CHAPTER SIX
VOICES OF THE MARGINALIZED IN MANJU KAPUR'S DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS

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6.1 Introduction:

Manju Kapur was born in 1948 in Amritsar. She is graduated from the Miranda House University College for women. She received M.A Degree from Dalhousie University, Canada in 1972 and M. Phil from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Manju Kapur is a professor of English at Alma Mater Miranda House College, Delhi. She is compared with the British novelist Jane Austen for her themes and the issues of women. Kapur is well conscious about the condition of women in India and is contented that women writers are trying spotlight on the life of women.

Through her novels, Kapur has tried to give voice to the voiceless feminine section of the society. In one of her interviews she has commented about her writing and the current condition of women in Indian society.

“One of the min occupation in my buk is how woen manaage to negotiate bath the parivate and public speces in their laives – what secrifices du they have to meke in ordar to keip the home ranning, and at what cast to ther parsonal laives do they find same kaind of fulfilment outsdie the haome. They have to do so maony things, they
Kapur has written five novels. Her first novel ‘Difficult Daughters’ was published in 1998 which was best seller in India and won the Commonwealth Prize for literature. Her other novels are also got appreciation from readers and critics.

6.2 Manju Kapur: As A Novelist:

Manju Kapur’s writings mirror man-woman relationship, human desire, longing body, gender discrimination, marginalization of women, rebellion and protest of women. Manju Kapur’s perception of women’s emancipation and independence are deeply entrenched in the women situations within the socio-cultural and economic spaces and paradigms of the country. The protagonists in Manju Kapur’s novels are caught in the continuous confusion between the individual and the institutional requirements. Manju Kapur’s novels investigate not only the problems of sex but also they are about identity crisis and freedom of women. Kapur’s protagonists want their own distinctiveness. With education they become aware of their position and condition in the society and family through her novels, Kapur tries to show that women are a separate individual, who have their own wishes, expectations and ambitions.

Manju Kapur’s literary works include:

5. *Custody* (2011)
To give voice to voiceless section of the society seems to be the main intention of the writing of Manju Kapur. Manju Kapur has authored five novels which give voice to the marginalized women. Even though she has written few novels she got recognition in India and abroad. She is simply compared with Jane Austen about women in her novels. The condition of women in India society is not pleasing. She has presented the women in diverse roles. In her novels one meets old traditional woman, modern, autonomous, superstitious and rational woman.

Manju Kapur’s first novel ‘Difficult Daughters’ was in print in 1998. It is a story of a protagonist Virmati’s fight for career and identity. It is the story of Virmati who is asked to admit a typical arranged marriage but she rebels. The novel is tale of a woman torn between family duty and yearning for learning and love. Virmati is living in a society which does not anticipate and accept that women have wish, ambition and choices. The novel highlights on freedom movement and partition. ‘Difficult Daughters’ won the Commonwealth Prize and was the best seller in India. It is translated in different languages. ‘Difficult Daughters’ got success both in commercially and critically, in India as well as abroad.

Sheeba Azhar has commented:

“Difficult Daughters’ is a skilful, enticing first novel by an Indian writer who prefers realism to magic realism.”

Kapur’s second novel ‘A Married Woman’ was called flowing and witty. It explores Astha’s longing for a purpose in her life other than being a wife and mother. It presents troubles, insecurities and unrest faced by a middle class educated woman. Manju Kapur throws light on lesbian relationship between Astha and Pipeelika.

Kapur’s third novel ‘Home’ expresses the still prevalent narrow-minded attitude toward the nurture of the girl child in India. It was published in 2006. The novel expose the story of middle class joint family’s life in Delhi and Nisha’s search for home i.e. search for a place of shelter and security.
Kapur’s fourth novel ‘The Immigrant’ is an interesting portrait of an arranged marriage. It came into print in 2008, which explores the special challenges facing immigrant wives. It is a story of Nina, who migrates to Canada with her husband. She finds her marriage totally different from her dream. Her husband suffers from sexual inadequacy.

Kapur’s fifth novel ‘Custody’ published in 2011. It is not just a social commentary. It is a close portrait of marriage and family. Shagun protagonist of novel is a motivated woman who fulfills her individual dreams instead of familial fulfillment. Shagun is over ridden by individualism and her own well-being. It tells the story of an unsuccessful marriage and a clash for children after a failed marriage.

6.3 Manju Kapur : As A Feminist :

Manju Kapur’s all five novels have feminist discourse. It is not because she is a female writer writing about women but because she has understood woman. In her novels she deals with the condition, troubles, aspirations and ambitious of Indian woman.

Indian women writers have given their great contribution to focus the life of women in India. Considering the concept of feminism, Indian women novelists has placed a vital role in Indian writing in English literature. Right from the past, women have been continuously struggling in search of the momentous, respectable position and safe place for themselves. They have to find their own identity. Manju Kapur is the most important feminist writer. In an interview Manju Kapur has commented:

“She is interested in the lives of women, whether in the political area or in domestic space.”

Among the writers she has elected the ‘less traveled road’. She has made her ‘own path’. Undoubtedly, Manju Kapur catches the concentration and social obligations
and responsibilities. She has challenged the male dominated society. Feminism highlights the position of women in Indian society.

Indian Women novelists have given a new height to the Indian English fiction. Manju Kapur belongs to the group of Indian women novelists like Bharati Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Nair, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy and many other for whom women are not mere puppets, but they are brave, ambitious and successful in breaking all kinds of traditional boundaries. In the society where marital bliss, child bearing and women as a home maker is the image of women, there is a fine transition and shift towards modernity. These new women protest and emphasize their individualism. However, the women novelists are liberally expressing their views on various issues which were considered as a taboo to even think about. Manju Kapur in her novels explores women yearn for separate identity and independence in a traditional society. Through her novels Kapur has shown the way the women can travel. Manju Kapur is conscious about the potency of Indian woman.

6.4 Manju Kapur’s ‘Difficult Daughters’:

Manju Kapur’s ‘Difficult Daughters’ is an endeavor to project a new vision of Indian woman. The novel received the Commonweal Writers Priz for best first book. The novel is really a story of three generations of women – Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. Search for identity is the key subject of this novel.

Annie John comments:

“Difficult Daughter is a tale of struggle under the patriarchal order where tradition and transformation are juxtaposed. It is a fine portrayal of a family, spanning three generation”
Manju Kapur reproduces man woman relationship, sex, gender, human desire, gender inequity, exploitation and marginalization in her novels. Her novels deal with the life of middle class people especially with women. Main purpose of her writing is to give voice to women. All those women protagonist are the representatives of the Indian women.

‘Difficult Daughters’ portrays the life of middle class woman torn between different forces in the male dominated society. It is a sensible story of a middle class woman which presents her duty towards her parents, urge of getting education, her illicit love affair with a married man and her attempt to create her own fate is at the care of the navel. The novel is set against the political background, the freedom movement and the partition of the country, which is displayed purely creative reconstruction. The novel describes the minute details in the life of protagonist.

