CHAPTER -V
CONCLUSION

5.1 Preliminaries

The present chapter is divided into two sections: Comparative Analysis and Major Findings. The novels that come under the purview of this study are Shobha De’s *Socialite Evenings* and *Second Thoughts* and Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman*. The thrust of the comparison is on the novelists’ choice of theme, language, style of narration, the social class of their protagonists, and their attitude towards the institution of marriage, family, education, etc. The chapter then records the findings that have emerged out of a detailed study of the novels followed by a discussion on its pedagogical implications. It also suggests scope for further research in the related area.

5.2 A Comparative Study of Search for ‘Self’ of Female Protagonists in Selected Novels of Shobha De and Manju Kapur

Shobha De and Manju Kapur belong to the league of women novelists who have heralded a new beginning through their literary revolution. They have used their literary genius to deliberate on the issues of women’s independence and garner a positive change in their lives that has been in fetters because of social stigmas, taboos and biases. In their path-breaking endeavor, both the novelists have striven to move away from traditional portrayal of their women as submissive, oppressed and self-effacing entities in society. Their women are seen metamorphosing from their image as docile, meek and mute sufferers to self-reliant, assertive and emancipated individuals with growing awareness of their rights in a society that has claimed to be a male’s domain for ages. De and Kapur have articulated their concerns on the question of women’s identity and have deftly described their
protagonists’ sufferings, pain, helplessness, frustration and disillusionment in their search for ‘self’ in a phallo-centric world.

The present research is based on the study of two novels by each of these novelists. The novels chosen for study are *Socialite Evenings* and *Second Thoughts* by Shobha De and *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman* by Manju Kapur. Though both these writers seem apparently different, their inner self binds them together on a common plane. They both are deeply affected by the predicament of women and through their literary writings they voice their deep concerns for their sufferings and pain. The protagonists of both these novelists are women trapped in a society that is bound by traditions and strict social and cultural norms. In their search for identity, the women in their novels are seen to transition from tradition to modernity.

5.2.1 Theme

Manju Kapur and Shobha De are both feminist writers. They have chosen to create the image of a ‘New Woman’, and artistically portrayed her search for identity, her undeterred efforts to realize her ‘self’ and her desire to define her existence through life, growth and experience. The personality of the ‘New Woman’ is a strict departure from the traditional image of a silent, submissive, self-sacrificing, enduring woman. She is educated, aware, confident and self-reliant and dares to question her position in a male-dominating society.

Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* is set against the backdrop of the nation’s political upheaval. It narrates the tale of women’s subjugation through the lives of its protagonists spanning across three generations and spread over three different periods in the nation’s history. *Difficult Daughters* is the story of Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. Kasturi’s status in society is synonymous with the condition of a country under colonial rule. Kasturi silently endures her sufferings and never questions her dominant position. Her feeble and weak health as a result of incessant childbirth reflects the lack adaisical state of affairs of a nation marauded time and again in
history. Both Kasturi and the nation’s status are like that of the mute sufferers rendered powerless in the hands of their oppressors. Kasturi’s daughter Virmati belongs to and lives through the period in history that is witness to the nation and its people becoming conscious of their dominant status and trying hard to fight for their rights and freedom. Virmati is a rebel who wants to break away from the manacles of patriarchal ideologies and value system that has through ages curbed the freedom of millions of women like her. She is in fact a victim of double-colonization who craves for her independence both as a woman and as a citizen of a nation reeling under the colonial rule. Ida, Virmati’s daughter is a woman of independent India with independent thoughts and ideas. However, in Ida and her generation of women, there is seen a clash between customs and traditions and self-willed modernity. Kapur has also very intricately woven the theme of partition which functions at two levels in the novel. Against the backdrop of the country’s partition, we see Virmati erecting walls of partition in her parent’s family as well as the family of her husband Harish.

*Difficult Daughters* speaks about the struggle of a woman against traditions in a male-dominated society. Virmati is an independent woman who has a desire to live life as per her wishes. When her mother Kasturi who represents the voice of patriarchy in the novel arranges Virmati’s marriage with a boy of her own choice, Virmati, the non-conformist, in her act of defiance attempts to end her life. Further on, her love for the married Professor Harish is also an act that is unacceptable as per the social norms. Virmati’s adamancy in the matters concerning her life, be it her desire for education, her illicit affair with a married man, or her deviant attitude to walk away from traditional norms results in her ostracism from her family—a price she has to pay for being self-willed and independent. All through her journey in search of an identity she is scorned by her mother and the other women around her. She is deprived of the pleasure of the company of her siblings to whom she was almost a second mother. The sordid experiences of her life
narrate the story of the pain and agony of being a ‘woman’. Talking of the plight of women, Virginia Woolf says:

*Imaginatively she is of the highest importance. Practically she is completely insignificant... some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips: in real life, she could hardly read, could hardly spell and was the property of her husband*¹

*(45-46)*

*A Married Woman* by Kapur is again set against the backdrop of a social unrest related to the controversial historical episode of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992 resulting in communal violence. It is the tale of Astha, an only child of her parents who is brought up in a way to fit perfectly into the mould of social norms and conventions. In other words the novel underscores the vulnerable status of a woman who is so conditioned that she can easily fit into the role of a dutiful daughter-in-law. Unfortunately, in an Indian society, a married woman’s silent and unquestioning submissiveness is used as a yard stick to measure her contentment and happiness. In contrast to this, her rebellious and defiant attitude towards the patriarchal ideologies labels her as willful, arrogant, profane and immoral. Astha’s marriage with the well-educated and respectable Hemant begins on a harmonious note but soon turns drab and dull as a result of Hemant’s chauvinistic attitude that quashes her self-respect and dignity as his wife. The ongoing unrest in Astha’s mind is beautifully drawn against the country’s social unrest. Her insurgent psyche prompts her to break the marital boundaries and seek sweet vengeance on her dominating and heartless husband. Astha indulges in a same sex relationship with Pipeelika which is a means of escape from the familial oppression and her first step towards finding her own ‘space’.

Defiance or rebellion against existing social conventions and patriarchal ideologies becomes necessary in the lives of all women battling for their rightful
place in society as an individual. De’s protagonists also follow suit. De’s women are self-reliant and self-assured women having an independent sense of identity. They are educated, career-oriented, competent and seductive women who squirm at the idea of being treated unequally in society. De demands equal status for women as individuals because they are born free to live life as a worthy human being and not as rubber dolls in a male-dominated society. She is also against the idea of segregation or discrimination faced by women because of their ability to procreate. Rather, women are more adaptive than their male counterparts and have complete control over their integrity as women. De is a modern novelist who is conscious of the displacement and fractured status of women. Through her bold and honest renditions, she attempts to shatter the patriarchal hegemony and raise a voice of protest against women subjugation.

*Socialite Evenings* by De is about her protagonists’ insurgence towards male-assigned roles and identities. It is a story about Karuna and Anjali who are victims of male-atrocities. Anjali comes from a conservative Jain family. She chooses the world of advertising to escape from her middle-class environment. A self-assured woman with a desire to enjoy her independence, “to see the world, meet people, buy lovely clothes and perfumes”² (SE 12), Anjali marries a wealthy playboy Abbas Abe Tayabjee. A typical male with wayward ways and flirtatious lifestyle, he accords a subservient position to Anjali in his life. Initially she tries to cope with his attitude. However, unable to endure the affliction, she revolts against his constraints and finally taking a single major step, deserts him to lead an independent life. Karuna also grapples with her sour marriage and finally after years of suffering breathes free out of this asphyxiation. Somewhere along the way, she is drawn into an adulterous relationship with her husband’s friend Krish but finds it hard to maintain parallel relations. Though her husband accepts her back into his life, it is her pregnancy that brings in the catastrophe. Karuna’s pregnancy creates a suspicion in her husband’s mind and he expels her out of his
life. Utterly dejected she suffers the agonies and anxieties in her life with her friend Anjali by her side. Besides Karuna and Anjali, Ritu is another important character in the novel who flouts conventions. Ritu is a socialite who understands well how to make the most of an opportunity. A happy-go-lucky type, she believes in merriment alone with least thought for deep and lasting relationships. A woman of independent selfhood, she believes men are like dogs that can be conditioned through reward and punishment.

*Second Thoughts* moves around the pretty, young and demure Maya, a middle-class textile engineer from Calcutta who visits the city of her dreams—Bombay and decides to settle down there having married Ranjan Mallik, a bank executive. The novel, according to Anita Myles demonstrates “a candid study of a woman’s imbroglio in the contemporary Indian metropolitan society, while she struggles to maintain equilibrium between tradition and society”\(^3\) (102). Ranjan shows no interest in Maya’s professional aspirations or her emotional and physical desires. Ranjan’s mother-fixation and his constant comparison of Maya with his mother humiliate Maya. Ranjan’s lack of emotional involvement with his wife and his abstinence from marital responsibilities of a husband drives Maya into loneliness. The young neighbor Nikhil breathes in some freshness and youthful energy in her otherwise dull and drab life. It is in his intimate company that she realizes her joys of womanhood.

Thus, a brief look at the themes of the selected novels by De and Kapur substantiate the fact that both these novelists place women at the centre of all the action. The space occupied by the male characters in their writings is relatively less conspicuous. Moreover, their women are not the silent, meek and suffering type. They are rooted in tradition yet modern in their outlook towards life. They are women with aspirations and desire to carve their own special place in a world dominated by patriarchal ideologies. Both the novelists delineate the frustrations of their women trapped in loveless, deceitful, meaningless marriages be it Kapur’s
Asthaganga or De’s Karuna, Anjali or Maya. Their women also lack freedom in economic, personal or professional matters. Maya has to stick to Ranjan’s way of life, do as he says and Karuna’s behavior and actions are governed by her husband. Astha in spite of earning her own money has no freedom in choosing a way to spend it. Marriage becomes suffocating for these women with their husbands viewing it as a relationship where the wife should be content with carrying out her womanly responsibilities alone.

