Retrieving the Literary Past gives the detailed description of the origin of literature. It throws light on the various genres written by various writers giving realistic picture of Indian Literary past focusing on women’s contribution and a significant place to Manju Kapur. The rich literature of the learned scholars gives a glimpse of the works of the writers. A country’s tradition and culture are depicted by the writers of that country. Every country should be proud of these rich talents, who are preserving the cultures of their society. Men and women are equal while presenting and influencing the people with their sophisticated thoughts.

As every fictional writer believes, Kapur also views that literature is the spirit of culture in which we live. It is born through a complicated process as the result of the literary person’s anxieties upon the social condition in its tension with his or her cultures. Sometimes, fiction emerges as a social protest to portray the social condition at a particular time. It also viewed as the spirit of it in an age. And from there, exploration of fictional writings contributes the particular insight upon the social situation, belief system, ideology, and individual expectation as the real representation of the national culture. It is a matter of great pride that Indian women’s fiction has crossed the oceans, to be boasted especially the contribution of Kapur. She brought a great pride to Indian women’s fiction that has come into its own and is recognized as literature with a substance. Over the past few decades along with other women writers Kapur also have contributed significantly to life and literature by interrogating and exploring their own personal lives and that of other women.

Today Indian women’s fiction is dealing with multiple issues concerning self and society. Kapur is under the strong conviction that women had for long been denied access to education, equal rights, right to work and the freedom to choose. And much of women’s writing is primarily a critique of social justice and equality in particular society. It should be apparent that the narratives are personalized to any civilization which shares some of the rational, systematic, probing tendencies and also almost world-wide, inquisitiveness about society. Women’s studies have gained credibly as a subject and a mode of enquiry. In its effort to unravel the so-called private sphere, it has not only exposed the inner dreams and desires of women but has looked at the politics of gender which has denied women their rightful place in the public sphere. A common belief is that woman is capable of making choices. Her inferior state is the result of her distance from culture. The thesis tries to record that much of Indian women’s fiction probes the
ideology of gender, by placing it within a historical social reality and links it up with the issue of writing and sexual difference. Trapped in a socio-cultural milieu women suffer inwardly in the novels of Manju Kapur. For her, marriages fail due to lack of understanding between man and woman.

The socio-political atmosphere of the state and position of women are reciprocally interrelated. This connection is justifiably apparent by the novelist and accessible through the genre of novel. Women are the reservoir of focal point for writers and researchers. She exists in the form of silent victim, sacrificial mother or a household archangel catering attention from everybody. Fictional writings of many regional novelists offer us with an illustration of the above statements. The tendency of male novelists might have dealt with child marriage, suppressed life of widows, widow remarriage, women's attempts to break the patriarchal clutches and norms. Yet they failed in expressing with full throated voice.

The second chapter focuses on insightful issues present in patriarchal families which make woman throttled. Difficult Daughters is an outcome of Manju Kapur’s four years turmoil of her research at Teen Murti House Library and Nehru Memorial Museum outlined for readers of literary taste and socially concerned people. She had written the book more than half a dozen times, hoping every time it was completed but had to write again. The first experience is always painful. Though the Indian publishers didn’t show any interest in publishing her novel, Faber and Faber in England recommended some changes and Penguin India published the book.

The year 1998 is a fortunate year as it had a remarkable growth of novels in English. Mulkraj Anand’s Nine Moods of Bharata, Shiv K.Kumar’s A River with Three Banks, I.Allan Salley’s The Everest Hotel, Amit Chaudhuri’s Freedom Song, Sudhir Kakar’s The Ascetic of Desire and Manju Kapur’s Difficult Daughters were a sumptuous feast to the literature lovers. In India, book shopping is done only by the book-lovers. The dreary, dusty book stores have discouraged others but not the book-buyers. The increase in the number of book stores in metropolitan cities has promoted good reading through book promotions, literary fests and discussions.

The other attempt made to encourage the book readers was The Crossword Book Award, which encouraged the readers to focus on reading and rewarding the talented work pieces. Adil Jussawala, the novelists Kiran Nagarkar and Mukul Kesavan and academicians Malashri Lal and Meenakshi Mukherjee were the judges for awarding the prestigious awards. Allen Salley’s The
Everest Hotel won the cash prize of two lakh rupees for the year 1998 and the runners up were Difficult Daughters by Manju Kapur, The Mad Woman of Jogare by Sohaila Abdulali, Across the Lakes by Amal Chatterjee and Tivolem by Victor Rangel-Riberio. Difficult Daughters is certainly the most readable novel of the Indian novels published in 1998.

All the forms of literature are generally associated with society. Mark Schorer rightly asserted in this context ‘The novel seems to exist at a point where we can recognize the intersection of the stream of social history and stream of soul’. The Indian Freedom Struggle provided a striking basin for the literary activities in India and M.K.Naik rightly points out “the Indian novel in English was born before Independence and naturally the politics of the freedom struggle plays an important part in it” (Naik, 1984, 117). The Partition of India had indelible scars in the memories of the people. Individuals were thrown apart, families were divided and new borders and identities took their roots in the new soil.

The freedom struggle was not enjoyed for a long time as the country had undergone a bifurcation into two new horizons – India and Pakistan. Partition had its own effects on people, who were uprooted from their native soils. The trauma of partition and its repercussions had its impact on the present. According to Ritu Menon “Each new eruption of communal strife brings to mind the bitter and divisive erosion of social relations between the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs” (Menon, 1998, 3). The common people on either sides of the border became refugees on alien lands overnight. The experience of the ordinary people during the partition is too awful to express in words. Human power cannot alone describe the agent. Literary field had made a huge contribution to show the history of partition to the modern generations.

Partition is not a natural calamity but a calamity created by man which had a severe effect on the people. Partition had a long-lasting effect on the lives of the people. Many narratives were written to show the disasters which captured the sufferings of the public. As Gyanendra Pandey views the historian’s history of partition has a fresh impact on the minds of the people living in the present than the people who had a live experience of it. The partition experiences of the people are inexpressible and beyond words. Some attempts have been made in the literary field to show the turmoil of people. The massive tragedy of partition gave a path to the inventive and decisive minds in its vortex and stimulated the literary imagination in various languages.

The resultant output was in the form of dramas, poems, memoirs, short stories, and autobiographies. But only novel could gain more prominence, as it is the most nurtured form by
history in all forms of literature. The observation of Antoinette Burton rightly stands in this context. He says “The recovery of oral histories has coincided with a turn to fiction as a site of historical evidence in last ten years” (Burton, 2003, 105). Novel combines the narratives of the individual victims along with historical facts. Novel deals with historical events and also includes the characters seen around and met face to face.

A novel which has the theme as history is the mirror of the age which not only reflects the outer features but also the inner turmoil. The novelists attempt an inventive exposition of the period and also enter to the inner worlds of characters when they blend history and characters. E.M. Forster rightly examined that evidence may not support the facts. So history cannot be real than a fiction as fiction goes deep beyond the proofs available to it. The novels on Partition are indeed an incursion into the social history of times. Fiction is an important basis to recuperate the underside of the Partition of history.

As Khushwant Singh points out Partition has been an essential moment for some in defining their worldview. He confesses that he had believed in humanity throughout his life. He thought a man cannot harm the other man. He had a great admiration for the man’s internal and external wisdom to protect him and his fellow beings. But the 1947 autumn incident has changed his mind and made him to pour out his agonies in the form of letters and words. He was sure there was no question of man being tolerant towards his fellow race. If at all they had the tolerance they would never behave in such a way.

*Mera Dard Na Jane Koi* by K.S.Duggal, *Tamas* (1988) by Bhisham Sahni and *Train to Pakistan* (1956) by Khushwant Singh are the ‘Literature of Anguish’. There are a good number of novelists who have chosen Partition as the theme. Yashpal’s *Jhutha Sach* deals with the pre and post-partition politics and the lives of a few families living in Punjab. Balwant Singh’s *Kaale Kose* is a novel of communal harmony among the various religions of the pre-partition Punjab. Bhisham Sahni’s *Tamas* shows the pre-partition situations and the disturbed communal harmony. Indian English writer’s response was rather slow when compared to the writers of the other languages. Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, H.S. Gill, Raj Gill, B. Rajan and Attia Hosain have laid the platform to play upon the theme of Partition. The successors like Salman Rushdie, Sharf Mukaddam, Nina Sibal, Bapsi Sidhwa, Gurucharan Das, Mehr Nigar Masroor, Amitav Ghosh, Mukul Kesavan, Manju Kapur, Shiv Kumar and Shauna Singh Baldwin continued the tradition of Partition in their novels.
Balchandra Rajan in his *The Dark Dancer* (1958) and R.K. Narayan in *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1958) have taken the theme of Partition as a side issue while the main focus was on the Indian scene at the dawn of Independence. *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) by Manohar Malgonkar represents the origin of Partition as part of the process of national struggle for independence. Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) presents the psychological aspects of Partition. A well settled family head Lala Kanshi Ram’s life gets disturbed due to Partition and he is forced to come to India. Manju Kapur’s unveiling novel *Difficult Daughters* also transacts with the theme of Partition. Kapur’s *Home* also shows how Lala Banwari Lal’s well settled family had to move towards India. Chaman Nahal’s agony is rightly focused in his words about exile. To express his agony he used the medium of chant and asserted his nostalgia on his birth city.

Women were the worst sufferers among the people who witnessed Partition. They lost their children and husbands. They are left to pick up the scattered threads and begin a new process of remedy and exodus. Partition of India was not a simple event but it was a complex process that began a little bit earlier and had immediate as well as long term upshots. According to women writers, Partition is a process and while dealing with pre-partition historiography, they also portray the earth-shattering effects of the post partition. The immediate impacts of partition were the brutal violence and total loss of human sensibilities. There was an unparalleled migration on a massive scale and the paradox was that the people were driven out of their homeland by exigencies. Women writers portray the psychological aspect of Partition trauma like male writers and try to analyze the partition process from a philosophical dimension also. Partition cannot be treated as a simple event as nothing happens without a cause.

Anita Kumar in *The Night of the Seven Dawns* points out the result of Partition as “Our ancestors did...before we were born. They have left us the consequences of their acts, which now control and govern as; make us rebellious but helpless, angry but vulnerable” (Anita Kumar, 1979, 74). Anita Kumar is exceptional in forefronting the polished and restrained working of violence during Partition, which left the body unstained but be determined the mind and stabbed the heart forever. *The Night of the Seven Dawns* is a heart-rending depiction of the long-term ramifications of the Partition of India.

Lalita is forced to leave her son, Arun with her Muslim friends in Pakistan. Lalita comes to India and Arun grows up as a Pakistani citizen and becomes an army officer, Lieutenant Arshad-an enemy of Indian army. Through the character of Lalita, Anita Kumar points out how
women were victimised during Partition. The novel depicts the pathetic condition of women, who suffered in the hands of the rival community and their own kith and kin. Though she meets her son and wants him to live with her, he refuses and she goes into coma. She recovers after a few days but the fresh wound of separation becomes deeper.

Baldwin in *What the Body Remembers* describes the Partition’s dismal, “hope of freedom and independence, but from the fear their bodies remembered from other ages” (Baldwin, 1999, 395). Women writers highlight the palpability as well as the Partition trauma and foreground the humane aspect. Women writers articulate their experiences from socio-cultural as well as emotional point of view. The horrors of Partition haunt them and bitter experiences are still live rubbing salts in their wounds keeping them still raw. In the aesthetic venture, women writes always focus on women as victims as well as saviours. They portray their victimization along with their stamina and spirit. The view of the partition writers is to focus on the implausible melancholy and its transformation on personal lives of the common people.

In the debut novel, the Punjabi writer, Baldwin shows how she went through the Partition trauma, “It is not something that you have to make up. I don’t need to look far. It is my bone. It is what my body remembers too” (*Hindustan Times*, 16.04.2000, 2). The story is about a village girl, Roop who understands the miseries of life and marries a wealthy middle-aged Sikh land owner. The struggle between the two wives for their identity at their home and the tension existing between different communities which erupt in bloodshed following the Partition are well portrayed. Though the story starts with marital tensions, it traces the history of India up to Independence and Partition in 1947.

Unlike the above mentioned women writers, Manju Kapur’s debut novel also covers a part of Partition. As in the novels of Bapsi Sidhwa’s *The Crow Eaters* (1978), Anita Desai’s *Clear Light of the Day* (1980) Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* (1998) handle Partition as the only backdrop of the novel. Manju Kapur’s novel *Difficult Daughters* reflects India’s struggle for Independence, communal commotion carnage and slaughter of partition like the novels of Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*, and Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* etc.

*Difficult Daughters* is written on the time period of partition of 1947, the communal riots fury in Bengal and Punjab. Gopinath, Virmati’s brother had a bitter experience of the traumatic incidents of the partition. It is a highly disastrous event where the compartments were filled with dead bodies, with scattered organs everywhere. A river of blood flowed from all the open ways
in the compartment. The doors and the windows were crashed. The entire scene had a terrific everlasting impression on his brain that it stayed afresh in his mind.

Joya Chakravarty asserted that Kapur wanted to name her novel as *Partition* but she changed it according to the suggestions of the publisher. The novelist gives a picture of holy places of Sikhs ‘The Golden Temple’, ‘The Company Baag’ in Amritsar and Lahore. She also reports Gandhi’s Satyagraha movement and partition as the backdrop in her novel *Difficult Daughters*. The readers acquire knowledge about the Congress Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Mahatma Gandhi ji was arrested and was unconditionally released on 5th May, 1944 at 8.00 a.m. from jail for therapeutic treatment. During this period, women were also partaking in this movement like the characters of this novel, Shakuntala and Swarnalata. The novel represents traditional women roles like Kasturi, Lajwanti and Ganga. The novelist narrates that how 1946 saw disturbances all over the country. Muslim leaders did not want separation but the concept of Pakistan puffed up day by day.

Though many people and leaders were not interested at the idea of having Pakistan as an Independent nation, the idea has deep rooted in the minds of the general public. All the civilians of different religions were disturbed. None of them wanted to have Pakistan. Many of the leaders were also against the concept of Pakistan. One of the eminent personalities wanted to be united and stay under one roof. The others wanted to continue the legacy of unity which was granted by the Mughal Emperor, Akbar. But in spite of these, there were continuous disturbances in the form of strikes in all the government organisations. Manju Kapur gives one more clue about partition through Swaranalata Sondhi: “When they received the worried, secret warning from a Muslim friend they too hastily departed. They had seen too much arson, looting, and people drunk with the lust of killing to feel exceptions. As it was, they were hanging on by a long emotional thread that needed but one direct threat to snap” (136).

Manju Kapur, a contemporary feminist writer is precisely the salt of the earth. Her place as a novelist in Indian writings is beyond doubt unsurpassed in the female writers’ record. The present chapter on *Difficult Daughters* (1998) deals with her initiation of the novel for which she amazingly won the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1999. Manju Kapur, who was a professor at Miranda House, outlined her protagonists as educated and working women striving hard for their individuality in the male-dominated society. This novel focuses on how the patriarchal system was prevalent in post-independent India.
The novelist mentions the conflict between tradition and modernity. Virmati, Shakuntala, Swarnalata and Ida are the model exemplaries of new woman. They break the limitations of established values and family customs. This novel depicts three generations of women Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. Their relations are not cordial with their mother. As Dr. Shaleen Kumar Singh has put forward Kapur holds a good vision on the struggle between the past and the present. Her protagonists are trapped under domination and also had to bear the differences between the generations.

Kasturi, Virmati and Ida are three chief female characters whose relationships are much affected with the ailment of generation gap that is another modified term for conflict of tradition versus modernity. Kasturi acts in accordance with societal norms of patriarchal society. She also compels her daughter Virmati to swallow the family tradition. But Virmati does not care the traditional terms and turns a deaf ear to her mother’s advice. She was a difficult daughter to her mother, while her daughter was a difficult daughter to her, as Virmati also expected the same from Ida as Kasturi had expected from Virmati.

Nobody will differ to view Satish Kumar Harit’s opinion on Indian society is profoundly filled with traditions. In one way or the other these traditions lead to female repression and oppression. The institution of marriage teaches her to be acquiescent and forbearing. Though her entire vision is to take care of her family, she is not even regarded as a part of her family, but is considered as an outsider than an insider. When Ida’s husband drives her to the removal of an embryo from the uterus, she gets divorce from him.

She is a lonely woman without a family and individuals to call as her own. Ida breaks a disastrous marriage. Here her condition is very feeble. She draws a line of latitude between her father and her husband. While Virmati admits her husband’s covetous attitude but Ida does not tolerate her husband’s chauvinism. Manju Kapur aptly comments about Ida’s high regard towards her father. For Ida, her father was an ideal man. Naturally she expects a similar tendency of her father from her husband. Therefore, there is no wrong in Ida’s direction of thinking.

The novelist contrives the story of the soreness of horrible partition, the birth of a new nation, struggle against false notions, women’s liberation against orthodox society, unwed pregnancy, abortion, miscarriage, downhearted and so on. She displays the Indian scenario. After her mother’s death, Ida plans to make a visit to her ancestral home in Amritsar. She discloses the history of her parents through her kith and kin. She actually wanted to know one side of the coin.
of her mother’s life but her relatives have shown her the second side, may be the dark emotional corners of her mother.

Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* knows that the expectations in orthodox families are very simple, marriage, family and children nothing else than that. Virmati always remembers her mother’s intention behind bringing up a female child. Her mother feels that the ultimate destination of a girl’s birth is marriage. Kapur’s women are compelled to think of nothing but marriage as it seemed to Virmati that her parents and siblings had nothing else to be bothered other than her marriage. Kasturi belonging to the first generation of the difficult daughters was too orthodox in her thoughts and had a fixed formula for a female child that a girl was born to please her in-laws. Maybe her brought up made her to make up such a mindset. Though they send her to school, they were damn sure that it is not going to be of any help to her. Does she need a degree to look after a family?

The elders in the family would be happy if they got their children married to a right person at the right time. The family’s reputation lies on the children’s marriage. Perhaps this deeprooted reason made traditional Kasturi feel distressed at Lajwanti’s daughter’s condition. She wants her daughter to know the agony of a mother. She didn’t want her daughter to compare to her sister, Shakuntala as she was the only daughter of her parents. Can anyone understand the agony of the parents? The daughter may not be traditional, but what about her mother? Should she also be blamed by the family and the society? May be Virmati should not take the chance of disgracing the family’s honour.

With reference to her family background Virmati knew the fact that her parents are not giving any respect to her internal emotions. Their first desire was to dispose her in the name of marriage and compel her to face the society boldly. Her marriage with Harish brought her relief than happiness. She was happy that she was free from the guilty consciousness. She could now at least answer to the people who were asking about her marriage that she could achieve her love. She can come out of the secret life she was experiencing for the past few years. Though she had parents it was his friend’s parents who became the elders for her marriage.

Manju Verma has aptly pointed out that generally the relationship between a man and a woman should be bonding and affectionate. In the place of a good relation we see that one tries to dominate the other, the sensitive love disappears between them causing hardships to the individuals and the family. Going through the novel, it becomes clear that Harish was behind her
success and sorrow. She could fulfil her dream of attaining a degree, working as a teacher and winning the love she was yearning for many years. But her marriage was interwoven with problems and humiliations. The only lesson she learnt was “Adjust, compromise, adapt” (256).

According to this novel, the relation between Virmati and Ida is not meritorious. When Ida mentions in the very first line that she didn’t want to be the replica of her mother she clearly states that there is no amicable relation between them. She traces her mother’s life from past to present. The story begins with the cremation of Virmati (Ida’s mother). Virmati did not want any formality after her death and wanted to bestow the organs. Possibly, any person will remember me after using my organs. Virmati’s equation of life was more balanced with sorrows than happiness. May be the coldness of her family members made her to be far from them. So she wanted to lead a simple life. May be she even wants to pay penance for her life? So she decided to donate her organs.

It is a well known fact that Patriarchy clearly points out the male domination towards the female subordination. The title and money are inherited by the male lineage which is termed as the opposite female equivalent is matriarchy. Patriarchy had widespread into social, legal, political, economical and different cultures dominating and suppressing the opposite genders. According to the pre-historic evidences the hunter-gatherers were egalitarian, meaning all people are equal and deserve equal rights. The development of patriarchal societies developed after the end of the Pleistocene era roughly 4000 BCE. According to Aristotle women were inferior to men. Their duty is to produce children and obey their husband. So male domination is not an artificial phenomenon but has risen naturally.

The Greeks influenced their theory of patriarchy to the entire world. The theorists in the 16th and 17th centuries had the same opinion as Aristotle concerned the place of women in society. It was in the 19th century; the patriarchal interpretation of Christian society was accepted. Elizabeth Cady Stanton published *The Woman’s Bible*, which included the feminist reading of the Old and New testaments. Feminism doesn’t accept patriarchy as it is an unfair method and oppressive to women. Many sociologists rejected the biological explanations of patriarchy and challenged that communal and cultural conditioning is primarily responsible for establishing male and female gender roles.

Lala Diwan Chand’s family is a good example for patriarch’s dominated family in 1940s. Virmati, the daughter of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash was striving for her own independence in
Lahore amidst the women struggling for country’s independence. Virmati, the surrogated mother of her ten siblings could not receive the love she longed for. Her childhood was entirely passed in the service of her siblings as her mother had become sick due to continuous child bearing. A mother can only foster love upon her children as father will always be busy with his outside physical exertion. Unfortunately Kasturi could not think of her daughter’s internal emotional feelings as she herself was pre-occupied with her children. She only expected Virmati to be dutiful, responsible and matured towards her brothers and sisters.

It was quite natural for Virmati to expect love from her mother, but Kasturi pushed her away. She wanted Virmati to be a machine rather than a human being. She didn’t want her to expect any sort of lively communication between them. When she was seventeen and was preparing for her FA exams, she was sent to Dalhousie to look after her mother and little sister Paro. They did not give any importance to her education or feelings. At Dalhousie she was influenced by her sister Shakuntala, daughter of Lajwanti and Chandra Prakash. She admired the independent celibacy of Shakuntala Pehnji. When she wishes to join her sister in Lahore for higher studies and expresses her inabilities, Shakuntala encourages her by saying she need not worry to be independent. Women are travelling fast into modernity. They have the liberty to pursue their education or fight for the country on their own accord.

The seed was planted right into the mind of Virmati. But when it developed into a plant it could not grow into a healthy plant, rather had grown into a plant with many diseases. Shakuntala finished her M.Sc, participated in seminars and conferences, travelled long distances and participated in freedom movements in Lahore. She was totally free from the emancipations of married life. She had a clear vision of her future. But unfortunately Virmati, being the eldest was not well guided. She was trapped by the Oxford returned Professor Harish Chandra, a married man. In a state of desolation she accepted his love and fought for her independence throughout her life ruining the family’s fame. She even committed suicide, but neither her grandfather nor her father questioned her. Kasturi was often back of her rebuking for the sins she had committed. If she was treated in a different way at least after her suicidal attempt, may be if her mother could have fostered affection and had tried to motivate her in a proper way, her life could be turned in a different way.

Virmati was sent to AS College. There the professor fell in love with her and she had no chance other than accepting his love as she was already craving for maternal love and also
aiming for her independence. Her fortune was also not favourable to her that her marriage with Inderjeet got postponed two times as one of his relatives died. She gave importance to her family traditions and tried to bid goodbye to the professor after her marriage proposal. But he didn’t give her a chance, pondering love on her and the effect was she tried to talk to her mother that she was not prepared to marry Inderjeet as she wanted to study in Lahore. She was in turn brutally hit by her mother. She feels may be god has chosen her to punish for her karmas. Who can save her?

It’s quite normal for a mother to expect her daughter to be sent to a traditional and well settled family. Every mother thinks the happiness of her daughter lies in the house they have selected, as they are more experienced and thoughtful than the younger generations. It is true to a large extent but with the modernization and female education creeping into the minds of youngsters they need to be given importance before a choice is made for their life discussing the various aspects related to their security and comfort. Kasturi’s mother was frightened when her daughter was caught praying to the picture of Jesus Christ, which ultimately led to the child’s marriage thinking she was going to be spoiled by the education. But Kasturi’s uncle had saved her from the child marriage, supported by her father. She was well trained in the Arya Samaj Bhavan, in the rituals like Sandhya and meditation in addition to her reading, writing and balancing household accounts.

Her mother, unlike other typical mothers thought her daughter’s final destination was building a concrete home. So she trained her daughter in cooking, sewing and stitching. Kasturi, who was also fond of reading confined to a furtive reading at night. The family had the effect of Swami Dayanandaji. So when her mother was against showing Kasturi to Suraj Prakash, her father Lala Jivan Das convinced his wife about the modern generations. Human being’s attitude is quite confusing sometimes. They want to send their daughters to an affluent and traditional family hoping a bright future for them, but at the same time they don’t allow them at least to have a look at their would-be partner. Infused by the thoughts of Swamiji, Lala Jivan Das convinces and allows the young man to see his daughter, Kasturi.

Kasturi’s father had a modern positive approach towards his daughter, though they were twenty years behind Virmati’s generation. But unfortunately when Virmati committed suicide, she could not receive any response from her father in the car at least a small gesture that she had received from her grandfather. Suraj Prakash was also a good father but failed to understand the
independent nature of his own daughter, who had crossed the family limits by loving a man, who was already married and had a child. When the entire family was back of Virmati for finding out the reason, he was concerned about his daughter and tried to stop his family members by saying perhaps she was not in a position to let out her problems. He also feels that may be as parents they were not too close to the children. That could be the reason she failed to approach them. So he pacifies her to let out her inner struggle.

Virmati said as an excuse that she wanted to study but Lajwanti expected that the girl was hiding something and finally Virmati told that she didn’t like the boy and they locked her in a room and Indumati was married to Inderjeet. The agonized mother could lock her in a room but could not find out what was happening to her daughter in the room where she continued to share her agonies to the professor as the members of her family failed to understand her. They in turn wanted to allow her back from godown if she will forget the professor. Virmati’s parents could not understand the humiliation burning in her heart. Her identity was totally ignored. The only urge of her parents was that she should agree to marry. She was moved from godown to terrace which could not bring about a change in her life. Virmati’s mother was an archetypal mother of a true Indian tradition, who was happy when she heard Ganga; the professor’s wife was pregnant. Her happiness could be seen in the words “Poor thing, it is not her fault she has been taken in. She is so simple. Once she is out of here, the situation will improve” (108).

Poor mother she could not understand a simple thing. She had to notice two things, the first one is she should have spoken to her daughter directly about the consequences of trusting a married man with kids and secondly she should have diverted her mind far from her disturbances, indulging her in a caring environment. Failing in both the aspects, Kasturi had to bear the black spot on the reputation of her family. She always thought that education has spoiled the child, but she never had time to think over the internal conflicts of independent status that had deep rooted into her daughter’s mind. If the disease is diagnosed it would be rather easy for a medical practitioner to cure the patient. The cure should not be a speedy recovery which just heals the diseased part, but it should heal the roots which will never again generate the problem. An amicable understanding should be prevalent between a mother and a teenage daughter. Kasturi tried in her own ways to bring about a change in her daughter’s life. She made a final attempt to make her daughter realize the reasons for her stay at Lahore. She wants her
daughter to recognise the importance of her life. She may not be serious about her family, at least she should think of herself. Otherwise she would be isolated from the family and society.

Kasturi always felt that god has given her Virmati only to punish her. When she takes Virmati to join the BT course in Lahore and Shakuntala asked if she was not going to regret for sending Virmati to Lahore, she painfully said “Beti, what is there to hide from you? What else is left this wretched girl but study?” (113). She compared herself to her daughter, feeling that Virmati was not all satisfied with what was given to her, while on the other hand she was quite satisfied with her eighth class education. But sure there is a gap of decades between the mother and the daughter. No doubt the thoughts of women have changed as they were exposed to modern education. Kasturi went to meet the principal to take care of Virmati keeping her past in mind.

Here she could not recognize that her daughter might feel that she was still doubted by her mother and considered as a black sheep in the family. Sure, she was compos mentis but forgot that she was making her daughter a prisoner in the eyes of the new institution. Unaware of the things that had happened to Virmati in Lahore; her parents were too conscious about the girl’s safety and decided to send her to Sirmaur, a small Himalayan town. Her father assured her mother that it was the right place for her to be far from him “Let her go, said Suraj Prakash cleverly. ‘Here she is still too near him. We can never be sure. Such an influence he had, and may still have…” (18).Virmati, a girl of gentle nature and humble character could not have deceived her for the sake of independence.

Virmati’s daughter, Ida says she should be certainly different from her mother. What is that her daughter doesn’t want to be like Virmati? Virmati, a sensitive character, rightly termed as difficult daughter had undergone many agonies in her life. She had none to guide her when her thoughts were misleading her. She was an intelligent girl but could not excel well in studies because of her excessive burden in her house-hold chores. She loves and respects her family but could not stand to their morals and values in time of need. Her agony is deeply felt by the readers that she was helpless in many situations. She was influenced by Shakuntala Pehnji at a young age failing to build up her own vision. She built castles in the air for individual independence failing to keep her family in mind the way Shakuntala Pehnji did. Certainly there was a difference between them.
Lajwanti was unhappy about Shakuntala because she refused to marry sacrificing her life for the sake of the country without harming the family’s reputation. Kasturi was unhappy because Virmati was seduced by a married man having children, abandoning a good match, as she herself exclaims to the professor by disgracing the family’s honour. Virmati was shown as a matured character but she doesn’t stand the same for a long time. She knows well that the professor was not true to her as he hides that his wife is pregnant at which she bids goodbye to him by accepting the punishment for what she had done.

As the professor points out truly she is a myopic. Virmati feels happy at her new beginning in Lahore. She planned herself to live according to the moral standards of her family, but her family especially her mother failed to understand it. Her family would accept her only if she tried to marry and settle like a house-wife, which her mother was always dreaming of. She should forget her independence. She was a sensible girl who didn’t like to share anything about the professor to her cousin, when she herself wanted to wipe it out from her memory.

Virmati one way started her second phase of life in Lahore planning to be what she actually wanted to be until the professor again entered her life. She was fascinated by Swarna Latha’s ideologies towards freedom struggle. When she attended the Punjab Women’s Student Conference, she could clearly make out the difference between the women in the conference and herself. Those women were politically active and engaged themselves in political struggle, while she was wasting her entire time on love. Her thoughts and struggles were only for a short interval of time. She soothed herself saying that those large places were not hers and she should be satisfied with Harish’s love. Her patience is clearly shown in the hostel, when medicines were given to her that could bring about an immediate relief. She refused to take the medicine and continued nature cure bearing the pain silently without even informing it to her parents.

Virmati wanted a secured life from the professor. She wanted him to marry her but the professor brings out his own family problems. She felt sorry as he had not listened to her parents. She was punished because of him. She accuses herself for her eccentric behaviour. She blames her fate. She curses her position. She lost her entire life. She was in between the devil and the deep sea. But what is the reward she received? The gift was to be locked in a godown. She acts bravely when she recognized that she was conceiving. She doesn’t even share it to Swarna Latha. She silently bears her agony trying not to disgrace the family’s honour. She hoped Harish would marry her at this juncture, but he had gone to his hometown.
As she has become independent in thinking and living in Lahore, she could solve her problem on her own without letting the cat out of the bag. But her problem of marrying Harish continued even when she became a principal in Sirmaur. Here she could completely enjoy her independence as an administrator and teacher in Nahan. When the professor visits her she carefully arranges his stay in the prime minister’s house as the rules were very strict in Nahan especially concerned to the discipline of the administrators. She becomes cynical after she heard that Swarna Latha got married. She thinks of her own status and writes to Harish.

Harish comes to meet her and she pours out her torment before him. It is true in places like Amritsar, and in bigger families like Virmati, nothing can be hidden from the public attention. People are more interested to know about the marriage that has broken up and the reasons behind it. Would they leave her? Neither she nor her parents know the answer, such a deplorable situation. Yes, she was right, unless wed legally how can she say about her relation to others. What can she say to people who ask her about her marriage as she had already begun her career as a teacher? She wanted to lead an independent and secured life with her partner. But what’s wrong in marrying her? She was trapped by Harish’s love and affection towards her.

Harish admired her as she was everything for him. He was happy that he could find a suitable partner as his first wife Ganga, whom he married at the age of three was an illiterate woman and not suitable for him. Virmati could suffice his craving for a pretty and well-educated woman to share his concerns and feelings. When Virmati thinks of her family and tries to move away from him, he ties her with his love. His love was beyond the heights for the poor girl to free herself from him. When the professor met Virmati in Lahore, the first thing they talked about was his son. He pleaded Virmati not to show anger on his innocent son. Virmati is not an imprudent woman. She blindly followed the professor in all matters. She knew pretty well that men convince women until they get what they aim for. Once they get it, they forget it forever and ever.

Virmati knew the reality that it was not possible for a man to throw away his children simply for the sake of love. But she was completely drowned in the river of love that it was difficult for her to be saved. When she was sent away from Nahan, she finally decided to move to Shantinikethan. Fortunately the trip to Calcutta had favoured her at last. The train to Calcutta was late for about seventeen hours and she had to stay in Delhi in professor’s friend’s house. He was the person who could understand her situation and convinced Harish to marry her. Finally
the marriage took place in Delhi. Virmati, the eldest of the house, born and brought up in a rich family amidst her own siblings had to marry like an orphan not having parents on either side.

Now the third phase started in Virmati’s life as a second wife to Harish. It was not easy for Ganga to digest it, as in Indian tradition a wife expects her husband as her sole property. It was Kishori Devi, mother of Harish who thought as a useless argument with her son about this matter as it was already depicted in his horoscope and they have been experiencing it for the last five years. As an experienced woman she could only console Ganga to accept her fate though it was painful to her. Her motherly advice though seems to be a reality, was not sufficient to control Ganga’s grief. She says to Ganga the ultimate truth of life. Nothing is in our hands nor would be in our hands. We cannot lead our life according to our wishes. What we can do is perform our duty sincerely. We cannot even expect anything in return. Our future is designed permanently. It cannot be erased. We need to have strength and courage to accept the God’s decision.

As expected, Virmati had to face a hostile environment around her. No one was ready to talk to her or treat her as a part of their family. The only love she could gain was from Harish. She could make out the difference in the attitude of Harish. Now he is much bothered about his mother, wife, sister and his kids and their internal emotions. Virmati was hurt when he told her to adjust with the tea as he did not want to trouble them in their anguish demanding for the things she wanted. She was not even allowed to serve or work for her husband as the wives normally do. Virmati was humiliated in her own house when she went to meet them. As she had anticipated none of them gave her a warm welcome. She was completely alienated from her family on the grounds of worsening the family’s reputation.

Virmati is truly an introvert who could bravely bury her feelings without expressing them to her husband. She never let out the humiliation that she had undergone in her maternal house, as she knew he would be taking things rather in an easy manner. Her father’s death leading to her grandfather’s death also could not make her to enter the family. She was completely away from the minds of her family members. She was not invited to her brother’s marriage. None in the house cared about her except Paro, whom she met often. She was craving for the love of her father and grandfather, but both her father and grandfather died without forgiving her. She was accused at the death of her father and grandfather. Poor sensitive girl could not bear the anguish and lost her pregnancy in the third month. She knew that she was punished for her deeds. She had robbed Ganga’s and her children’s life. Even though Kishori Devi tried to protect her from
anguish eyes, she was punished. The same humiliation continued in her house. She was treated as a gaandhi lady, the children, Guddiya all refused to come to her.

In spite of living with people, she was isolated except when she had her husband with her. She could gain independence and solace only when the poet came to stay with them for a month. When she was sent to work in a school as a principal, she gained independent strength, which made her a rebel. She used her husband as a weapon, made him to bring sweets for her and gave them to others. She wanted her husband to lose his temper on his mother and Ganga. Her ultimate aim was her happiness; she did not care for others. As she became more stubborn, her husband decided to send her for further studies to Lahore, which he thought would bring about a change in her attitude. Ganga was also happy as she felt that the woman would be away from her family.

When Virmati was sent to Lahore for her higher education in 1944, the country was facing many problems of partition. She was as usual isolated in Lahore staying in Harish friend’s sister, Leela’s house. She met Swarna Latha, who was still active with the activist’s movements. No change had been observed in her married life. She urged Virmati to join against the Hindu Code Bill. But Virmati was reluctant as she was married and not knowing what Harish would think of her. So Swarna Latha left her. She did not like to go to Amritsar in the weekends and enjoyed with Kiran and Kaka, the progenies of Leela wandering in the city of Lahore. Even though Harish could not accept this he left it, as both of them got a chance to be happy in Lahore once again fresh wiping out the unhappy situations. She could also listen to the political talk about the affairs of war between Harish and Syed Hussain.

Women become puppets in the hands of men. Ultimately it is the man who wins over woman. Virmati was happy in Lahore and she did not want to disturb her happiness and tranquillity and return to Amritsar, but she was forced to as she was forced to do her MA in psychology though she was not interested in it. Things never remain constant forever. The rise in the prices, the war to be ended shortly made the things worst. Kishori Devi who was a cautious mother tried to relieve her son from the additional burden of herself and her daughter as he was already having his own family added to a wife studying and staying in Lahore.

Harish couldn’t accept this and he felt it was high time that Virmati should complete her MA and return to Amritsar. He expected that his wives should know what to expect from each other by this time. As usual Virmati was hurt because she was always the wife for him and
Ganga was only a pronoun. She could not tolerate the idea of equating both of them. She suspects about their intimacy where upon Harish makes her to understand it was rather difficult for him to continue his running after her all the time though he was the person who sent her to Lahore for further studies. He exerts his male dominance by arguing with her. He wants her to adhere to himself and to his family. She finds solace in the company of her well-wishers. But he was afraid that she may become too arrogant with her excessive freedom.

The struggle for freedom, the fight between the Hindus and Muslims in Bengal has become so aggressive that the effect fell on Virmati. It spread to Amritsar and Ganga and her mother-in-law along with her children moved to Kanpur and expected Virmati and Harish to join them later. Though Ganga was reluctant to proceed she was forced to do. Harish knew Virmati would not accept to go to his hometown but his male ego comforted him by pacifying that ultimately she should do what he says. There is a comparison between Virmati and the country’s freedom struggle. When India was trying for independence struggling all the way from foreign rule, Virmati was also struggling for her independence from her husband’s family. She wanted a life free from Ganga with her husband and the dream was fulfilled at last.

When Amritsar changed, Virmati also changed and returned home to start her life with Harish, while Ganga left the house. As the partition of the country was decided Virmati’s and Ganga’s partition was also decided. As Punjab was separated, Ganga left the house and Virmati had her own in Amritsar. As the country was free from Britishers, Virmati was free from Ganga, and now she was happy as she had attained the expected independent life. Even her mother called upon for her to serve the needy. She was so independent in her decisions that she donated Ganga’s, her mother-in-law’s, Guddiaya’s, Chhotti’s and Giridhar’s dresses to the relief camps.

After India became an independent country, Harish was offered a principal ship in one of the colleges of Delhi University and Ganga was permanently forced to reside in Kanpur. Virmati had a child Ida, the narrator of the story whom she actually wanted to name Bharathi but once again Harish’s male domination won by naming her Ida. Virmati as a mother wanted Ida to settle having her own family, the same wish as her mother had in the past. Ida a self-centred, divorced, childless was not like her mother. She was anxious to know about her mother’s life, which her mother failed to tell her, when she was alive but she gathered the history from her mother’s friends, relatives, who did not want to share as she was no more. But Ida was very particular about it and could finally understand the miseries in her mother’s life.
Virmati was much worried about the devastating marriage of her daughter. She was happy about Prabhakar, but unfortunately the marriage turned to be a fiasco leaving Ida alone and childless. As Ida remarks what Kasturi had done to Virmati, Virmati had done the same to Ida. Though Virmati suffered throughout her life in the hands of her mother’s uncontrolled domination, she wanted her daughter to follow the footsteps of her. She too wanted the remote control to be in her hands. Virmati chose Harish herself, Ida chose Prabhakar. It’s clearly the education as Kasturi often mentions brought about a change in the attitudes of Shakuntala, Virmati or Ida.

Kasturi was happy at her mother’s training in culinary, stitching and maintaining household activities. She thought they helped her a lot in her marital home to serve them as it was the only responsibility for her. Even Ganga was happy until Virmati entered her husband’s life. She was a good house wife, who cooked, served and maintained the family accounts. She was not at all recognized by her husband stating that she was an illiterate lady. But how can her services be ignored? As Virmati said all the tidiness in his appearance was due to Ganga. Even though she was not educated she could understand her husband’s feelings and could act upon accordingly.

When Virmati tried to commit suicide and left Tarsikka, her husband hurried to tell her the matter. She was quite intelligent to ask him “What is she telling you that her mother doesn’t already know?” (78). She could anticipate her future, so she prays to God to save her life when he receives a telegram from his poet friend asking him to start immediately. Her life was pitiable; she was a wife, who could not achieve anything in spite of her gentle services to the family. She could not fight for independence as she was not educated. For her, cooking and serving her family were sufficient and also made her happy. She feels if her husband had cared for her as he had for Virmati, certainly her life would not have been in the way as it was now. Her miseries were answered by her daughter Chhotti, who wanted to enter the administrative services to look after her mother and grandmother.

As the entire novel runs over patriarchy, Harish stands as a good example for patriarchal rule. He was very lucky as Manju Kapur says because the things were always favourable to him. He came as a tenant to Lajwanti’s house and trapped innocent Virmati. His influence was so strong that Virmati’s family could not do anything to keep him away from her. He loved Virmati, but whenever the proposal of marriage came he was just like other men. He was brave enough to express his feelings and love to Virmati, made her cancel her engagement but when it came to
marriage he was taken aback by keeping his family and society in mind. He soothed himself by accepting his horoscope of having two wives. When Virmati disagrees about their relation before marriage and urges him to marry her in Lahore, he cleverly escapes blaming others. He couldn’t agree to the fact. He blames her and accuses her friends for poisoning her brain. He is not an isolated human being. He belongs to a society and should care for them. He has none to support him. On the other side, he should also think of Virmati, as well as his family.

Is it true that a well-educated man does not know all these? He loves her; he knew very well how to pacify her. He is a good son, teacher and a brother. But as a father, as Virmati doubts how could he say he loves her more than his children who are nothing to him than Virmati. He shows his male domination in his house. Ganga being an illiterate accepts whatever he says, but Virmati fights for her independence, he thinks of her happiness first but later does what he intends for. In choosing the subjects in MA or naming her daughter, his decision was final.

When Virmati dared to question his attitude on marrying her, he blushed for her provoking attitude to question him. His male ego did not allow him to bear that. He was also aware of the consequences and miseries in second marriages. When Virmati refused to return to Amritsar after her second year MA course, he did not say anything but thought that she should teach her a lesson. He always insisted upon her mingling up with his family, even though she was not accepted by them. Virmati was given utmost importance which he lacked it to give to either Ganga or his children. He loved Virmati that she was happy with him and also expected a son-in-law with the same qualities.

Virmati was educated, charming and was best suited to him. But he failed to recognize the duties rendered by his wife, whom he married without his knowledge at the age of three. As his mother says she is not a show piece, a human being with emotional feelings that she should be respected by him. He was a true lover, he always thought of Virmati and tried to see her happy. There is a difference between the generations to live and follow their family traditions according to their will. Kasturi, Virmati and Ida belong to the same family but are from different generations. Virmati was a complicated daughter to Kasturi and Ida was a complicated daughter to Virmati.

Kasturi had suffered throughout her life with Virmati, maybe she was not having any problems with the rest of her daughters nor did the author focus much on their problems. Indumati accepted the match of Inderjeet and saved the reputation of her family. She was happy
in her marital life. May be she was not much affected by the term independence or male domination as Virmati had. Gunvati followed her foot steps and no regrets were found even from Gunvati. Virmati also suffered from the attitude of Ida but not to the extent of her mother. Here the main reason was Ida married Prabhakar and it was the first marriage and she was in the modern society, where people could better understand the terms of love and affection.

Virmati married a man, who had his own wife and children. So there was a great suffering between the two families. Virmati’s family is answerable to the society. When Virmati found that she was conceived before marriage and did not want to reveal it and disgrace her family, she wanted to solve the problem herself. She went to meet Kanihya as he was the only person, who could help her. Though Kanihya parents talked to her normally, the minute she left Kanihya’s mother commented on Virmati “Those people don’t know how to keep their daughters in order. Just think! Virmati came here to meet Kanihya! Alone! No brother, uncle, cousin, nobody. So shameless! The poor boy must be protected from her. Are you listening?” (165).

Kanihya’s father could not find anything wrong in it. But Kanihya’s mother, who was brought up in a male dominated society could not accept the simple logic of a girl meeting a boy like her brother, familiar to one another. Even at the death of her father people who came to attend the cremation were talking among themselves about her marriage. Suraj Prakash was a simple man. There were no complaints against him either from his father or his wife. He wanted to protect his daughter from infatuation. He didn’t directly approach towards the problem. He was a compassionate father. Though the family’s reputation was disgraced with his elder daughter’s marriage, he didn’t blame her. He silently buried his inner fury and ended his life. Despite the other reasons, Virmati was quickly centred as the main victim for the death of her father.

Ida was brought up in a cosmopolitan city like Delhi, where much importance is not given to individual family sectors. So there was no question of Virmati to feel that she had ill reputed the family by her divorce. The suffering and the result of the suffering was limited to their family. There may be differences in the attitudes of educated people and uneducated people but the internal emotions which women hide in their inner chambers have not changed from the past. Generally women are considered to be strong in facing the problems than men, even though they are sub-ordinate to men. There is an identical relation between Virmati and her daughter Ida when they had undergone an abortion. Virmati tackled her problem with the help of Swarna
Latha not letting her family members to know about it, especially keeping her family’s reputation in mind.

Ida has also undergone an abortion after her marriage, hides the same from her mother to save her from the disgrace she faced with Prabhakar. She internally feels when she heard about her mother’s abortion from Swarna Latha that for a sensitive woman, aborting the foetus is not a simple issue. She could imagine how her mother had to do it, without the help of her parents or Harish. She has developed an intimate relation with the foetus inside her body. Her mother had a valid reason, she could not face the society as she was not married, but her condition was different. She was legally wed, had a husband. Still, she was not cared as her mother was cared by her father.

Neither Kasturi nor Virmati were aware of their daughter’s agony in killing their first babies. Virmati and Ida were opposite in the way they lead their marital lives. Virmati, though married a man, who had a wife and children struggled to occupy her in the family even though she was treated as a murderer and totally alienated from the family. Ida on the other hand had not faced the difficulties that her mother had faced, but she was departed from her husband and had to lead an individual life without her own children. May be Kasturi or Virmati or Ida the problem of self possessiveness lies in their attitude, not in their brought up.

Born in a traditional family, Kasturi had occupied herself in the family into which her parents had sent her. Her continuous child bearing, ill health, the tribulations created by her daughter, Virmati and Lajwanti’s humiliations were silently swallowed up by her. Once she married and came out of the house she didn’t create any problems to her parents after stepping into her marital life. She struggled to bring up a huge family consisting of many children. She never complained anything to her husband or her in-laws.

Virmati though brought up by such a mother stepped into a marital life causing agony to the first wife of her husband, mother and children. The family’s years of reputation was damaged by Virmati’s marriage which she could not even say to her daughter about her life. Seeking an independent life was her aim. But should it be at the cost of other’s life? Has it ever occurred to her? As an educated woman in 1940’s, she could better understand the position of a wife like Ganga, who had no other opportunity other than her husband and children. Ida was the ultimate sufferer of Ganga’s tears.
What did his knowledge award the Professor? Knowingly or unknowingly he married Ganga at an early age, probably the age which he was not all aware of. After becoming father of two kids, how did he feel that Ganga was not suitable a match to him? The guests in his house were happy with the hospitality of Ganga. How come the Professor failed to recognize her services? May be Ganga was not educated but she was dutiful and loyal to him and his family. With his great education the Professor ruined her life and the reputation of two families causing agony to the elders and even had become an offender of Virmati’s father and grand father’s death. Is it what he had learnt from his years of education and teaching? He used Kanhiya to deliver his messages to Virmati. Is that what a teacher should teach to his students? Certainly despite their illiteracy Ganga, Kasturi, Indumati could manage their lives without disturbing others successfully and happily than the so called educated people.

Manju Kapur intelligently shapes the characters of her protagonists making the readers analyse the pros and cons of the independent lives of women in and around them. The novel is interwoven as a series of narrations of the past interlinking with the anxiety of the narrator mixing up with her own interventions. The novel is totally based on the patriarchal system of where the head of the family had the power to take decision relating to the matters of their family members, including their marriages. The protagonist could not adjust herself into this system, striving for self–identity and independence as the country was aiming for.

Manju Kapur had run the story parallel to the freedom struggle and the protagonist’s struggle. The nativity is also well marked in the novel which makes the readers more involved. The expressions which Manju Kapur uses for indicating food items, dresses and other miscellaneous are highly fascinating. