Chapter: 2

Catastrophic Synthesis of Desire and Duty in

Difficult Daughters

The Female sex represents more than half of the population in the world but is never indulgenced as equivalent to the male sex because of the reason unknown. She has the equal mental and moral clout, yet she is not acceptable as his equivalent. In this male subjugated society different positions are consigned to her- of a daughter, a wife, a mother, a home maker and she is estimated to accept, provide, forfeit and suffer every ailing against her serenely. In the itinerary of extenuating each duty given to her, she disregards to substantiate her own self. Gender egalitarianism is primary and chief, a human right. Women are allowed to live in self-esteem and in autonomy from dread. The images of Sita, Savitri and Gandhari are always estimated to be pursued by her. But the manifest peak is that these idyllic women subsisted only in epics, they were princesses and queens and were far from the hitches and snags in the modern world in which modern woman, has no individuality of her individual person. She lives for others and breathe for others. And the situation becomes more deadly when we take it in Indian context where women must defer to her husband and make the marital home pleasant for him. Among the prolific women novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Jhumpa Lahiri; Manju Kapur is also a distinguished figure in the world of novels. Anita Myles states on feminist writers as:
Feminist consciousness has certainly given a fresh ardor and excitement to literary studies. A reasonably new perception of women in literature and the works by women writers have unveiled some of the prejudices at work in the traditional approaches to literature hitherto dominated by the masculine perspective (Myles 3).

Manju Kapur, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan and Shobha De espouse to analyze the dilemmas of besetting the Indian women in present Indian society. Her maiden novel *Difficult Daughters* won her international acclaim and common wealth prize for the best first book (Eurasia), which was published in 1998. She has focused on passage as motif; Kapur has taken deep imminent into woman’s internal havoc to ascertain a place, an individuality and identity of her own in present Indian society. For centuries, women are always back staged by patriarchal world. Literature and art - and scriptures too – consider women as a meek and docile creature. One who appears to be against this ideological of a framework of a feminine is considered as immoral. On the one side, in Hindu mythology, examples cited are of Sita, Savitri to reveal Pativarta. Her *Difficult Daughters*, a debut success won the Commonwealth Writers’ best first book prize in 1999 opening perhaps the success door for Rajkamal Jha’s *The Blue Bedspread* in 2000. The novel seems as Kapur’s tribute to her country’s celebration of 50 years of independence in which she makes her Virmati, a cult figure to fight against taboos, social and family restrictions and the man-made rules for women. Anita Myles expresses her views in this regard:
Feminism in Indian literature is essentially concerned with the representation of women in society and their corresponding position. Most of the attempts to define what it is to be a woman, assume a universal connotation in that woman is considered more as a product of cultural norms and restraints rather than as a creation of nature (Myles 1).

*Difficult Daughters* reminds with some of the situations during the independence war when the socio-political condition of the country was totally ravaged by the communal fire and partition policy. In this kind of social surrounding Kapur presents the problem or an upper-middle class urban Arya Samaj Punjabi family in Amritsar in purely imaginative reconstructions. The novel highlights the issues like the awakening of the country for freedom, women education and feminine freedom. Her women characters in the novel are divided into three generations, with their values, mindsets and relationships. The novel presents larger issues of patriarchy, which denies woman’s voice and freedom set around at the time of partition. The novelist expresses her absorbing ideas of women relationship, women sexuality, love, infatuation, jealousy, marriage, gender roles, self-discovery and other problem with intelligence and sympathy. Bhagabat Nayak says on the theme of *Difficult Daughters*: “*Difficult Daughters* presents larger issues of patriarchy, which denies woman’s voice and freedom set around at the time of partition”. He further adds “the novelist expresses her absorbing ideas of woman relationship, woman sexuality, love, infatuation, jealousy, marriage, gender roles, self-discovery, and other problems with intelligence and sympathy” (209). Basically she has presented that women had no voice to
assert their rights. But unlike the modern women she has made her Virmati more vocal for her rights, for education and economic independence. *Difficult Daughters* represents the women who try to establish their own identity and individuality in the traditional society. According to Sunita Sinha, "Kapur speaks of the idea of independence— independence aspired to and obtained by nation also independence yearned after by a woman"(161).

Kasturi, Virmati and Ida are three chief female characters whose relationships are much pretentious with the weakness of generation fissure that is another adapted tenure which depicts the conflict between patriarchal and modern woman's views. Virmati, the protagonist is a ten year old girl and the eldest daughter of a Punjabi house-hold who from the very inauguration clarifies a tale of rebellion against cavernous embedded family custom and later on thrives to certain level. However, Virmati a difficult daughter of Kasturi becomes a mother of another difficult daughter called Ida who in the same way rebellious to the customs of her mother in a more hostile and courageous mode. This succession of conflict interlaces depicts by Kapur through mother- daughter relationship. Mrs. P. Sudha Shree has observed that ...

...Virmati, the protagonist rebels against tradition. Yet she is filled with self doubt. She pleads for studying further and postponement of her marriage. She attempts suicide, when faced with prospect of marrying the canal engineer. The family brands her 'to be restless, sick and selfish' and locks her up (Shree 165).