Virmati, the protagonist of the novel is a Panjabi girl from a conventional family in Amritsar. She falls in love with a married professor Prof. Horish Chandra. This relationship is considered as an illicit and did not receive social, legal or moral approval. Virmati has chosen the road which is less travelled. It was the time when women are not given the education, Virmati struggles for education. She begins to value education and other higher things in her life. It was the time when the voices of the women are suppressed within the families; Virmati raises her voice for education, and love. She is an eldest daughter in the family. She has eleven brother and sisters. She is fed up with her mother’s unceasing pregnancies and giving birth to the babies.

Virmati a sharp and talented girl is a right hand of her grandfather and he is proud of her. But like other Indian families when she becomes 13 years old the discussion of her marriage starts at her home. She wants to take education but her family does not approve it. She is not the only daughter in her family. Her father starts looking suitable bridegroom for Virmati. They fix her marriage with an Engineer named Indrajeet. Date of their marriage is also fixed but the death of her fiancé’s father opens the door of education for her. She starts going to college. There in the college she met a young

He comes to live in the house of Virmati’s aunt as a paying guest. Their first meeting at his home rewards both. Both fall in love with each other. Although he is a married person, Virmati can’t stop herself from falling in love with him. Harish wants educated wife but his family had done his marriage at the age of three and his wife is not interested in education. He tries to teach her but unsuccessfully. When he sees Virmati and her curiosity about getting education he can’t stop himself.

Virmati is in very critical condition. Their relationship is tolerable neither in the society nor to the family. She has no courage to tell the truth but she refuses to get married. She tries to commit suicide and sees herself locked in a godown. Finally her sister’s marriage was fixed with her suitor. Her grandfather is traumatized to listen about her affair and stops talking to her and never talks her till death. Her parents have a faith in her but in vain. She starts writing letter to Harish with the help of her younger sister. At the time she learns about the pregnancy of Harish’s wife Ganga. She realizes the hopelessness in their relationship. Her mother sees a ray of hope and tries to prepare her for marriage.

Her family decides to send her to Lahore for the further study. Harish also reaches there to persuade his love for her and as usual he get succeeds. They cross the limit and keep their sexual relationship in Lahore. She is supposed as a secret wife at Lahore. She requests him not to meet during the exams but Prof. Harish Chandra continues his meeting and the result is Virmati becomes pregnant. She tries to search him but she can’t reach to him. She has no time because very soon the baby will show the symptoms on her body. Getting no way she decides to do abortion.

After some days he comes to meet her but in vain she has lost her temper. She does not excuse him. Again he uses same trick to convince her. She completes her course and goes to home. The issue of her marriage again comes on surface. She is not
ready to marry. Prof. Harish Chandra is takes a time to take a decision. He is not ready to live with her and also let her go in her own way. She accepts a job far away from family at Nahal as a headmistress of the girl’s school. She realizes her own strength. Prof. Harish Chandra reaches there and their frequent secrete meetings become the cause of her leaving job.

She decides to go to Shanti Niketan but one of Harish’s friend stops her. Finally with the help of this friend they get married. After her marriage she is not accepted by her parents as well as in-laws. She becomes the second wife of Harish who has already two children. Her place in the house is just a woman having sexual relation with Harish. She has no right to do anything at home. She is not permitted to do anything in the kitchen. When she goes to meet her parents no one is ready to pardon her. She comes back with lot of exploitation and burden of sadness of her family. She is misplaced in both the places in the house of her husband and in the house of her parents. In both the houses she remains as an unwelcome guest.

Success and failure runs parallel in the life of Virmati. She becomes pregnant; her mother in law starts taking care of her, but miscarriage takes place. Harish sends her to Lahore for M.A. in Psychology. Whenever she sees Ganga crying, she thinks that she is the killer of her happiness. Virmati becomes pregnant and comes to her parent’s home. Her mother tries to forgive her. Virmati gives birth to a baby girl names ‘Ida’.

The novel is a realistic picture of a woman who struggles for education and love. The writer has used this novel to give voice to suffering of women. The writer has shown the journey of traditional, independent and modern woman. The novel is an endeavor to give voice to the all kinds of women living in Indian society.
6.5 VOICES OF THE MARGINALIZED IN MANJU KAPUR'S 'DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS'

'DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS'
6.5.1 Women presented in Myth and Epic:

There is a myth connected with the creation of woman. As per the myth Brahma first created man. He thought to give man a companion. But he had exhausted all the substance in the creation of man hence he borrowed a number of components from the beautiful nature and made woman. So woman is also called as prakriti. Then Brahma offered woman to his earlier creation man saying, she will serve you lifelong and if you can not live with her, neither can you live without her. This ancient myth carries an unambiguous allegation of woman’s picture in life and writing for centuries together. The ancient myth gave woman her conventional identity which has been reinforced by the archetypes for ages.

The two great epics, the Ramayana by Valmiki and, the Mahabharata by Maharishi Vyasa, move around two central women characters Sita and Draupadi. These two women are two poles of feminine experiences. Sita absorbs all inflicted melancholy and humiliation and Draupadi challenges male ego. In the Vedic period, women were given the position of devis. But today, women were not given the position of devis, on a contradictory state of affairs exists in India. Her position, privileges, and roles are defined. In this period one can find the roots of patriarchy. Though the Hindus of the period had a patriarchal society women in general did not suffer from discrepancy. A number of references are found about the remarriage in Vedas. The word Didhishu means a second husband of widow used in Rug-Veda. The widows are remarried with her husband’s brother. The word ‘Devera’ means her second husband or brother-in-law.

The Medieval period was measured the “Dark Ages” for Indian women. In this period the position of woman declined. They faced adversity and cruelty due to evil practices. Child marriage, widowhood, prostitution, custom of Sati and Devdasi are the product of the medieval period. When the Mughals and the British invaded India, they brought with them their own culture. This has in some cases negatively affected the condition of women. As the results of the Islamic culture, Indian women started using ‘Purdah’, to cover their face and body. They were not allowed to move freely in society.
It gives rise to some new evils like child marriage, Sati, Jauhar and constraint on girl education. Women are restricted within the four walls; her entire life is around home, children, husband and religion. They lost their self-confidence and ability to think individually.

This continues for a long period. Then the condition of women started shifting when the social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and Mahatma Gandhi started social reform in the pre-independent period.

6.5.2 Contradictory condition of women:

The position of women in modern India is contradictory. She is considered at the peak, the ladder of success; on the other hand, she is mutely suffering. Women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality, they have to still travel a long way. There is mystification among women whether they are powerful or powerless. Women have left the secured domain of their home and are now in the battle field of life, fully armored with their talent. The women have shown their talent and capacity but in the countries like India, they are yet to get their dues. The women started writing and it becomes a tool for social reforms and social regeneration.

In conventional male dominating Indian society both men and women writers have presented woman, primarily as mother, wife, mistress and sex object. The writers had not shown woman as an achiever and if presented it is considered as an exception. Not much importance is given to woman’s individual self. Despite these, women today have begun to comprehend that they are independent. There is emergent feeling that women and men are equal. In the modern time a women has also become a breadwinner. Her new empowered image is reflected in the Indian English novels. Indian woman writers explore the feminine subjectivity.

While talking about the women’s movement Arunima Singh observes:
“The women’s movement in India has many divergences within itself. The Urban privileged women are quite aware of their rights while rural women are almost untouched by feministic movement.”

Arunima Singh rightly observes the condition of women and it is true that urban women are enjoying some freedom but rural woman are still disadvantaged from that freedom and are marginalized.

### 6.5.3 Rising awareness among women:

The women’s movement in India has divergences within itself. The urban privileged women are quite aware of their rights while rural woman are convention bound. With education there is some alteration but that is not satisfactory. The condition of women is critical in India. In America the growing awareness of women emerged in the form of feminist and civil rights movement which proliferated through various countries. Thus national, ethnic, sexual, gender and other issues came to the front position. The women empowerment all over the world has shifted from women’s emancipation to women’s empowerment in human interest. While the western radical feminism fought for sexual orientation and free sex, the feminist movement in the developing countries is primarily based upon socio-economic issues, such as high mortality rate, female infantile, bride burning, dowry, cruelty against women, rape, suicide, unpleasant working conditions, increasing inflation and so on. In fact, their struggle comes within the socio economic and cultural fabric of the patriarchal society.

Women are the marginalized in male dominated society. They have no importance in the society as well as in the family. The consequence of whole atmosphere has seen in the nature of women in Indian families. They change themselves according to condition. Manju Kapur in her novel gives the voice to the marginalized
women in every phase. She has been described an old conventional mother, rebellious woman, modern educated independent women in her writing. Kapur has described how in past the world of woman moves around her family. Her family is everything for her. Afterwards with education women started thinking but at this stage the male dominance under and the women have to compromise. The novel shows how gradually women are conscious of their rights. The present novel selected for the purpose of study servers the purpose how Manju Kapur had given voice to all kinds of women through her novel.

6.5.4 Voices Of Three Generations Women:

It is found that women have generally no importance. Women are neglected, insulted and not given importance to their views. However, urban and metropolis educated Indian women are claiming their rights within their family and beyond it. They are attempted to establish a new identity with their shifting gender roles. Now most of privileged young women represent and handle the public and political affairs. The identities of women are different from their husbands.

The situation of women in rural area is quite different. They are restricted in four walls. If women in need go to work, they are less paid compare to their male partner, they are physically, sexually, and verbally exploited. So the sexual persecution is becoming common to their male counterparts. The sexual persecution is common in rural as well as in urban area.

Manju Kapur’s ‘Difficult Daughters’ gives the voice to the three generations women. Kasturi, Virmati and Ida are the representatives three different generations. It is believed that the subordinate caste people are marginalized but half of the population of the world which contains women is the vast marginalized section. The condition of women in male dominated society is very critical and not better than slaves and untouchables. Arunima Sing in her book “Persecuted Women in Indo-Anglian Novels” comments:
“One of the major cause of the harassment of women in Indian Society is predominantly patriarchal, in which the right to property and right to take part vital decisions rest with the eldest male members of the family. In short, the will of males prevails over the females.”

In the novel “Difficult Daughters” Kasturi and Ganga represent the old conventional women. Kasturi is educated but she forces her daughter for marriage. She is against her daughter’s decision of taking of education. Ganga also belongs to the old convention that worships her husband like a God and accepts all his evils happily. The characters of Kasturi and Ganga are not imaginary but realistic. In Indian society everyone will find many Kasturi’s and Ganga’s.

Virmati, Shakuntala and Swarnalata belong to recent generation. Shakuntala is an autonomous woman and leads her life according to her own terms and conditions. She discards the concept of marriage and remains unmarried. Swarnalata is a free flying bird who takes an energetic part in freedom movement. Virmati has struggle in her whole life. She struggles for love and education.

The writer indirectly suggests that the path the modern and educated women had taken to travel is not easy. These women have to struggle for their right.

Ida represents to the new generation who throws the burden of society and manmade boundaries. She removes the useless things in her life. She takes a divorce from her husband. It is a tragedy that Ida does not like to be like her mother.

It is not true that only conventional women suffer in their life. Manju Kapur through this novels shows that uneducated, educated women and modern women have to
suffer in this social structure. Kapur gives voice to all kinds of women in her novels. She has made the mission of her life to present the all kinds of women and their struggle.

6.5.5 KASTURI: CUSTOMARY MOTHER:

Kasturi in “Difficult Daughters” is a mother of Virmati. She has taken a formal education. Though being educated she can’t value her daughter’s thrust for education. She searches happiness in being a house wife. She can’t stop the incestuous pregnancies. She is the mother who does not understand her daughter. When she was young she went to the mission school. Like Kasturi, her mother also felt it is better to marry her off but because of her uncle she is prevented from doing an evil practice of child marriage. Kasturi’s education is not routine but it is an exceptional example.

Her uncle believed that proper education would work wonder for a woman made sure that Kasturi continued her studies. Kasturi worked hard. She is perfect in reading, writing, accounting, and balancing the household work and the entire her head modestly bent. The rituals of Arya Samaj were deeply embedded within her. Kasturi firmly believe that marriage was the destiny of every daughter. This was the impact of the society on women who didn’t allow women to see above tradition. In real sense of the term, Kasturi is literate and not educated.

Although Kausturi’s formal education was over, she continued studying at home. Her marriage was arranged to Suraj Prakash through an advertisement. Although her in-laws family is educated. She has to face continuous pregnancies. It made her disgraceful in front of her daughter. Her sister-in-laws mocks at her.

“Breeding like cats and dogs. Harvest time again.”

Virmati was her first child. Kasturi fails to understand the behavior of Virmati. She wonders how her nurture could bear such a bitter fruit. She fails to realize why
Virmati contemplates suicide. She was filled with anger, shame and anguish to think about her first born insensitive behavior. As for herself, she could never demolish the stain of having a child thoughtless enough to contemplate ending her life with consideration for what her family would suffer. Her words:

“Maybe this will knock some sense into you! What offense did I commit in my life that I should be cursed with a daughter like you in this one?”

These words of Kasturi show the intense anguish that she undergoes to see her first daughter being rebellious in her own ways. Her relationship with her mother was not good. Kasturi is happy looking after the household, her husband and does not even voice her concern or opinion regarding her continuous pregnancies. Although she loathes the sight of her frequent swelling abdomen, she can do very little about it. She is surprised to see the shift within her daughters and fails to understand why she cannot stick to the social norms.

She does not allow Virmati to enter in the house after her marriage with Professor Harish. Even when Suraj Prakash died, she held Virmati responsible for his death. Virmati’s rebellion is taken by Kasturi as a revolt against her own self.