5.2.2 Social Milieu of De and Kapur’s Women

Shobha De and Manju Kapur are postcolonial novelists whose writings stand out because of their overwhelming presence of women characters. A look at their protagonists highlights the magnitude of problems that shroud them and the trauma they experience in their challenge and protest against the patriarchal logic of male supremacy irrespective of the social class or period they belong to. While Kapur has based the action in her stories from 1920 to 1950 and between 1970 and 1990, Shobha De’s narrative focuses its action on the events of the present time that is from 1990 onwards. Kapur’s women of the pre-independent era are mute sufferers under patriarchal norms and conventions. To this category belong Kasturi, Lajwanti, Kishori Devi and Sita. Virmati, Swarnalata, Shakuntala are women with seeds of freedom and desire for meaningful life sown in them. Unlike their mothers and grandmothers, they no longer consider marriage as the ultimate goal in a girl’s life. All Kapur’s women belong to the middle class in society. While some like Kasturi and Ganga are deeply rooted in tradition, Virmati, Swarnalata and Shakuntala use education as a means to empower themselves. Enlightenment through education gives them courage to protest against patriarchal ideologies and question their identity in a male-driven culture and society. Home and hearth are no more the destiny for both De and Kapur’s women.
De’s women hail from the urban class and have their own set of problems and frustrations. De doesn’t invent them. Rather they are picked up from real life situations. With her keen sense of observation she presents their follies and foibles, their stories of success and failures, their deceit, envy and social snobbishness and mainly their frustrations.

Although these characters may seem unreal to some, De states in an interview- 

*These characters exist. I’m not doing a biography of somebody. I know the world I’m writing about inside out. Believe me. There are no secrets in that reality that I don’t have access to. And as I told you earlier, I have presented that reality with a pretty sheen. It’s far more horrific than anybody outside can ever dream about. It’s so sordid. It’s unbelievable* (Society).

De’s women - Karuna, Anjali and the likes are obsessed with the word ‘status’ to the extent that they feel ashamed of their middle-class origin. Her protagonist Karuna is a prominent Bombay socialite who strives to establish the need to assert woman power in a male domain. Anjali marries the ape-like wealthy Abbas solely to enjoy the material comforts and luxuries that comes along with it. However, life is not so rosy and colourful for Anjali in the company of her boorish, brutal and exploitative husband. De’s Maya on the other hand belongs to the middle-class society, a strict departure from the women of high class which has been De’s favorite in most of her writings. Maya leads the life of a typical woman of her class, confined within the four walls of her house with the kitchen becoming her domain of action.

5.2.3 Perception of Women

Perception in general sense of the word means the way in which things are seen, regarded or interpreted. It is in fact, belief of the people. Woman in a patriarchal
society is perceived as docile and meek and born to serve and sacrifice. She must be submissive and ready to follow the orders of a man-father, husband or son. She has to keep silent and prioritize the interest of others pushing her own desires to the background. It is a universal perception that women are dependent and they need to be protected. In the words of a British poet, Tennyson,

*Man for the field and woman for the hearth/ Man for the sword and for the needle she/ Man with the head and woman with the heart/ Man to command and woman to obey/ All else confusion. (The Princess)*

In India perception of women is based on ‘Manu Smruti’. Manu regarded women as being the lowest, even below the untouchable. Even ‘The Bible’ perceives the woman as as one that brings sorrow and woe in the life of man.

Women in the novels of Manju Kapur and Shobha De are perceived in a similar fashion. Virmati is regarded as one who brings bad luck to her family. Hence she is treated like an outcaste by her family. Karuna’s husband does not like her because she reads and is a thinking woman. Ranjan expects his wife to be a slave. He doesn’t consider her intelligent and worthy of acquiring a job in Bombay. Astha’s husband looks at his wife’s achievements with condescension and considers her incapable of handling her own finances. A woman however educated she may be is accorded a secondary status in the patriarchal framework of things. It is this bias against women that both De and Kapur aim to change. Their women are seen to voice their protest and rebel against the rigid conventions of patriarchy and their subservience in society.

5.2.4 Institution of Marriage

The patriarchal culture asserts that a woman should belong to a man. The institution of marriage sanctions the right to a man and woman to live under the same roof locked in a relationship where the man enjoys his superiority. Most
often it is seen that the husband uses his superior position to oppress his wife. Manju Kapur’s *A Married Woman* is deeply rooted in the Indian context and deliberates upon a hidden power play between a married couple. Astha’s blissful marriage with Hemant soon begins to lose its charm when her husband’s growing neglect owing to his pre-occupation with his competitive business pushes Astha to a world of tedium and monotony. Bored, frustrated and alienated Astha’s sentiments are echoed through the words of Simone de Beauvoir who maintains that:

> *A husband regards none of his wife’s good qualities as particularly meritorious...he is ignorant of her dreams, her fancies, her nostalgic yearnings, of the emotional climate in which she spends the day*<sup>5</sup> (492).

Asthana’s growing dissatisfaction in her marriage and her desire to create a space for herself drives her into a lesbian relationship. However, Kapur’s belief that a married woman can take liberties with herself but not her family forces Astha to terminate her lesbian journey abruptly and return to her husband and children. Astha is educated and modern, capable of leading her life independent of a man if she so desires. Yet she returns to the sanctity of her home and family that only a marriage can offer.

Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* describes the woes and sufferings of women who lived and struggled under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society. A woman who is a part of this society is never allowed to forget that marriage is her destiny and ultimate goal of life. In a patriarchal society marriage is a form of deliverance. In a society that believes that as a child, a woman needs the support of her father, as a young girl, her husband’s and as she grows old, the support of her son, marriage is no reason to rebel against. A woman’s image is thus built around her role as wife, a mother and a home-maker. But Virmati does rebel against the attitude of her family towards this institution. Kapur being a Punjabi
herself gives a vivid account of the practice prevailing among educated Punjabi families where girls are educated with the intention of learning manners and be prepared for suitable marriage to be arranged by their parents. Virmati’s mother Kasturi and Shakuntala’s mother Lajwanti abound in tradition and show their displeasure at the girls’ desire to pursue higher studies. Similarly Astha’s mother Sita also believes in the importance of marriage being the ultimate goal for a girl. She is a conservative mother who right from Astha’s childhood ingrains in her the idea that all women were meant to get married and be submissive to their husbands. The concept of ‘submissiveness’ connotes a woman’s secondary status in this man-woman relationship. When Virmati chooses to have an illicit affair with the married Professor, and ultimately marries him, strange though it may seem, the Professor is not scorned at by their family but Virmati has to undergo ostracism. Feminist writers condemn the double-standards in society that lays out one set of principles for a woman and another set of ideals for the man. As a result, marriage turns out to be a sort of confinement for woman who enters into this sacred bond with tender and youthful dreams in her heart.

Shobha De’s take on marriage is more aggressive. She suggests that one must not marry because she feels she must. Neither should bearing children be the reason for marriage. One should marry for the sake of marriage alone and not factors like “security”, for according to her no such thing exists. Moreover, it is observed in feminist ideology that marriage is a hotbed that breeds subjugation and oppression of women. Maya’s marriage with Ranjan in Second Thoughts is a farce right from the beginning. It is a marriage of convenience for Ranjan who consents to it only to please his mother and fulfill her wish of bringing home a daughter-in-law. His dishonesty to Maya smothers her young mind and drives her into depression. He is neither emotionally nor sexually involved with his wife. Ranjan is egoistic in his attitude towards his wife and emerges as a typical male in the role of a husband. All three protagonists in De’s Socialite Evenings viz. Karuna, Anjali
and Ritu are women trapped in meaningless marriages. Karuna is treated like an alien by her husband, and Abe who is a compulsive flirt exploits Anjali till the time she feels fatally suffocated in her relationship with him. Thus, De brings out the hollowness of conventional notions of marriage highlighting the fact how the role of a wife has been the genesis of women’s rebellion throughout history.

5.2.5 Family

Family plays a vital role in shaping an individual. Family is situated at the heart of Manju Kapur’s narrative. The concept of a family structure holds prominence in all her writings. Difficult Daughters is the story of Virmati and many other daughters of the Diwan Chand family of which Lala Diwan Chand is the patriarch. His is a traditional joint family with his sons involved in the family business. When Kasturi enters Lala’s family as his elder daughter-in-law, in the absence of her mother-in-law, she assumes the place of a matriarch. She is committed to carry out the family duties. Though fairly educated, Kasturi is a simple woman who perfectly fits into the role of a traditional daughter-in-law. She abounds in Indian traditional values and feels it her duty to inculcate similar values in her daughters which also includes agreeing to a marriage alliance chosen by the family. Kasturi plans Virmati’s life for her, in keeping with the traditional and familial ideals but fails to achieve any success. On her part, Virmati also finds it difficult to defy the family norms by going against them in their choice of her prospective groom. This emphasizes the solidity of the boundaries that enclose a family.

Family is a place that soothes and comforts. When the rebellious Virmati is ostracized by her family, she has deep longings in heart to go back to them but fails until strong political turmoil softens her mother’s heart to reconcile with her daughter. Virmati’s return to her home and family finally brings her the peace of mind after her long and arduous journey to establish her identity. Women in traditional families are conditioned to serve and sacrifice silently. Ganga, the
Professor’s wife continues to perform her duties as a dutiful wife and daughter-in-law even after her husband brings home a second wife - Virmati.

Asth a is an only child of her parents who is brought up in a family that strives to instill all the qualities in a girl appropriate to make a good wife. However, as time passes, she begins to feel suffocated in her marriage with Hemant because of his demeaning attitude towards her. Her life takes a surprising twist when she enters into a same sex relationship with Pipeelika. Although she enjoys her independence and makes the most of her womanhood, the pangs of remaining bonded with her husband and children that is her family, subverts her desire for freedom that she has been enjoying with Pipeelika. Yet another reason for Astha’s decision to part ways with her friend is that she finds her new relationship too equally demanding.

De’s writings present a slightly different picture of the institution of family. De’s women are educated and independent and modern. Though Karuna’s father is a strong voice of patriarchy, she has the courage to defy him and enter into the glamorous world of modeling and advertising. After an unsuccessful marriage and a string of affairs, Karuna resolves to stay single and look after her invalid sister and support her ageing parents. This explains the effect of good value systems imbibed in her as a child by her family. The vivacious Anjali is in no way burdened by family restrictions. She marries a man of her own choice outside her religion and community. She is independent and liberated. In moving away from dependency on men, Anjali and the likes raise their voice against the formidable control of patriarchy.

Maya is a simple girl from a middle-class family in Calcutta. She is raised with noble values as a child mainly by her mother. Her marriage with Ranjan is a debacle. The institution of family crushes her confidence as she has no one to support her. Maya ends up being lonely only until her spirits are lifted up by the young Nikhil.
De’s women are confident and self-assured. Kapur’s women in comparison to De’s are conservative and bound by tradition. They are not as liberated as De’s women who are capable of leading their lives, if necessary without the support of their family.

5.2.6 Mother-Daughter Relationship

In the family unit, it is the mother who ranks next to the head of the family. Traditionally the mother is the pivot that binds together all the members of the family. She enjoys an undisputed position as one who showers unconditional love to her children, takes care of the house and the needs of the family and is a perennial source of love care and concern. She is the one who creates and nurtures. According to Girija Khanna and Mariamma Verghese,

*The Indian woman, whatever may be her status, sees herself primarily as a mother, and considers this role as the most significant one. Whatever she does or whatever she achieves is an extension of this primary image*° (106)

Karuna’s mother in De’s *Socialite Evenings* is one whose priority is always to focus on the needs of her husband. The children’s needs were always secondary. Women like her are conditioned from childhood to consider their husbands as their lord and serve them selflessly. The *Pati - Parmeshwar* image is so uniquely ingrained in them that they are almost blinded by their devotion towards their master with little or no concern regarding the needs of the children. All her time is taken away in his worship. Karuna’s mother exemplifies such a woman. She fears being punished for the wrong done by her children. She acts as the mediator between the father and the daughters. Karuna feels sorry for her mother’s condition and sympathizes with her submissive status. Her position as a victim of patriarchy is underlined by the observation of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak:
Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is displaced between tradition and modernization\(^7\) (122)

Mayas’ mother Chitra plays a significant part in Maya’s life. However, once Maya is married her mother Chitra is of the opinion that “A girl has to cut off her cord to her family quickly and identify with her in-laws. The sooner she does this, the better”\(^8\) (ST 222). When Maya goes through the turmoil of her bitter marriage and seeks her mother’s help, her mother writes to her saying girls who cling on to their own family for too long never succeed in adjusting to their husbands.

Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughter* presents the key role played by a mother in the lives of her daughters. As an individual she may not be important but her presence undoubtedly is very important for both the physical and mental or psychological growth of her daughters. Kapur breaks the myth of the loving and fear-dispelling image of the mother. Kasturi as the mother is most unsympathetic towards the needs of her daughter Virmati. She is rather a threatening force in her daughter’s life. She restricts Virmati’s desires and never ever fulfils her daughter’s thirst for love and attention. Kapur’s Kasturi abounds in traditional ideologies. In Kapur’s novel it is she who emerges as the voice of patriarchy.

In Kapur’s second novel *A Married Woman* the protagonist Astha’s mother is a purely traditional woman. She considers it her most important responsibility to find a decent and respectable groom for her daughter. She represents the old generation of mothers who did not think it fit to live with her daughter, hence settles down in an ashram in Rishikesh after her husband’s death. However, she is always by her daughter’s side whenever she needs help.

Both De and Kapur have deftly delineated the mother-daughter relationship in the novels selected for the present study. An analysis of the mothers’ psyche conveys
the message that unfulfilled mothers can never offer fulfillment to their daughters. Since daughters are the alter-ego of their mothers, the mother desires to realize her unfulfilled dreams through her daughter. They train their daughters and inculcate values in them with the view to make them good wives and daughters-in-law. Hence, for a healthy flowering relationship between the two, it is essential for women to be aware as well as independent. To conclude in the words of Simone de Beauvoir, “The mother’s relation with her children takes from within the totality of her life, it depends upon her relation with her husband, her past, her occupation, herself” ⁹ (537)

5.2.7 Tradition and Modernity

According to eminent woman novelist Shashi Deshpande, “Tradition is our link to the past-we need that link” ¹⁰ (2). A dictionary defines tradition as the sense of a belief, a custom or a practice handed down to posterity. But since tradition keeps changing and undergoes transformation with time it is wrong to consider tradition and modernity as contradictory. Modernity is a positive awareness of the difference of current times to preceding ones. Both Shobha De and Manju Kapur have captured this shift from tradition to modernity in their novels.

In a typical traditional Indian set-up daughters unlike the sons are perceived as meek and docile, dutiful and selfless, ever ready to gratify the needs and demands in the family. Virmati’s mother Kasturi - Difficult Daughters and Astha’s mother Sita -A Married Woman, or even Maya and Karuna’s mothers in De’s Second Thoughts and Socialite Evenings who are traditional Indian women view education as a means to make accomplished wives and daughter’s-in-law. For these women a woman’s duty and sole purpose in life is to be able to ‘run a good home’ and nurture a family. Kapur’s Virmati and Astha and De’s Karuna and Maya are educated women with modern outlook. They believe that professional and financial autonomy is essential for a woman to establish her identity in a
male-dominated society. They do not look at marriage as a bonding that spells subservience. These women believe that it is futile to search for solutions to problem inside one’s home, and that one must learn to look outside. While the older generation is submissive in their behavior and surrendering in nature attributing each and every incident in their lives to destiny, the younger women are seen to find ways out of their helpless state and rebel against forces of patriarchy. The excessive focus on family and marriage in a woman’s life chains them down from fulfilling their ambitions. Karuna remains firm in her decision to choose modeling as a career and Virmati refuses to marry a man of her parents’ choice. Karuna takes a bold decision to break her disappointing marriage to lead an independent life while Virmati doesn’t have qualms of settling down with an already married man. Karuna’s words “single is good for me” (SE 34) indicates the need for giving up tradition as a means of peaceful survival. De’s protagonists Karuna and Anjali are more like heroes who are not subdued by male authority and refuse to go down on their knees before the men in their lives. Kapur’s Astha protests against her husband’s insensitivity towards her by seeking solace in Pipeelika’s arms. In entering into a relationship with another woman, she defies tradition but is ultimately seen to return to her roots.