Through her very first protagonist Virmati, Manju Kapur has dealt with the premise of travails in self-identity vise a versa socio-cultural identity. In the same novel, the second protagonist, Ida again revolts against the ways and
follies of her mother Virmati. She embarks on her search to know her mother's legacy after she dies. The novel *Difficult Daughter* opens with the anguishing voice of Ida.

The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother. Now she was gone and I stared at the fire that rose from her shriveled body, dry-eyed, leaden, half dead myself, while my relatives clustered around the pyre and wept (01).

Virmati is in an unvarying effort with the world for searching her own self in her patriarchal family. She is the eldest daughter of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash. Since childhood Virmati always was working for others. Ida encounters this by her aunts and uncle that “she never rested or played with us, she always had some work” (05). She has eleven siblings and being the eldest child, the saddle of household work and younger brothers-sisters was plummeted upon Virmati’s tender shoulders. Thus, she accomplishes maturity at a very younger age of her life. When Virmati was sixteen, her mother had conceived eleventh child. On a frozen December nighttime, she confers birth to a weak girl child, Paro. Subsequent to this delivery, her physical condition is completely become weak. Her body required potency the fresh atmosphere and the altered surroundings was suggested to revitalize her busted healthiness. So, Suraj Prakash, Virmati’s father decided Virmati to send her along with her mother to Dalhousie. Her life transforms a slight in Dalhousie, on the appearance of Shakuntala, her cousin sister. Shakuntala was an epitome of modern Indian woman. Young Virmati’s longing for higher education acutely enrooted and became stiff when she met Shakuntala, who was studying M.Sc. in Chemistry in Lahore. There was curiosity, energetic
eagerness along with the longing for modern life and higher education crops up and progressively enrooting steadily in her mind. She (Shakuntala) abandoned her family convention of marrying at a young age and selects her education over marriage. Shakuntala’s existence and her discussion prepared an effect on Virmati. She enlightens her wonderful days in Lahore to Virmati, “We travel, entertain ourselves in the evenings, follow each other’s works, read papers, attend seminars. One of them is even going abroad for higher studies” (17). She also accentuates her modern vision by declaring that: “It was useless looking for answers inside the home. One had to look outside. To education, freedom, and the bright lights of Lahore colleges” (15). Shakuntala’s existence lights an ember in Virmati’s wish for of leading an autonomous life and her pursuit for individuality. Awed by her influenced Virmati utters suddenly to Shakuntala. She wished to be like Shakuntala. She wanted to shatter the cavernous- embedded principles of integrity prepared by the society, particularly for a girl. She commences a journey of searching her own identity and foremost a self-governing life but to her, it leaves her in the middle with no accomplishment. But she stays burly.

The continuity of clash between tradition and modernity in the women of three generations form Kasturi to Ida ends both in admittance and rejection. Kasturi yields to traditions while Virmati and Ida do not succumb to follow ancient social values, customs and system and suffer maladjustment, malcontent, and male prejudice and are ruined at last. Another significant point is that female characters of Manju Kapur are more influenced with the thought of Modernity. Contrary to this, men have been still similarly ailed with male-chauvinism, averse to all progressive ideas and indifferent to any
type of such clash as they are panicked to lose their dominion as well as position in society where they have been ruling the women for centuries. The conflict of 'Tradition' and 'Modernity' is deliberately not settled by Manju Kapur as this is still a debatable and an unanswered question among academicians whether who is right and who is wrong in our society, yet it is beyond doubt that the one (women) who raises a voice against odds has to suffer and the one who surrenders will definitely has to suffer admitting it as their misfortune. One can feel satiated to notice Gur Pyari Jandial who states clearly:

It would be mistake to devalue Virmati's struggle she failed, for what mattered was to have made the attempt: what is necessary is to break the patriarchal mould and for Virmati to do that in the forties was great achievement (qtd. in Rollason : 11).

Difficult Daughters clearly hints at the strange, unmanageable behavior of Virmati and Shakuntala (but Swarna Lata cannot be placed beside them, a compassionate nationalist girl that she is). Shakuntala, a M.Sc. in Chemistry, is a girl who has tasted 'the wine of freedom' (17). The very word 'shaadi' (marriage) makes her miserable and desperate. Her mother, Lajwanti, wants her to marry and settle down. Her auntie, Kasturi says to her as under:

Hai re, beti! What is the need to do a job? A woman's shaan is in her home. Now you have studied and worked enough. And Shakuntala's pert reply comes against marriage. She remarks that her friends come from different background, and that all of them are unmarried. She then recounts the advantages of being single in life: We travel, entertain ourselves in the evenings, follow each other's work, read papers, attend seminars. One of them
is even going abroad for higher studies (15). Indirectly she suggests that marriage is an obstacle in the pursuit of 'higher studies'. This may be partly true, but the reality is that it takes away the chances of freedom—freedom from male domination, freedom from economic dependence on others, freedom from physical servitude, etc. Thus, the freedom of Shakuntala aims at self-dependence and self-reliance in personal life, highly educated as she is. In brief, she is a girl of staunch feminist leanings. But Virmati is an utter contrast to her and she is a 'difficult daughter' of another sort. Though Virmati wishes to be like Shakuntala- "I want to be like you" (15). She is certainly not like her. Her mother, Kasturi, feels the pinch of it when she bitterly says, "Really, I give my daughters too much freedom. And this is the result!" (72). The hint here is at the attempted suicide by Virmati in the canal waters. In the mother's eyes, she is stubborn, independent and ungrateful; she is too whimsical and wayward in her behavior.

Her love for Harish overpowersingly haunts her wherever she goes. She is earthly and sensuous in her emotional response to this man. Commenting on her peculiar nature, Kapur observes: "The daughter had been bad enough" (112). Such a comment is not warranted in case of Shakuntala. The major predicament in her life, however, curls from her love for the Professor. Her desire for education and craving to be like her cousin Shaku Pehnji. She droves her mode to the verge of the Oxford-returned English Professor Harishchandra. He arrives in Amritsar as a renter and neighbor to Virmati. Moreover, mere romantic love or love culminating in marriage is not all in life. One has to attend to moral, social, political and economic responsibilities too. With due regard to Virmati's romantic longings and her intense,
unwavering love for Harish, she does not carry out these responsibilities in a proper manner. Very rightly does Swarna Lata suggest to her:

Marriage is not the only thing in life, Viru. The war-the Satyagraha movement-because of these things, women are coming out of their homes. Taking jobs, fighting, and going to jail. Wake up from your stale dream (139).

But all the sound suggestions of Swarna fall on the deaf ears of Virmati. But when the persuasions of Swarna fall on deaf ears, the two friends part their company. The plain reason for this is that Swarna is made of a stronger stuff than Virmati. The love theme is dealt with at great length in *Difficult Daughters*. Whether it is old-patterned, traditional love of Virmati’s parents or of her uncle and auntie, or of her sisters, or whether it is the wayward, unconventional love of Virmati, it invariably leads to marriage will-nil. What troubles the reader of the novel is the impulsive, irresponsible love of Virmati for a middle-aged man who has a wife and two children. Her intense love for Harish shows that she is a strange ('difficult') girl. Her mother, father and grandfather are terribly upset over it. Her mother, in a furious mood, rudely remarks about Virmati (the eldest of her six daughters) thus:

... the girl was so stubborn and independent, no matter what they did for her, she wasn't grateful. When she had been young eighth-class pass had satisfied her, but her daughter thought she was too special to follow family ways (104).

The mother is quick to perceive the wayward ways and stubborn behavior of her daughter whose education has brought nothing but shame to
the otherwise prestigious Lala Diwan Chand family (which is well-known for its honest dealings in business). Her mother, Kasturi, harshly chides her in great fury:

You've destroyed our family, you badmash, you randi. You've blackened our face everywhere! Because of you there is shame on your family, shame on me, shame on Bade Pitaji! But what do you care, brazen that you are! (204).

From the traditional norms, the mother seems to be correct, but Virmati is a non-traditional girl, and a B.T. at that, who also serves as Principal of the Maharani Primary School. Since childhood, she has to bear the heavy responsibility of becoming a small mother of younger brothers and sisters. Her desire to study becomes more fervent when she meets Shakuntala, her cousin. After meeting Shakuntala, she feels the need to make her own existence and leads a life on her own terms. Ultimately, she breaks the traditions and old family system. But unfortunately, she keeps on moving like a pendulum between education and marriage. When she is compelled to marry the canal engineer, she protests and writes a letter to Professor Harish whom she loves dearly and says:

I couldn’t think, and all I heard around me was talk of my marriage. If I was to be a rubber doll for others to move as they willed, then I didn't want to live. I thought of what you taught us about Sydney Carton, and how noble and fine it seemed at the moment of his death. His last words echoed in my ears all that day. So you of all people should understand my actions! (92).
When she rejects this marriage proposal, she is treated more harshly. She just beholds each happening occurring around her and keeps mum but soon she takes her decision in spite of several unprecedented hurdles:

I am going to Lahore to do my BT. I want to be a teacher like you and Shakuntala Pehnji. Perhaps my family will also benefit by what I do, as yours has done. As for me, I never stopped learning from you, whether it was in the classroom or outside. Mati says at least I wouldn’t be at home to remind her of the eternal disgrace I am to everybody. I too, want a fresh start. It will be a great relief for me to leave this house. May be Bade Baoji will consent to come here after I have gone (107-08).

"For Virmati herself education is an escape from the reproaches of her family from and her mother's silent disapproval" (Sree174). The major predicament in her life, however, curls from her love for the Professor. Her desire for education and craving to be like her cousin Shaku Pehnji shepherds her mode to the verge of the Oxford-returned English Professor Harishchandra. He arrives in Amritsar as a renter and neighbor to Virmati. Virmati comes into contact with an Oxford-returned Professor Harish, who now lives as her neighbor, and teacher in a college of Amritsar. He has also an opportunity to Virmati as he turns her into an enlightened and educated girl. Such is his charismatic effect that soon Virmati falls in love with him and a series of furtive love meetings begins due to which the Professor starts ignoring his illiterate wife. His wife is his moral duty and his love is his need, and left with no other option, he opts for his love. By giving the educated Virmati an advantage over an illiterate Ganga, Kapur highlights the
importance of female education in this modern world. His influxes also convey a tempest in the life of young Virmati and slowly her love affair flourished with the Professor. Her relationship with the Professor releases new dominion for her. She respects the Professor’s exertion of teaching his wife. Her ambition to achieve academic knowledge takes her knotted in an affair with the Professor Harish.

Virmati’s illegitimate relationship with professor makes her life more decisive. One more phase arrives to her life when she revealed that she is pregnant and come across the reality that her beloved Harish for whom she protested against each emotional and social factor of her life is apathetic to her situation, she breaks into pieces. She herself goes for an abortion to be done. After abortion she appreciates half the meaning to be called woman and the fantasy of dreamy love. After facing much obscurity and criticism she is married to the Prof. Harish, and after her marriage with him, the subsequent phase of her life's misery begins. After passing through a series of confinements, Virmati manages to marry the Professor and settles down in his house along with his first wife Ganga. However, this much sought-after marriage does not bring any solace for her, as she is being neglected by Harish's mother and Ganga. She wants to negotiate with Ganga in washing Harish's cloth but fails. Having occupied Ganga's bed, she longs to have a share in her kitchen also, but it does not materialize. Even her sense of fulfillment is not met, as Harish still teaches her about how to act in life. Elleke Boehmer hits the crux of the matter when she say: "She thus becomes reconciled to her difficult choices only by living out a kind of modern schizophrenia, in effect a self-partition, choosing to occupy tenuously linked
locations in her new conventional role as a wife who remains a student" (Boehmer 58). Virmati definitely marries the man of her choice, but she thereby disintegrates two families. What happens to Ganga (Harish's first wife) and her children, and what happens to her parental family?- is anybody's guess. Virmati has to suffer both physically and mentally owing to her marriage with Harish; she has to suffer an abortion and a miscarriage and she is also under constant pressure from her spousal and parental families: "Virmati became better, but not less dull. One abortion and one miscarriage.....beginnings" (227).

Being a male, Professor Harish plays the role of a dominant partner in this incoherent love affair as Virmati becomes a source of carnal pleasure for him. Whenever he wants her, she is supposed to be with him, disregarding the various social and familial restrictions inflicted upon her. But when it comes to his marriage with Virmati, he takes a step back due to the fear of the same restrictions and never dares to face her parents. Harish refuses to abandon his first wife Ganga but expects Virmati to share the same bed with her. He tells her: "Co-wives are part of our social traditions" (112). Throughout this unorthodox love affair between the Professor and the girl, we find that the former always checks his movements cautiously, and leaves every bold step to be taken by the beloved. She is the one who always remains in search for control over her destiny and tries to elevate her female voice while negotiating. She turns down the proposal of marriage from an engineer-boy. Virmati's irritating action causes the death of her father, Suraj Prakash, followed by the shocking expiry of her grandfather, Lala Diwan Chand. Hearing the news of her father's miserable death, Virmati goes to her parental
house, to the great grief of her mother, who shouts at her thus: "Would your Pitaji have gone if he didn't have to live with the disgrace his daughter caused him?" (221). Not merely does Virmati destroy the parental family, she also destroys her own career as a student in Lahore. It is perhaps difficult to justify such a blind love which proves to be 'a disease' for a promising girl.

Virmati has before her the example of Shakuntala; daughter of her father's elder brother, but the latter ever inspires the former to study much and more in order to be able to carve out a dignified place for herself in society. Shakuntala is, no doubt, an independent girl of firm determination, and she completes her M.Sc. and take up the teaching assignment in Lahore and then, after riots and violence of the Partition, the job of a Principal in a girls' college at Amritsar. In her own words, "After Partition, I came to Amritsar, where I had house and a job as principal of a girls' college all ready waiting for me. I was one of the lucky ones" (250). Shakuntala remains single throughout her life, and is independent both physically and economically. But Virmati is not so. By submitting herself to Harish, she brings shame and disgrace to her parental family. Whether her physical submission is an act of cohabitation or an opening of a future prospect as a co-wife is up to the reader to judge. But I, for one, can say it with confidence that she falls short of the standard of Shakuntala in regard to man-woman relationship. She becomes rebellious for professor's reluctance to marry in spite of her frequent entreating and this enables her to understand the gratification of 'male desire'. And she doubts his love:

Now you want to prolong the situation. Why don't we get married?

You say your family makes no difference. But still you want to
continue in this way. Be honest with me. I can bear anything but this continuous irresolution. Swarna is right. Men do take advantage of women! (149).

Realizing her position in all artificial barriers she complains to Professor.

I break my engagement because of you, blacken my family’s name, a locked up inside my house; get sent to Lahore because no one knows what do with me. Here, I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wandering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace… and why? Because I am an idiot(137).

The man of apparently magnificent and somber temperament, in reality, curls out to be a flatterer, who cheaply ruined the life of Virmati to please his hunger for keeping her in dread. Even in his love letters to Virmati, the Professor fake that the sender of the letters is a girl. Eventually she ruptures the customs and old patriarchy family structure. When she is obligated to marry the canal engineer, she revolts and writes a letter to Professor Harish whom she loves extremely. Soon Virmati gets pregnant, but the joy of her pregnancy is short-lived as it turns out to be a case of miscarriage. Evidently, we see that Virmati has to suffer both physically and mentally owing to her marriage with Harish; she has to suffer an abortion and a miscarriage and she is also under constant pressure from her spousal and parental families: "Virmati became better, but not less dull. One abortion and one miscarriage….Years of penetration, years of her insides churning with pregnant beginning" (246). Unable to feel the ebullient sense of motherhood, she becomes depressed. In order to counter her isolation, Harish decides to
send her to Lahore for pursuing M.A. But after sometime, communal riots erupt in India and Virmati is being forced to hark back to Amritsar. We witness that such riots represent Virmati's enhanced personal trauma. At times, various social and communal problems encompassing India disturb Virmati's peace of mind. The fact is further substantiated by Virmati when she states: "I fret about my petty, domestic matters at a time when the nation is on trial. I too must take a stand" (239).In the home of Harish, she is not achieved her own identity but she treated as the second wife of Harish who has snatched the privileges of his first wife Ganga. She feels as an offender of Ganga. When she passes away, she is neither recognized according to her wishes nor her accent and her own individualism and self is notorious by anyone. Even her daughter (Ida) does not regard the traditions of her mother justified. She, who had not sought to be lamented in anyhow, hence through this splendid will even after death Virmati wants to keep her own identity harmless on funeral fire. The honor which she could not earn in her lifetime from both the family members and society and now after death she wanted it on funeral pyre.

Virmati discussed about her individuality and freedom, but her liberty is restricted only in betwixt her body and heart. She does not effort to exploit her education as Shakuntala did. In fact, Virmati after a number of vicissitudes ends up in her own marginalization by her traditional family and society. In a time of freedom struggle of India, the seeds of modernity are sown in the heart of Virmati who decides to study further and to go Lahore. She makes it clear in her letter to Harish: "My parents are unwilling to send me to Lahore to study further, but when a girl has been educated so far, it is
foolish to not pursue the subject, and I am so far determined that nothing should stop me." (122). The imaginative mind, longings and aspirations to soar high and high, the impressionism of new education rouses in her incessant urge to establish her own identity, have been the potent causes of the revolt against traditions and have added the clash against tradition versus modernity. Because Virmati aspired to lead different life against the norms of traditions, she succeeded in her attempt to live a life of her own. It clearly points out that modernity has defeated traditions to a great extent, but when we glance the tragic end of novel when Virmati has to suffer victimization of modernity.

When she discards this marriage proposal, she is treated more severely. She just beholds each experience happening around her and remains silent but soon she takes her resolution in spite of numerous unprecedented barriers. She even does not abide the indecisive approach of Harish, she directly rebukes him when he reveals his helplessness to marry her and suspicions his love:” Be honest with me. I can bear anything but this continuous irresolution. Swarna is right. Men do take advantage of women!” (149). When Virmati Chooses one between the passive suffering and self-assertion in Professor’s house she tries to assert her rights and responsibility. In spite of Ganga’s hostility she thinks “a woman’s happiness lies in giving her husband happiness” (110) and likes to enjoy love, sex, children and right to do odd jobs of her husband. When she thinks of being deprived of these things she broods over some sinful doings in her past life. Both Virmati and Ganga accuse each other of snatching away each others’ rights. While Ganga is more aggressive due to her possessiveness in the family Virmati become more
passive due to her civilizing influence of education, winning favor of the professor and may be due to her cultural background. On this, Vandita Mishra rightly comments in *The Pioneer*:

Kapur never permits Virmati any assertion of power or freedom. Because even as she breaks free from old prisons, she locked into newer ones. Her relationship with the professor, for instance. While it does provide an escape from a loveless arranged marriage, it is itself furtive and claustrophobic, offering only a stolen togetherness behind curtained windows. Even years of studying and working alone do not give her the confidence to strike independent roots and grow. She hovers uncertainly at the age of new world, never entering, lest the professor should call and not find her near. Eventually, marriage to the man of her choice is no triumph either. As second wife, she must fight social ostracism outside the house, and compete for the kitchen and conjugal bed with Ganga, the first wife inside it. (qtd. in Milhoutra: 169)

At the close, the tragic end of Virmati determines the idea that even in post-independence period of modernization the two poles tradition and modernity are making the man more and more pendulous. It also reminds us that 'Indian Background and Psyche' will hanker after the Modern Indian Mind, sometimes even overpower him/her though he/she may try much to peel off these multiple layers set deep on the mind and soul. Usually, the victimization gives birth to the voice of protest and if we look deep into the life of Virmati the protagonist, we will find that it is smeared with the pressure of family responsibility from her childhood that is lost in being a
young mother to her siblings'. However, the indomitable will power to continue her studies and her realization and despise of the idea of being an ideal tradition-bound housewife mirror her defiance of the established institution called marriage. "Days passed, and Virmati’s confusion grew. She would sometimes wish that - but what could she wish? Early marriage, and no education?- Her soul revolted her sufferings increased." (54). She, when writes a letter to the professor and shows her anger in a mixed tone of protest, states:

When I first heard, how I suffered, how I cried. I thought, this is the real punishment for what I have done. I had to be strong to bear the pain, silently, without anyone knowing. I did not want them to believe I was so stupid that no matter what you did, I would go on fighting with them over you (109).

Besides, Manju Kapur provides sufficient reasons for the protest of the woman. She mirrors the careless attitude of the parents who fail to cultivate human values in their daughters. On the other hand, it also relates the sad story of a woman who wishes to soar in the heaven of imagination and live a life of liberty. Thus it is not only about difficult daughter but also about difficult mothers. About mothers who do not understand their daughters, about daughters who want to break out into new paths. Virmati, at times protests against her lover and says about him, "As a man who is already married and a traitor to his wife can never give happiness. Though her agitation grows louder when she realizes the hopelessness of her illicit love with Professor and when Ganga is pregnant again, she says:

How could it be true? Man professing his love for her on one hand and making his wife pregnant on the other at this juncture decisively and
brusquely, she cuts him saying: you think you can do what like so long as you go on saying you love (86).

Manju Kapur, successfully depicts the predicament of women psychology. She has also portrayed that human character is a creation of circumstances as a woman can in chorus be feeble as well as sturdy and she successfully illustrates this eternal dilemma which all human beings struggle to conquer. Virmati has been represented a sturdy woman and she successfully comes upon all the troubles in her life and accomplishes her desires, to go for higher education despite all probabilities. She has audacity and confidence to rebel against her family, the social standards and rules and she comes out successfully in her altercation with all social forces. But the same Virmati appears very frail when she is not capable to see through the purposes of professor who is engrossed in maintaining the relationship with her only to satisfy his sexual impulses. His love to Virmati is limited only at physical plane as he never gives any clue of their marriage. Though Virmati struggles tough for her higher education and she is an enlightened woman but Manju Kapur revolves her into a feeble temperament by representing her as slave of love. After completing her B.T. Virmati returns back to Amritsar where she is offered a job of principal in the hill state of Sirmour. Though her mother disputes against the offer but eventually Virmati is allowed to join the school. This chance comes as a revolving peak for Virmati as she comes very close to her aim. She genuinely executes her job but once again her heart yearns for Professor and she writes to him who again begins his furtive visits to Virmati. Time and again Virmati elevates the question of their marriage but Professor usually seduces her through his lustful images and convinces her
while saying, "Viru, I love you more than you love me, that much is obvious,' panted the professor. It's been almost six months – I can think of nothing else and here you torture me with your questions and answers!" (174). Virmati becomes irritated on the repeated words of professor and pours out her annoyance while culpability him, "It is you who are torturing me!' She cries almost in a fit"(174). Mythili observed that:

Virmati wants to free herself from the family bondage, commits an irrevocable mistake and has to suffer throughout her life. Knowing full well that Harish is impractical, irresponsible, unethical and insincere why should Virmati bear with all his idiosyncrasies? Because with the passage of time, she comes to know that no matter what the consequences are she has to respect the traditional values and norms. No one would marry her after what has happened. The one wise decision taken by Virmati is to marry Harish. She knows that if she rejects Harish, the decision would be self- destructive (Mythili 160-161).

The life of Virmati is burdened both with the responsibilities of upholding the culture of a Hindu Punjabi family as well as nourishing the traditions and customs in an austere and upper class manner. The title of the novel is pointer to the fact that the woman who tries to raise a voice of protest in the male-dominated society is leveled with the charge of difficult daughter and has to lead a life full of trials and tribulations. Even Ida, the narrator of the novel and the daughter of Virmati says at the very outset: "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (01).Ida again narrates the bold and
assertive words of Virmati when she and her uncle went to the ghat to collect the cold ashes of her dead body:

She, who had not wanted to be mourned in any way. When I die, she said to me. I want my body donated. My eyes, my heart, my kidneys, any organ that can be use. That way someone will value me after I have gone….and, she went on, when I die I want no shor-shaur, I don’t want a chauth, I don’t want an uthala, I want no one called, no one informed ( 01).

The novel is a graphic capture of complex relationship among mothers and daughters and husbands and wives. It clearly justifies its title when we go through the comment of Dr. Ruby Milhoutra:

However, Virmati is not the only difficult daughter in the novel, her daughter Ida turns out to be equally 'difficult'. The novel begins with the description of death of Virmati. Her death though mourned, leads to something positive too. The narrator, Viramti's daughter can speak only because her mother is no more, only because she is now mentally unshackled (Milhoutra 166).

In the end of the novel, Ida says: "Now her shadow no longer threatens me, Without the hindrance of her presence, I can link into her past and make in mine" (280).The 'lack of love' is also a genuine cause of Virmati who in a man-dominated world fails to find any feeling of love and adoration the hearts and behavior of the near relatives and even in her husband. In fact, the love-lost Virmati struggles in pressing conditions of freedom-struggle before independence (1947). Besides, the novel shows the results of 'freedom' allowed to girls, who on the name of freedom, protest against the male and
society. To some extent, the novelist reflects the tendencies and the outlook of the people of the decade of fifty, and hints at the future directions of feminine sensibility, which says that "there is much to be done still" Despite so much creative efforts of creating consciousness among women, there is still long way to go. It is interesting to note that Virmati talks of her identity, her freedom but her freedom is confined only to her body and heart. She does not attempt to utilize her education as Shakuntala did. Her internal and external conflict becomes louder when her mother Kasturi's profound identification with Virmati makes her think of her daughter's thoughts of independence as sheer selfishness smacking of ingratitude. Her mother better know the norms of patriarchal society so when Virmati revolts against patriarchal values; her mother takes it to be a revolt against her own self. Virmati's illicit relation with professor makes her life more crucial. She becomes a stigma to the family reputation. She is compelled to lead a life of compromises quite in prosecution with her ideals from which she finds no escape. P. Sudha Shree says: "There is an unresolved dichotomy in the character portrayal of Virmati, the female protagonist. While she is strong willed to resist all kind of social and family pressure, she is not strong enough to stay away from professor's influence" (Shree 166). One more bolt comes to her when she becomes pregnant and finds that her love Harish for whom she revoluted against each emotional and social part of her life is indifferent to her state, she splits into pieces. She herself goes for an abortion to be done. After abortion she realizes half the meaning to be called woman and the illusion of romantic love. After much difficulty and condemnation when she is married to the Prof. Harish, the second stage of her suffering begins. In the house of
Harish, she is not considered an identity but the second wife of Harish who has snatched the rights of his first wife Ganga. She is a sinner to the backbone. When she dies, she is neither cremated according to her wishers nor her voice and her identity is recognized by anybody. Even her daughter does not consider the ways of her mother justified.

As Kapur’s modern women, Virmati is disillusioned with the ideologies of satyagraha movement, strikes, academic freedom, the war, peace, rural upliftment, mass consciousness, high-prices, congress committee, the Muslim League, anti-imperialism and realization of her lot in love as “men do take advantage of women” (138) and her suffering is a tragic irony. She realizes her predicament when “male egocentricity blinds men to the situation of women, who may be placed in agonizing circumstances on account of their relationship with men.” (Dhawan 108). Kapur’s Virmati is a new woman of colonial India and stands as a metaphor to explore the possibilities for modern women in education and economic independence who experience humiliation and disillusionment in their colonial matrix. The novelist has raised the ‘question of women’ during a political and social movement in colonial India for which:

.....We may turn a novel “feminist” for its analysis of gender of socially constructed-for its understanding that change is possible and that narrative can play in it. Feminist fiction is the most revolutionary movement in contemporary fiction-revolutionary both in that it is formally innovative and in that it helped to make a social revolution (Bassnett 1).
She is a staunch feminist and continues her ultra-committed political activates even after her marriage. She spearheads the women's front, collecting funds and donations, clothes and jewellery, for freedom-fighters against the British Empire. She takes Virmati to a meeting of the Women's Student Conference, and the lectures of various luminary women expose her lacuna, as Virmati finds them "talking in language she had still to learn" (144). In such a time, Virmati contemplates: "Am I free thought Virmati. I came here to be free, but I am not like these women. They are using their minds, organizing participating in conference, politically active, while my time is spent in love" (142). She now realizes that a woman's life is not confined to love, marriage, education, and domestic-limbo, instead she has to play a vital role in the outer world and in the empowerment of her nation. Consequently, she decides to be active in India's freedom struggle like her peer group but at the very next moment this decision is effaced by her intense passion for Harish, which again reactivates. Now she opts for her further studies as it can be "her passport to independence, not just her passport to sleeping with the Professor"(152). Unlike Swarna Lata, her cousin Shakuntala, and even her daughter Ida, Virmati fails to earn recognition in the society but she must be applauded for her valiant struggle against patriarchy and colonialism throughout the novel.

Virmati's own daughter has been a convoluted daughter for her but Virmati too demonstrates to be a difficult mother as she fails to ascertain strong place for their relation. As Ida complains, "I grew up struggling to be a model daughter. Pressure, pressure to perform day and night"(259). Though Ida too endured in her married life but she is not at all reliant on her husband.
like Virmati in reality she willingly divorces her husband and look for the new segment of her life. Thus Virmati nearby sharp distinction to Swarna Lata, her friend and her daughter Ida, both of these avow new grounds for women and understand out the midway transformation in the feminist perceptions. Ida is an educated woman, a divorcee who escorts more enlightened life than her mother used to live. Though at times she appears to be a sufferer of same uneasiness that overwhelmed her mother as sometimes she is on the threshold of confessing that “her existence as a single woman reverberate desolately”(03). She definitely is a 'New Woman', trying to discover her position in society as she knows how to esteem herself and who has the bravery and fortitude to curve the society adjacent to her determination. Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters is all about the daughters who emerge with a zeal for self recognition and self introspection. Manju Kapur realistically depicts women of three generations emphasizing difficult daughters of two generation. They set on a journey of self-discovery with their individual traits and their voyage emphasizes on the emergence of education as a modernizing force and an agent of change as the "self introspection and self-discovery help the women characters to realize their veiled inner strength. It is now that the woman emerges as the ultimate redeemer for as mother, wife, sister or daughter she contains the power of sustaining the family“(Myles 10).

Thus while concluding this chapter, the researcher has observed that in the whole novel Difficult Daughters Virmati’s craving for identity and her struggle for the same. The budding of a ‘New Woman’ in Virmati who does not want "to be a rubber doll for others to move as they willed"(85). But
though she dares to cross one patriarchal threshold, she is caught into another where her free spirit is curbed and all she does is to amend negotiation and acclimatize. She could have put her foot down saying "she will be her own mistress and relate to him with dignity or not at all. Perhaps the words were at the back of her mind, teasing her tongue with their shadowy sounds" (236) but she does not. May be her mind had gone “soft and pulpy with repeated complying” (236). Thus, Virmati emerges as the incipient New Woman who is conscious, introspective, educated, wants to carve a life for herself, to some extent she even conveys a personal vision of womanhood by violating current social codes yet she lacks confidence, self control, farsightedness and is psychically imprisoned with an underlying need to be emotionally and intellectually dependant on a superior force, Professor Harish and it is precisely this knowledge through which the patriarchy works. "Virmati blooms into a 'New woman' where she displays marvelous strength of mind in overcoming her dejection" (Shree 176).

Virmati’s desire for establishing self-identity is “a value charged, almost a charismatic term, with its secured achievement regarded as equivalent to personal salvation” (Wrong 52). Her quest for identity is “spiritual moorings and who is anxious to seek his roots” (Pathak 52). In love making and relationship both the families in the novel suffer and women characters search for self identity and desire to assert their rights. Virmati’s struggle in the Darwinian theory for existence is only for her love with the professor and “it is not a mere physical experience. The man and the woman experience a feeling which everything, including their individualities ceases to exist” (Reagacharya 140-141). Her love and marriage with the professor
has led him to intellectual and scholastic perfection. If professor’s marriage with Virmati is on his intellectual selection it appears quite Shavian in Kapur’s theory of man and superman but Virmati’s resentment with her family is quite Ibsenian like that of Nora’s in A Doll’s House. The novel evokes some concern over the problem of women in a male dominate society where laws for women are made by men in its social matrix and a husband stands as a ‘sheltering tree’ under which a woman proves her strength through her suffering. Kapur has defended this through her Virmati with an idea that:

The Emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics depends on the understanding that, in all societies which divide the sexes into differing cultural, economical or political spheres, women are less valued than men. Feminism also depends on the premise that women can consciously and collectively change their social place (Greene 2).

For Prof. Harish, Virmati is an enigma, a riddle and an essential partner for his physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual scarification. While Professor’s love with Ganga is secured and unsatisfactory, with Virmati it is platonic and based on intellectual understanding. The ‘winds of misfortune’ in both the families blow for Virmati for which she has a ‘bizarre obsession of grief’ and in a human predicament she searched for her self-autonomy. They are caught between culture and modernity, self-aggrandizement and self-realization and between self-assertion and confrontation. Virmati’s problems and conflicts are existential and her struggle for self-assertion leads her to self-alienation. Virmati, the protagonist undergoes alternative fission-fusion as her identity is by turn and divided and enlarged by various family and national problems. She "seeks human relations
that will allow her to be herself and to exercise the degree of control over her life which, as an educated woman, she knows she deserves" (Rollason 2). Virmati is born in Amritsar in a strict and elevated mentality of family, excluding for her conventional mother Kasturi, Virmati always desires for a sovereignty which is damned and ridiculed in an authentic patriarchal Indian society. "Adjust, compromise, adapt" (256) that has been required from the women by such a male dominant society where women's freedom and independence are restricted. Kapur has portrayed three generations of women characters and their relationship affected by generation gap. Virmati, the central character, is the ten years old girl and eldest daughter of a Punjabi household. Two dominant themes—love and struggle for independence appear in it, through the major portion of the novel is occupied by woman called Virmati, who is ceaselessly torn between family duty, the desire for education and illegal love for a married man called Harish, the Professor. Shoma. A. Chatterjee describes in her words, "Women are in bondage even during the period of transition in roles, in ideologies about the woman question. Besides, there is tremendous conflict that arises out of the positive and normative roles—what woman is within the present social framework"(Chatterjee 195).

*Difficult Daughters* is a literary work distinctly in the existentialistic trend and it involves a creative interaction between the writer and the social milieu. Kapur has given her feminist views as the “Indian women novelists have concentrated on women’s problem in their work and have given vent to a new approach to and consciousness of emerging phenomenon” (Pathak 147). Like her contemporary Shobha De, Kapur has represented the intimate understanding of women and their problems. The
researcher has modestly attempted to explore Kapur’s treatment of feminist issues in this chapter. Her woman protagonist Virmati is portrayed with sympathy and warmth to cloud our colonial consciousness. Her views on marriage and sex will drive the last nail in the coffin of the age-old institution of marriage and patriarchy. She makes it clear that a sexless existence or unfulfilled relationship leaves a scar on the psyche of a sensitive woman. Virmati has experienced in her frustration disenchantment in Professor’s family. Throughout the novel, Kapur has made matrimony and sex a vital subject. The novelist represents Kasturi as typical Indian mother, a symbol of Indian motherhood and by disobeying her commandments Virmati has gone through the travails of a dantesque hell made by her society. Kapur has presented her with as Prasana Sree says: "The novel depicts the triumph of the spirit, the longing to beat the odds to conquer weakness and to move forward. The force of love and life are greater and stronger than hatred and death"(Sree 178). Kapur honestly says some of the scandalous and embarrassing things in Virmati’s life. Kapur like, her contemporary feminists presents the injustice done towards her woman in the name of religion, god, morality, honesty and other taboos. She has made ‘marriage’ as a security for women, a conjugal compromise, transforming a fugitive desire into a lasting emotion for both.
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