Being an educated Kausturi remains unchanged. It does not mean that Kausturi does not love Virmati, but she fails to understand Virmati and her desire to be autonomous and live life on her own terms and conditions. Only when the communal riots begins, she got worried about Virmati and that there was no point to carry on her resentment and called her to stay with the family. Kausturi belongs to the first generation of women and she is faithful to her type. However, if only she had shown a little understanding, her daughter’s future would have been different.
Kasturi belongs to the old generation. The writer had shown how women like Kasturi see what they are shown. They are educated but under the force of the society and tradition the woman learn only to read and write. Such women are only literate and not educated which serve the purpose of the family. Kasturi did not understand the real meaning of education and did not understand her daughter Virmati. In our society, one finds so many Kasturi. Kasturi in “Difficult Daughters” is the real representative of all those women. It is not imaginative but a realistic character.

6.5.6 Virmati : Difficult Daughter:

6.5.6.1 The Protagonist:

Virmati is the protagonist of the novel ‘Difficult Daughters’. She is a young Punjabi girl from a very conventional family in Amritsar. She is the daughter of Suraj Prakash and Kasturi. She is free with tongue. She acts very domineering. She has some work to do. She studies more than any other girl in her family. She was impatient, but tolerant and a hard task –master. She is very beautiful. She has long hair, fine face with large, widely spaced eyes. As her name suggest she is very fearless and stubborn. She fights against the age-old tradition and breaks the restraints of patriarchal society. She proves to be difficult daughter to her parents by denying marrying a person selected by her parents. ‘Difficult Daughters’ is the story of many girls, who tries to revolt against the age old tradition. The title of the novel is also named after Virmati.

6.5.6.2 Early life:

Virmati is the eldest daughter of her parents. As an eldest daughter she is given more responsibilities. Since childhood, she has to bear the important responsibility of becoming a small mother of younger brothers and sisters. Being the eldest child of the family, the liability of looking after the other ten siblings falls upon her. She does all household works with motherly fondness. The writer comments about the kind of work and the psychology of Virmati.
“Sometimes she tried to be moderate, but it was weary work and she was almost always tired and harassed.”

When Virmati’s mother Kasturi was expecting her eleventh child, Virmati has obligated to do the house work and look after her brothers and sisters because she was the eldest child in the house. She becomes sick of her mother’s constant pregnancies.

“When Virmati moaned about impatiently, hanging about her mother, playing with baby fidgeting with some knitting as she looked out of the window”.

Through the character of Virmati the writer focus on the mentality of Indian families. Kapur highlights the position of girl in Indian families. The elders in the family give more importance to the marriage of girl child than the education. Like other typical middle class Indian families less significance has given to the education of Virmati. She is taught that there were many things in life other than mere education. When she was thirteen talks of marriage began to surface. She is crazy for education. She wants to do something different in her life. Her cousin Shakuntala’s visit sow the seed of ambition in Virmati. She wants to be autonomous like her. She tries to discover her true place in society.

Virmati’s marriage fixed with an Engineer named Indrajeet. They think he is appropriate for her and she becomes of a marriageable age. When she tries to revolt, her mother impatiently scolds upon her and expects co-operation. She also advices her think about family especially for your sisters and grandfather.

Eventually Virmati fails in F.A. (Fine Art) exam. She is disturbed at her failure. Kasturi as a mother wants her daughter should get married. She also scolds her by saying, if your studies gives you bad temper, leave it, think which is first for you, your family or education.
Kapur rightly comments about the mentality of society. She comments:

“You seem to forget that your place as a civilized family
civilized family
woman is in the home, and not on the streets.”

Finding no reason of avoidance Virmati starts thinking about marital life. However date of marriage is delayed due to her fiancé’s father’s death. It gives her an opportunity and scope for her education. Kasturi, mother of Virmati is able to take education because of her uncle and Virmati is able to continue her education because of the death of her fiancé’s father. This shows the education of women is not the matter of interest of the girl child but it depends on the fate and what the male in the family think.

6.5.6.3 REBELLIOUS WOMAN:

Virmati in the ‘Difficult Daughters’ is a portrayed of woman torn between different forces that affects her life. Her duty towards her family, her desire for education and love, her endeavor to shape her own destiny are at the core of the novel. The background of this set against the political event of independence. The main purpose of writing of this novel is to give the voice to the marginalized women. During her life time she travels through the various realistic experiences. She has to struggle for everything in her life. She is a new woman who can’t give to enemy. The male dominated society is expecting the woman should behave as per tradition. Tennyson comments about woman:

“Man for the field, woman for hearth

Man for the sword, for the needle she

Man to command and woman to obey.”
This shows the male domination in the society either western or eastern there is no much difference in the thinking of society towards woman. Manju Kapur through this novel wants to make the society that woman are now aware that they are autonomous and can think and act independently. She tells now women are no more dumbs. The time has come to rise and revolt for their rights and place in the society. She wants to talk about idea of independence and women empowerment. She wants to make aware about economic independence.

Sangita Mehta comments:

“Freedom without economic freedom is futile. Now have gone the days when sister had to depend upon her brother, a daughter had to seek her father’s permission for taking up a job, a mother dependent on her son and husband.”

Now picture has changed and women have aggressive as well as independent. Manju Kapur has given the voice and shown the change with the help of Virmati. Virmati become educated, independent. She struggle for the love and got it. She has suffered more for getting education and love but finally she gets it.

Virmati is a rebellious character who revolts against the tradition. She firmly stands on her views. She is in love with Prof. Harish she tells it to her family and finally succeeds in marrying with him. She struggles for education and love and gets it. The character of Virmati is rebellious but the rebel is for the right purpose.

6.5.6.4 Struggle for Love and Education:

Manju Kapur’s novel deals with the life of middle class Indian women captured in between family and male dominated society. Virmati’s first rebel is against her family. She denies marrying with a person chosen by her family for the purpose of education. Her act expresses her craze for education which shows the strength of modern woman.
Virmati belongs to the class of women from changed mind set, which have a faith on being independent economically and socially. Gurpyari Jandial comments:

“To break the patriarchal mould and for Virmati to have tried to do that in the forties was a great achievement.”

Prof. Harish Chandra’s arrival at the Arya Sabha College becomes as a turning point in the life of Virmati. He is a foreign returned professor of English comes back to his motherland with some important good values for his country. He also carries European Art and Literature with him. In addition to this he comes to live in the house of Lajwanti, Virmati’s paternal aunt as paying guest.

Prof. Harish Chandra is a wedded person and father of a child. His wife is uneducated. She has failed to fulfill his expectations about educated wife. In the first meeting, Virmati was rewarded by his sweetest music played for her and him by her romantic look. She is greatly influenced by him and considers noble for his care towards women’s education, just like her grandfather.

Virmati starts going to college regularly. Virmati’s place of sitting in the class is always in first row with the four other girls who were in the Professor’s class and that is the only place he sees her in college like a beautiful flower, against a background of boy students. This continues for sometimes and the professor’s Passion extends to Virmati’s heart and mind.

The seeds of love have blown in both sides. She is conscious of the professor’s paying great attention towards her; she finds it impossible to bridge the gap between them. The passing of days created a great confusion within her. On the one side professor was desperate waiting to share every feelings with her, she is imprinted on his mind, his heart, his soul so firmly that until they can be united in a more permanent way he lives in a shadow. On the other side Virmati also deeply falls in love with Harish.
The touch of Harish on her body makes her realize that he would be her soul mate. Virmati knows that the social hurdles and moral difficulties label their relationship as ‘illicit’. Her whole life and soul now belongs to Harish only. Virmati is ready to revolt against the society and family. Her relation with Prof. Harish will give rise to many problems but Virmati is ready to face the trouble for the sake of her love.

The struggle of Virmati to have her love started. The pressure from family and society confuses her. Her step towards love humiliate her grandfather publically, betrays her father who has given the chance for further study.

She is caught in psychological conflict. On the one side there is family, custom, norms, traditional values and on the other side her love, and her desire to educate herself. Days pass and Virmati’s confusion grows.

Manju Kapur with the help of Virmati tries to explore the condition of marginalized middle class marriageable girl who falls in love. There is a lot of anger, pressure and contrasting views between Virmati and her mother. For her mother Virmati should get married without any hesitation, doing her homely duties as a wife are not less important than education. She knows that Virmati has always been good and sensible. How she could not see her happiness lay marrying a decent boy, who has waiting patiently? Her family members also have given the word to him. She too knows the value of education. She says,

“Further thought school and collage strengthen you, not change you.”

The statement of mother indicates that in front of family reputation and the tradition there is no value to the education and love of a girl. Her mother wants her daughter should discontinue study and get married because there are other girls in their
family after her. She consoles her that she should think about her family. Girls can only become happy after marriage. Her happiness is within marriage not in education.

Virmati finishes her F.A (Fine Art) and marriage date is fixed. Virmati and Harish continue meeting secretly. He advises her to tell the truth to her fiancé Inderjit.

Virmati instead of telling a reason only refuses to getting married. The condition of her mind becomes critical. Another thing is that she is in love with a person who is married and also a father of a child. She has no courage to tell the truth in house. Her mother fails to understand why she does not want to get married. Psychological condition of Virmati becomes critical. Whenever she thinks about professor, finds the face of his wife in front of her. Having no way she thinks of her death. She thinks that death will finish all problems. Virmati decides to commit suicide. She makes futile effort of drowning. Her effort of suicide has failed and she becomes an object of much mockery and humiliation. When her grandfather learns about the attempt of suicide, he stops talking with her. He is very proud of her but she hurts him. He never comes to Amritsar till Virmati was there. She is locked and under watch but still remains calm. Her sister’s marriage was arranged with Virmati’s fiancé, Inderjit.

But instead of showing inner strength, Virmati tries to finish her life. The next some months pass by in great agony and loneliness. Virmati gets the way of communication, with the help of her little sister Paro. They communicate with each other through letters, exchanging every microscopic detail of things happening. Virmati is with his romantic notion of glorious world of freedom and love which he weaves through his high flow erotic diction. Virmati desires to study further instead of getting married. Virmati opens her heart to Harish by letters about her condition;

“Mata and Pitaji want me to promise I will have nothing more to do with you, then they will let me out….. I am just like a sack of wheat and dal here without my own life.”

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On one side Harish tells her he can’t live without her. On the other side her parents want to keep her away from him. Her ideas come into conflict with her mother, who always reminds her,

“You are the eldest, Viru, your duty is greater. You know how much the younger ones look up to you. Your grandfather and father both have confidence in you; otherwise would they have given you so much freedom? ……Now what will they feel when you want us to break our word and destroy our good name? How will they understand it?”

Harish continues to captivate her. He is not ready to let her away from him. He declares;

“…..I cannot, cannot live without you. Not in this world or in the next.”

“The news of professor’s wife’s pregnancy comes. She thinks that now she might forget him. Virmati realizes the hopelessness of their relationship. She stops giving answer to his letters.
Finally, her family decides to send her for further study. Her Mother again tries to convince her for marriage and tries to know her wish about future. She wants to be free from her motherly duties by getting her marriage. She tries to realize her about the proper timing of everything and it is the time of doing homely duties. She requests for delivering her duties as a daughter. Virmati, as her name shows have a courage. Although she tries to remain in moral code, the fate decides other. Despite her determination and suffering, she is regarded to be the black sheep of the family. No one is ready to understand her love for professor and curiosity for study.

The new chapter of her life begins when she goes to Lahore for the further study. At Lahore the two persons whom she gets greatly influenced are Shakuntala, her cousin and Swarnalata, her room partner. Both these women are rebellious and free from parental pressure. They come in her life like a fresh breath. These women being rebellious in their own way have already made a mark in the academic sphere. Virmati tries to mix in new atmosphere. She decides not to think about past and think for fruitful future.

Prof. Harish contacts Virmati and meets her in Lahore. The meeting of Virmati and the professor become rare in Lahore. Their first sexual attempt made her tense and uneasy. Virmati feels guilty but consoles herself by considering the feeling as that one of our dated morality. The first Diwali in Lahore which they spend together and wonder on the roads of Lahore as a husband and wife, hand in hand comes as first step toward a public statement. She is known as a professor’s ‘secret wife’. She likes to fasten their relationship legally. But every time he has his ‘genuine’ excuses.

December 1940, in winter in Lahore the air of Satyagraha Movement begins flowing. The conference takes place fast and furious in the city. The atmosphere is full of talks. Virmati attends one of woman’s conferences with Swarnalata. The meetings of Virmati with Harish become infrequent. Whenever she talks about marriage, he has his
fix reason. All disappointment comes out, she blurts on him. She holds responsible Harish for the happenings in her life from breaking engagement to leave her own home.

Harish tries to comfort her but in vain. One more shock is waiting for her. She realizes that she is pregnant. Harish assures her that nothing would be wrong. Harish’s words now she remembers.

“What talk is this? Are you poor, uneducated, unenlightened clods to live such things to chance? Don’t you trust me?”

Virmati tries to contact Harish to plan their future. She goes to Amritsar in search of Professor but he isn’t at home and it is locked and doesn’t know where he gone. Carrying a child is very happiest moment in the life of woman, but in the life of Virmati it becomes miserable. The only option in front of her is an abortion. She longs for Harish’s presence. She knows that this child would fasten their relationship. But she has no enough time to wait until Harish meets her. She feels a deep emptiness within her. At last she aborts the baby. At the crucial moment when she needs and longs for him, he is absent. She has to bear every emotional and physical pang alone. A great depression settles over her. She feels more alone than ever.

She finishes her exam and goes to Amritsar. Harish is not happy with what happened but could not complain. Virmati holds professor responsible for all that happened. Virmati stands as a rock against her family pressure about her life. She cannot take her own decision regarding her own life or her relationship with Harish. All the same she cannot think of a life without him. Her soul has written her name with Harish no other choice for her.