Thus, the protagonists of De and Kapur are seen to flout the gender-based protectionism and endeavor to make independent choices in life. They are found to live on their instincts and opt for an unfettered life that places them in a governing position. They are seen to display courage to debunk hitherto cherished values and ideals to be able to discover their ‘self’.

5.2.8 Manju Kapur’s Language and Style of Narration

All literary writers use language as the medium of their expression. English language came to India with the colonizers and it was accepted by the people. Today we have a large number of people who find it easy to communicate in their
mother tongue as well as in English. However, there are some contrasting opinions about the use of English language in literature. A great writer from the first generation, Raja Rao comments in the preface to his famous novel, ‘Kanthapura’ as:

*English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up – like Sanskrit or Persian was before - ....We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We can only write as Indians* (5).

Manju Kapur uses a lot of local expressions with a flavor of local culture and customs that makes her novel *Difficult Daughters* lucid. Some examples are cited below:

- Hai re, beti!
- He is ill, he is sick, he has fainted, hai re,
- hai re.
- Come here beta.

*Mornings, toast and milk. Lunch dal, rice, chapatti, vegetable, dahi, sometimes a sweet dish, for tea, pakora or mathri, for dinner, dal, sabzi, sometimes with paneer, rice, chapatti.*

According to Raja Rao one can express his feelings and sentiments in English but it cannot match the flavor of the native variety of English. The English used by Indian English writers is a new variety of language which is termed as Indian English. Raja Rao is aware of the limitations of translations and he makes it clear that certain words related to culture, food items, clothes, festivals cannot find exact substitutes or be translated exactly from one language to another. English is no exception to this rule.
Manju Kapur has presented her readers with a wonderful story. She has expressed her joys and hopes by using a version of English which is full of loan words, loan translations, code mixing and code switching. The concepts of turn taking and deictic items are also rightly used in the novel. Manju Kapur’s use of the following words highlights the use of loan words:

- Dahi, Dharamshala, Chowkidar, Shaddi, Bade Pitaji, Dhoti, Karahi, Baithak, Chutney, Aangan, Banja, Chauth, Baoji, Dupatta, Katori, Durries, Khas Gully, Munshi, Uthala, Bhai, Kurta Thali Furlong, Dal, Ghat, Dhobi, Kameez, Patila Havan, Pakora, Zenana, Aangan, Randi, Bhai, Saheb, Pyjama, Kewara, Paneer, Kothi, Pandit, Bhenji, Sandhya, Morraba, Maji, Kulchhas, Chachi, Mathri, Beta, Tandoori Masi, Luchis, Bua, Lassi, Pitaji, Malai, Puris, Atta, Sherbat, Papad”

There are many incidences of reduplication and religious invocations, compound words, etc.

- Bas-bas
- Bole so Nihal
- Badmash
- Arrewah
- Dhoti
- kurta
- jooti
- Seedha-saadha
- Allah-o-Akbar Shaan
- Hai re, hai re
- Gajjar-mooli
- Shor-shaar
- Har, har Mahadev
- Gandi
Thus, Manju Kapur has adopted a language suitable to her content. Her style of writing is very lucid and readable. All these words help the reader relate to the novel with gusto and he gradually gets drawn to the theme.

Kapur has used the first person and third person narrative. The novel starts with the statement, “The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother” (1) and these words seem to echo throughout the novel. This statement arouses the readers’ curiosity about how the narrator’s grandmother might have been and why her mother doesn’t want to be like her. The system of generating curiosity is very impressive. The rest of the novel is the journey of the narrator in search of this statement.

The novel ends with the statement of Ida as,

This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be. Do not haunt me any more\(^{10}\) (259).

Manju Kapur’s *A Married Woman* has a simple plot. The narrator is Astha and the story is seen from her perspective. This novel also shows the use of many Indian words and contexts.

The readability of these novels is more as both the novels deal with real events in history. *Difficult Daughters* is set against the background of the freedom struggle of India. *A Married Woman* is set against the backdrop of the demolition of Babri
Mosque. The names of different places in the novel draw the interest of its readers with their strong sense of familiarity.

5.2.9 Shobha De’s Language and Style of Narration

Shobha De is a modern novelist who has a very frank style of expression. A striking feature of her writing is that she is very candid and honest. She is one of those writers who thrive on challenges. De does not deny that sex is an important part of her writings. She is very innovative and has employed different narrative techniques in her novels. Shobha De uses flashback technique of narration in Socialite Evenings. Karuna, the heroine of the novel and a prominent Bombay socialite tries to escape into the past from her nightmarish present. In order to do this she writes a memoir of her life in a linear and flashback style. De uses the stream of consciousness technique in Second Thoughts in order to explore the world of Maya. In one of her interviews, Shobha De makes her views clear on use of English language in her novels

_I adore Indian English and marvel at our inventiveness. We can bend English any which way we feel like and still succeed in communicating the essentials. This is a creative feat which deserves to be documented meticulously, for every few years we add phrases and expression that reflect our evolving selves, “totally Jhakaas” cannot be translated as “effectively enough”, “phokatkabhav mat khao”, is too delightful to ruin by explanation”_"11 (Shobha De’s interview TOI)

She uses Marathi words to suit her needs and she luxuriantly employs code mixing and code switching in her novels.

Some of the words used in Socialite Evenings are:

Kutcha roads, the real big memsaah, paan-bidi shop, raddiwalla, etc.

There are many erotic scenes in her novels. De describes sex in her novels freely and in a candid manner.
5.2.10 Treatment of Indian Ethos

We cannot separate any literary text from the culture and sentiments of the people. Ethos is part of culture. Manju Kapur and Shobha De are both Indian writers who write about Indian themes exclusively. All the four novels in the present study deal with Indian ethos. Cambridge English Dictionary defines ‘ethos’ as,

*The characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations*.

“The set of beliefs, ideas, etc. about the social behavior and relationships of a person or group.

No story can be separated from its historical or social context. Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* traces the journey of three generation of women. However, it is the long, complicated story of Virmati’s life dotted with ordeals and pain that is at the centrality of the novel. Virmati’s academic interest and intellectual leanings draws her close to the Oxford educated Professor. Soon Virmati falls in love with the Professor and thus begins their journey of furtive meetings. The Professor who is a married man wants to enjoy the best of both worlds. He lures Virmati into a sexual relationship and Virmati is pregnant with his child. The fear of carrying a social stigma attached with an unwed mother makes her undergo an abortion. The agony she experiences out of this whole episode is an example of the novelist’s treatment of the Indian ethos. Virmati’s sense of guilt which she experiences because of her illicit affair with a married man perpetually nags her. Virmati is in constant pain because of her status of the so called ‘other woman’, in the Professor’s life. At one moment she even decides to put an end to her relationship and leaves for Lahore to pursue her studies. But the Professor follows her and she falls prey to his charms again. She insists that the Professor marry her and accord her the status of his legally wedded wife. It is this thought and feeling in Virmati that speaks of the ethos of the Indian culture.
A Married Woman deals with a same sex relationship which is considered a taboo in Indian society. Astha’s lesbian escapade in the novel with Pipeelika is an act of defiance. Astha dares to challenge the dominant paradigms, and the unquestionable predefined concepts, being fully aware of its pitfalls in a traditional Indian society. Although it is her way to defy patriarchy, but the fears of the newly acquired relationship cannot be done away with. When Pipeelika urges Astha to make it a lifetime partnership, she grows restless at the thought of being drawn into yet another dominating relationship. Added to this is her agony of staying away from her children which for an Indian mother is too difficult to endure. Astha’s return to her home as the wife and the mother is Kapur’s way of highlighting the Indian ethos.

Shobha De has earned too many sobriquets and epithets like ‘Porn Queen’, ‘Pulp Pasha’, ‘Vatsyayani’ among others for her carefree and bold expression of thoughts and ideas. It is a universally known fact that De’s fiction dabbles with every form of sexual behavior- heterosexuality, homosexuality, incest and lesbianism, but that does not sum up Shobha De. Though she chooses to call herself a humanist but one cannot fail to call her a feminist too because De is a woman who writes passionately about the issues of women.

Karuna’s sense of freedom makes her rebel against her father. In doing so perhaps she tries to vent out her anger at patriarchy of which her mother has been a silent victim. Her disastrous and empty marriage with Black Label, her stormy affair with her husband’s friend Krish, her erratic life, her abortion drains her out. Karuna is thrown out of her house and lands herself in poverty. But soon De’s Karuna is able to resurrect herself by the emotional support provided by her father. Karuna realizes the importance of familial ties and cultural affinities. De thus goes on to prove how filial love and care by parents is necessary for the development of a girl’s personality in the absence of which she is likely to go astray of which Karuna, Anjali and Ritu are best examples.
Through Maya’s tale of loneliness and depression arising out of her marriage with the insensitive Ranjan, De emphasizes on a few essential things that make a happy family and cordial and loving relationship between spouses. For instance a child raised well will grow up to be emotionally and mentally healthy. She stresses on the importance of values, manners and culture and urges people to have respect for elders. De through her novel upholds the traditional value of mutual trust and understanding for everlasting happy marriage.

5.2.11 Search for ‘Self’

The search for control over one’s destiny happens to be the choicest theme of both the novelists chosen for this study. Both De and Kapur have tried to raise their voice against imposition of tradition and patriarchal ideals in society that lead to truncated existence of women. Women in India have had a long history of suffering, discrimination and persecution. De and Kapur have a keen eye for the travails that women often face in a male-dominated society. Hence they have tried to capture the Indian woman’s transition from silent sufferers to women aware of their own rights as individuals rather than as mothers, daughters or wives. De has presented her women as having a strong desire to assert their identity in the deceptive world of men. De’s women are confident, educated, beautiful, attractive and assertive individuals who are aware of their self and its desire to carve its own ‘space’. Kapur’s fiction stresses upon the woman’s need for self-fulfillment, self-realization, independence and autonomy. She displays a mature understanding of the female psyche and is able to at once juxtapose the personal with the external.

The present study has examined various causes that are responsible for the subservient status of women and tried to understand their sufferings and finally concur with their decision to establish an identity of their own by standing up against oppression and repression in society.
The protagonists of De and Kapur are victims of male-atrocities. Astha, Maya, Karuna, Anjali and Ritu get into marital relationships which after a while tend to suffocate them. It is their fight against the men for a dignified status. The men are exploitative, cunning and boorish. In their effort to prioritize matters in their lives, they seem to completely turn blind to the emotional, sexual, professional and psychological needs of their women. Karuna and Anjali endure the traumas of their marriage until one day they take a single major step to revolt against the atrocities. Karuna metamorphoses into an independent woman with an identity of her own who is capable of living her life without the support of a man. Maya gets into depression as a lonely wife until her savior comes into her life and makes her realize her worth as a woman. Maya’s realization of herself pulls her out of her state of pity. Maya no longer is the dejected wife. She has metamorphosed into a mature woman who resolves to look at her marriage with renewed vigor. Astha seeks sweet vengeance against her husband by getting involved in a same sex relationship. Life turns worthy and meaningful for Astha in the company of her beautiful and loving partner Pipeelika. Astha has finally found her ‘self”. Virmati and Shakuntala desire to make a place for themselves in a male-dominated world by empowering themselves through education. But Virmati’s journey is full of pain and agony. Her involvement with a married man brings more anguish in her life. After a series of vicissitudes, Virmati earns the status of a legally married wife but she remains an outsider in the family. It is only after her death that her daughter Ida sees her as a lonely woman who had committed the mistake of creating an identity of her own.

5.3 Major Findings

Following a detailed analysis of the selected novels written by a bold and feisty writer Shobha De and a serious and sorted writer Manju Kapur studied against the social, cultural, political, traditional and familial background, the researcher has enumerated some of the major findings which are given below:
It has been observed that Manju Kapur’s novels manifest her protagonists’ struggle for ‘self’ as early as the pre-independent times which represents the initial phase of feminism whereas; Shobha De’s protagonists’ are seen struggling for a ‘space’ of their own in the modern times.

It is perceived that De’s protagonists are socialites and urban women aware of their ‘self’ and their need for equality with the opposite sex in every field of life viz. marriage, profession, and money or power. Kapur’s women are comparatively meek and docile but conscious of their need for identity in a patriarchal framework.

It is noticed that women in Manju Kapur’s novels consider morality as a virtue and their thoughts about sex are conservative. Shobha De’s women characters are comparatively more liberated and they do not regard sex as taboo.

It is seen that the thrust in Manju Kapur’s novels is on the importance and sanctity of the institutions of family and marriage. But Shobha De’s novels do not consider family to be at the pivot of meaningful and harmonious relationships. She portrays unsuccessful marriages leading to divorce and also re-marriage.

It is noted that extra-marital affairs and illicit relationships seem to be an inseparable part in the novels of De. However, Manju Kapur refrains from mention of adultery or infidelity in her novels. Kapur’s Virmati is ostracized by her family on account of her love affair with a married man.

It is also observed that men in Manju Kapur’s novels are very possessive about their wives. But Shobha De’s male characters have no qualms about their wives straying. Abe knows about Anjali’s affairs. Ritu’s husband accepts her even after she has spent so many years with Gul. Karuna’s husband also accepts her after her illicit relationship with Krish.

It is seen that marriage is the ultimate goal for women in Kapur’s novels. However, De is of the opinion that marriage is not a necessity for woman and
may not be viewed as a means of procreation; rather one should marry only if they enjoy being married.

- It is interesting to note that in Manju Kapur’s novels daughters are considered as burden and the birth of a male child is celebrated. But De’s novels make no such discrimination.

- It is observed that Kapur emphasizes education for women as a tool for emancipation. De’s women are more glamour conscious and lead glossy lives. They are more inclined towards display of their sexuality to make a place for themselves in the male world.

- It may be noted that De’s women are autonomous individuals with independent choices and priorities. De’ Karuna refuses to remarry and decides to support her aging parents and her invalid sister independently. Manju Kapur’s women look up to the men in their lives for motivation and encouragement in their pursuits. Virmati deviates from her goal on several occasions and Astha is disillusioned by her husband’s apathy.

- It is seen that the women in Manju Kapur’s novels have no concrete dreams about career. But Shobha De’s women are extremely career-conscious. Karuna earns reputation as a script writer and Anjali becomes a successful businesswoman.

- It is also noticed that the two novelists are poles apart in their use of language and style of narration especially with reference to the topic of sex. While Kapur is comparatively restrained, De is very bold and candid in her approach.

5.4 Pedagogical Implications of the Study

Since the present research is a systematic and organized study of women novelists in India with special reference to the portrayal of women in the works of two eminent post-colonial novelists, its pedagogical implications are many. This study will help in understanding the plight of women in India as seen in the writings of
women novelists. It will give the readers an insight into the atrocities and victimization of women in a patriarchal framework. Further, the study will enable students to understand the need for emancipation of women in a rapidly changing society rife with issues on gender and identity and acquaint them with the ways to achieve it. Finally, the study will help understand the different approaches used by modern women novelists in dealing with the question of freedom of the ‘self’.

5.5 Scope for Further Research

There is a lot scope for the further research. As the researcher has worked on only two select novels by each writer, there are many other novels on which research may be carried out. The researcher has dealt with the comparative study of the protagonists’ search for ‘self’ in the select novels of De and Kapur. One can study the texts from psychological and sociological point of view. Analyzing the texts from linguistic dimension or a study on discourse analysis of the same texts could pave way for some interesting research.
Works Cited


12. Shobha De Interviewed in *Times of India*