This episode in the life of Virmati shows the uncertainty, dependence of woman in Indian society and how male neglect and are unconcerned
6.5 Utopian phase:

She completes her study and goes to Lahore; as usual again the subject of marriage comes on the surface. To avoid those things Virmati accepts a post of the Principal at Prathibha Kanya Vidyalaya, Nahan. She has decided to remove all past memories and start a new life with new enthusiasm. In Virmati’s unstable life this period appears as wonderful moment in her life. Nahan, is a place ruled by an enlightened royal couple with full of beauty. It is here that she discovers her hidden talent and potentials. Though excited by a new job enjoying the fruits of independence she looks upon her stay there as a period of waiting rather than the beginning a career.

Frequently she is driven by an urge to be with the professor. They keep writing to each other and their secret communication continues. However the path of lover never runs smoothly. He visits her couple of time spend a night together. Virmati wants this ecstasy more. The condition of the mind of Virmati is narrated by Kapur.

“No fear of curfew, or of home, no fear of anybody hearing, anything For a brief moment Virmati lived that night as though there was no tomorrow.”\(^{21}\)

The period which Virmati spends at Nahan is the happiest period in the life of Virmati. But this doesn’t remain permanent. It is like an oasis in the desert.

6.5.1.1 Real Struggle:

Virmati gets a job as well as love from Harish. She is happy but this happiness doesn’t remain so long. When the school management gets the air of this secret matter, she is asked to resign, as the school’s reputation is at danger. She is driven out from the school. She leaves Nahan deciding to go to Shanti Niketan, as going back to Amritsar is out of question. She thinks:
“How many new beginnings had her relationship with the professor led her go.”

She has left the Nahan, she feels life is hopeless, but begins to feel stronger with every mile that she traveled. She knows that God might have thought something for her. She thinks she had a long life ahead and would definitely generate an identity for herself. This indicates the insecurity in the life of women. Virmati is educated and still is insecure in her life then what about those uneducated woman. The writer indirectly suggests that in male dominant Indian society the fortune of women is in the hands of men.

Before going to Shanti Niketan She thinks of visiting Harish’s poet friend at Delhi and her life takes an unexpected turn. He stops her from going to Shanti Niketan and promises to help her. He sends urgent telegram and calls Harish to Delhi. He persuades Harish for marriage

“You must marry her now, or she will be lost to you forever. Be prepared to let her go. If you can’t bring yourself to do this, you will never see her again.”

At last their marriage takes place. They marry according to the religious customs and rituals. Harish finally brings her to his home. Virmati becomes his ‘second wife’. Virmati sighs a relief for having the burden of past five years. But she is ignorant of the forthcoming situations and troubles.

Virmati and Harish reach at his home. No one welcomes them. Coming days were definitely going to be very thorny for Virmati who settles down as a second wife of the professor. Virmati’s marriage with the Harish turns out to be a disaster in her critical life. She is an unwanted guest, looked upon as a husband snatcher. No one accepts her
whole heartedly in his family. Ganga shares cold vibes with her. However professor calms her and stands like a strong rock supporting her and making her feel wanted.

Virmati is not permitted to allocate the kitchen. Ganga performs all domestic works of professor. Her condition is not different than another woman who is kept only for sex purpose. She feels like extra terrestrial in his house. Professor consoles her and saying he want a companion not a washerwoman, let her do what she wants. She gets outsider status in his family. She has to change her eating habits also as she cannot enter in the kitchen and has to eat whatever served by her mother-in-low and prepared by Ganga. Even professor’s children Giridhar and Chotti and Guddiya his sister are kept apart from her. They are scolded whenever she tries to talk or be friendly with them. Virmati spends her time in reading, helping her husband with his work, and participating with him at social gathering. The following lines show the dual behavior of Harish’s family towards her.

“In the evening, Virmati went to the angan to bring the
cloths in the line was bare except for her own, hanging
forlornly at the end. She took them down and clenched
her lip. She wondered drearily whether this isolation
would continue till the end of her life.”

Behavior of family members becomes one more trouble for her. Still they don’t accept her. The behavior given by her family members is not so good. Her cloths remain unwashed in bathroom and dry cloths exterior. She cannot tell all things to Harish and remains calm for family environment. It will destroy peace in life of Harish. Now she realizes why her parent wanted to keep her away from this relationship.

Harish advises that she has to visit to her parent’s home. He consoles her that she has done nothing immoral. Virmati doesn’t meet or try to contact to her parents, because
she knows that they never pardon her but again thought that parent’s relation doesn’t crumble so easily. She is energized to meet her sisters. Virmati tries to patch up and make harmony with her parents who had expelled her, her mother’s hidden anger come out and she was received in unexpected manner. Now she has no place for her in the house as well as in minds of her dear one’s. Her mother regrets her for destroying their name of the family.

She is literally turned down by her mother. Virmati is stunned by her mother’s words. She leaves her father’s home by saying silently that I am going, and I will not come again. The incident no doubt shocks Virmati. Back home, she kept questioning at the triviality of relationship. She wonders, daughter and parents relation cannot destroy, then how all things happen. All those years love and relation are now useless.

Virmati becomes pregnant. Attitude of her mother-in-law towards her was changed. But fate plays a different role. Virmati has a miscarriage and goes through a low phase in life. Professor suggests her about a job. He thinks that it will make her busy and happy. She accepts a job in a primary school in opposite to A .S. college. Whenever she becomes late to reach home she has to sleep without dinner. But she cannot complain of anything to professor.

Once again she is an uninvited guest at the time of death of her father. She remains at the margin to avoid prying eyes. There is a firing at the procession,

“Baoji always looked pale and tired. After what his daughter did he was never the same, all last years, so silent and listless. ..... It killed him definitely killed him.”

When Harish goes to pay his condolences they receive it very respectfully. She goes to meet her mother after funeral; her mother becomes hysteric and cries out that you
are responsible for the death of your father. Unnecessarily every unwanted incident is attached the Virmati and she is scolded by her family.

Virmati wonders to see the difference in their behavior. Another shock destroys her fully. Next day Virmati’s grandfather unable to bear the shock of losing his son also dies. She cannot attend the funeral. She becomes very depressing, her own father and Grandfather both die without pardoning her. The treatment she gets in the house makes her feel that she is left with nothing. The episode in the life of Virmati shows how the society has double standards one of men and other for women. Prof. Harish and Virmati both are equally responsible for the love marriage. Prof. Harish is received respectfully and Virmati with disgust.

Professor feels that further study will improve her and decides to send her to Lahore to do an M.A. in Philosophy. She loses all the sense of education. She takes her higher education but without zeal. She feels no more dreams of future. For her doing a M.A in Philosophy is boring and meaningless but it was only means of escape. College and his responsibilities are increased. He expects Virmati has to come at home. Harish visits her often. Meanwhile, she meets her friend Swarnalata again who invited her for meeting and demonstration. She is not sure Harish would like it and stayed away. This shows how for every action women have to consider what the parents or husband will react.

In Lahore she leads a very remote life but she thinks it is better than home. Her past never leaves her back. She is a married with a husband, a co-wife and two step children. She has an abortion and a miscarriage. These barriers make her different from her other fellows.

The political events take a horrifying turn. The war, Hitler’s death, Nazi collapse, German Surrender everything happening at such a fast. Harish sends his mother, Ganga and children to Kanpur. She hears their departure with mixed feeling. She is happy at least now her privacy would not be disturbed. There is no one to see them, no one to
mind anything they did. Virmati has never had so much freedom around her. May be this was really what she had fought for all along. Virmati has to depend for her privacy and independence on other.

Virmati conceives again and this time she was sure that nothing would harm the child. She wants to contribute in Freedom Movement like other freedom fighters. Harish strictly prohibits her from doing so. He feels she should be more careful now that she was expecting.

However the attack seems to be a blessing for Virmati as her mother sends for her. The environment and situation do not permit resentment to be carried any further past memories. No one mentions the past. Finally, a child was born and Virmati wants to name her, ‘Bharati’ to mark the ‘birth of our country’. But Harish does not think much about it as if connected war, hatred, fighting and killing that contributed the making of new country. He preferred the name ‘Ida’ which meant ‘a new slate and blank beginning’.

After independence Harish gets job in Delhi. They go to live there. However Ida proves to be a revolt against almost everything. She has no interest in education. Virmati’s efforts on her upbringing bore no fruit. Ida is just another difficult daughter. Probably Virmati realizes how much trouble she caused her mother Kasturi and how she must have bled. She realizes her mother’s agony.

Virmati must have realized being the cause of much trouble and tension in the lives of other. She feels guilty but nothing to do about what had happened. The wrong done could not be averted. She wants to be of some use at least after her death. She tells to her daughter,
“When I die... I want my body donated my eyes, my heart, my kidney, any organ that can be of use. That way someone will value me after I have gone.”

Virmati cannot escape accusation even after her death. She is held responsible for Ida’s state.

**6.5.1.2 Self Realization:**

Virmati becomes a second wife of Harish. Before marriage she feels that her all troubles are going to end. But after the marriage she comes to know that she is the criminal of Ganga. Virmati now realizes her fault and feels that it would have been better if she hadn’t married to Harish. It is the self realization of Virmati.

Virmati says:

“I should never have married you. And it’s too late now. I have never seen clearly. It’s not fair.”

Manju Kapur makes her realize fault. Though she falls in love, there is no fault of Ganga, Harish’s first wife. She feels responsible for the unfairness done to Ganga. She feels like a murderer. Whenever she hears Ganga’s cries and discussion with her mother-in-law, she feels her ears would burn scarlet, her chest yank with misery at the implication of some of the things she overheard and there is no avoidance from them either. This guilt doesn’t have her rest.

“Oh! Why was I born? Surely I was committed a terrible sin in my past life....... God take me away quickly so this disgrace can end.”
Although he is equal partner in the sin, no one includes him; Virmati’s family nurses no grievance against Harish. They do not voice it nor articulate it. But in the case of Virmati, she is considered as a black boat on the family, a husband snatcher, and the other. She does have courage to do argument with professor. Professor married with Virmati still she never asks him the reason. Virmati realizes her fault but it’s too late. She also realizes how she only is held responsible and men excused.

6.5.2 Ida- Another Difficult Daughter:

Virmati is difficult daughter for her parents. Similarly her daughter Ida by her deed and behavior proved to be no different from her mother. She too is yet another difficult daughter for her parents. Virmati’s mother Kasturi and father Suraj Prakash are against Virmati’s decision of marrying a married professor. Her parents were against her higher education. But Virmati by her strong will power succeeds in marrying Harish and completing her education. By going against the decision of parents Virmati proved to be a difficult daughter of her parents. The same story is repeated through Ida. The comment of Ida shows that how she dislike her mother.

“The one thing I wanted was not to be like my mother” 29

This shows that Ida had diverse feelings for her mother. This is because Virmati’s past had been kept secret from her. After the death of Virmati, Ida wishes to sink into the past and make it her own. She slowly stresses the story laden with tears, struggles and few smiles.

Ida recollects:

I could not remember a time it had been right between us,

and the guilt that her life had kept in check overwhelmed me. 30
When the novel opens the protagonist of the novel Virmati, the mother of Ida, is already dead. Ida was there to attend her funeral and this gave her opportunity to meet her relatives and recount the mystery of her mother’s life. Ida was never closely to her relatives as she says

*My mother sent me to Amritsar during all my school holidays, away from my half siblings, and the proxy warfare conducted on the battlefield of my life.*

However Ida feels alone without her mother and tries to connect with the people around. Ida’s relatives care for her in many ways and some of them are unduly sympathetic towards her. Ida is a divorcée and childless. The concept of divorcée kept grinding and clanking in her relatives heads. She hears the whisper of relatives He was such a nice man…. So educated…. But Virmati for mother, it is not strange that such a thing should happen.

They hold Virmati responsible for the condition of Ida, even after death. Ida tries to know more about her mother from her relatives. She tries to dig into more details which are given out reluctantly.

Ida is a modern girl totally different from her mother. She is a free flying bird. She is the daughter of educated family but not interested in education. She thinks that education is not only important thing in her life; there are so many things which are more important than education. She hates her mother. But she realizes the importance of her mother only after her death.

In this case Ida proved to be different from her mother. Under the pressure of society Virmati had an abortion. But when Ida’s husband forces her for abortion Ida throws bluntly denies. In this case Ida is a step ahead to her mother. She can think and act independently. Ida has never shared her secrete with her mother. She confesses how the death of fetus haunted her and how she had endured the shock of her loss alone.
decided to come over from her past and live for future. She does not wish to live a life as her mother left. Ida removes the burden of unwanted marriage and seeks divorce from her husband. She digs the history of her mother and father after the death of her mother.

Like Virmati Ida proves yet another difficult daughter for her parents. Ida’s parents had great anticipation and expectation, but Ida has not fulfilled these expectations. In her lifetime Ida has never thought of her mother. After her death, by using scrappy version Ida wants to re-establish her mother and she is pleased by certain discoveries. Ida is really a modern girl who lives a free life and is a representation of modern girl. Through the character of Ida the writer has created a new woman who can think and act independently.

6.5.3 Ganga- Old Traditional Woman:

Manju Kapur in her novel presents the women in every shade. There are old conventional woman like Kasturi there is also a modern girl Ida. Ganga is also another female character created by Kapur. Ganga is old traditional woman like Kasturi instead of that she is first wife of Professor Harish and counterfoil to Virmati.

She is uneducated, simple and bearable wife. Professor tries to educate her but remains unsuccessful. She is an ideal housewife. She has two children. She is very committed to him and his family. She had a child marriage. There is a great difference between Ganga and Harish. Ganga’s disregard about study and lack of consciousness brings Virmati to her husband’s home as a second wife. She does all the house work alone. She dominates Virmati in the case of house work. Ganga seeks no outlet, as her entire world centers around her husband and his second marriage does not tarnish his image in her sight. She holds him in high esteem and looked upon as him God. Though her husband does a second marriage and brings her at home she doesn’t ask a single question to her husband. Ganga lives with Harish under the same roof as his second wife.
Ganga is the representative of thousands of women in India who are blinded by the tradition and pray their husband as a god. Who cannot think their life without husband? They are not interested in education. Their husband, children and serving for them is a real happiness for them. The society and the tradition taught them that child and kitchen is the real world of women and such women do not go beyond it. The writer has given voice to many Ganga in Indian society. There are many women in the society who suffer without their own fault. Ganga is the representative of those women. The character is realistic character.

6.5.4 Swarnalata and Shakuntala: Autonomous and Modern Women:

Manju Kapur offers such woman character through the character of Swarnalata and Shakuntala. Manju Kapur has indirectly recommended to the society that if women are given proper education and autonomy they can be like Swarnalata and Shakuntala and to women she presents an example to imitate.

Toni Morrison comments:

“In a Difficult Daughters Manju Kapur presents the emergence of new woman who is no longer the Chaste wife whose suffering can only make her more virtuous, the nurturing mother who denies own self, the avenging Kali or a titillating strumpet.”"32

Shakuntala and Swarnalata are presented as truly ‘modern’ and ‘liberated’ women in this respect. Both are free flying birds. They are not constrained by their families. Both do whatever they want in their life. These women don’t accept parental pressure. They decide to carve a name for themselves through their intellectual pursuits.
Shakuntala is the cousin of Virmati. She is a teacher and lives at Amritsar. Shakuntala’s visit planted the seeds of aspiration in Virmati. Shakuntala gives an example to Virmati that it is possible for a woman to be something other than a wife. Though her mother wanted Shakuntala to marry, she never allowed anyone to open the topic. She has utilized her education for autonomy, and led her life according to her own term. Image of Shakuntala keeps floating through her head. Shakuntala, who has done her M. Sc. in Chemistry and tasting the wine of freedom, is intelligent, independent, modern and refined girl who does not believe in the concept of marriage and reacts strongly to this traditional idea. She tells to Virmati that women are still supposed to marry, beget children and do nothing else. This reaction of Shakuntala shows her thoughts towards marriage.

Swarnalata is Virmati’s room partner in Amritsar. Swarnalata meant ‘a golden creeper’ comes in Virmati’s life as a breath of fresh air. She is a modern woman. She involves in freedom movement. Her attitude towards life is very different. She is not only fearless but stubborn also. When Virmati tells her about carrying a child of Harish, her opinion about male that, men take advantage of women become more dominant in her mind and, she advices her, throw the burden upon mind, marriage is not only important thing in our lives. Instead of marriage we can take energetic part in social work. She gives her own example; she is always busy in organizing and participating in conferences. She is politically active woman. She advises Virmati that Marriage is not the only thing. She makes Virmati aware that Women are coming out of their houses and participating in war and Satyagraha movements. Taking jobs, fighting, and going to jail helps women to improve their status in the society and family.

Shakuntala and Swarnalata are truly autonomous. Both are rebellious. They have not accepted parental pressure. They have created their own identity through education. Shakuntala and Swarnalata give confidence to Virmati. The writer has given voice and shown way to thousands of women who think that marriage and give birth to children is the only job women can do. Shakuntala and Swarnalata give way and Virmati imitate their example. ‘Difficult Daughters’ is novel which make men think about the treatment
they give to women. It is lesson to women that the women have the competence to act independently like Shakuntala, Swarnalata and Virmati. Manju Kapur had given voice to all kinds of women.

6.6. Conclusion:

‘Difficult Daughter’ is a novel about the past, present and future of women. Manju Kapur gives birth to such an exceptional and most unforgettable female characters like Virmati, Ida, Swarnalata and Shakuntala who change the terminology of women’s life. Her women characters give such a jerk to the male dominated society that the so called male dominated society gives up the thought of suppressing and victimizing and ignoring their existence. The women revolt against age old traditions. They also revolt against male dominant society and remove the fleeter of slavery which prevent them from being the part of social world which is ruled by men. With the help of protagonist Manju Kapur wants to show how women’s are adopting change of modernity by refusing the shadow of the age old traditions. Their new thinking and new attitude gives them new recognition and social worth as an individual in male dominated society. Their new attitude makes them free to live their life according to their own strategy and terminology.

In Indian society women are not free from the traditional thinking. We find all kinds of women in the society. In the novel the writer includes all kinds of women. The writer presents the women characters of three generations with their values, mindset and relation. Virmati stands as a representative of transition and modernity. This transformation is wonderfully woven through the character of Virmati, who finally progresses from a immature girl to a woman matured through experience. Education makes her strive for an independent identity for which she fights against the social norms and religious convention. However she ends up with the identity of a ‘second wife’ and tag of the other.
Ida comes in the form of ‘new’ woman. Like her mother, Virmati she too is a difficult daughter. She is free like a bird. She does not seek any kind of fulfillment through marriage or motherhood as it is quite an outdated concept for her. However, being a divorcee and childless affects her life. She represents the modern woman who throws away the pressure of society and tradition. She misunderstands her mother and in ignorance declares that she wants not be like her mother. But finally knowing the truth she starts respecting her mother. Ida in the real sense is a modern girl.

On the other hand Kasturi and Ganga are two women who seek no change in their lives and are satisfied with fact. It is surprising that after taking education Kasturi does not want to see the world. The women like Kasturi remain as traditional women and imprison to the patriarchal hegemony. On the other hand, Ganga seeks no outlet, as her entire world centers around her husband. Both are content with their domestic world, its pains and pleasure. They do not even dream of crossing limits of patriarchal society.

One important thing noticed is this that the female characters of Manju Kapur are educated. In *Difficult Daughters* only Ganga the wife of Prof. Harish is uneducated. Manju Kapur wants to show the anguish hidden in the mind of educated, independent women. Virmati, Ida, Shakuntala, Swarnalata are educated and want that the society should give them freedom. Virmati’s mother is educated but is traditional. The writer wants to suggest with the time women are changing.

In *Difficult Daughters* there are three generation of women Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida. One sees speedy change in the attitude of women. Kasturi has taken education but remain unchanged and traditional. She is not ready to live old traditions. She is unable to stop her continuous pregnancies. She wants her daughter should get married and search happiness in married life instead of taking education. Second woman Virmati goes against her parents wish. She gets education. One sees some change in her attitude. Virmati is one step forward to her mother Kasturi. Ida is again one step forward to her mother Virmati. Though Virmati is educated, she is against the divorce of her daughter. Ida doesn’t want burden on herself. She is a new woman.
‘Difficult Daughters’ is an effort to give voice to the women. The writer has shown how the women are changing after getting education. The writer has given an account of three generation of women and tries to suggest the society that one can stop women from being free.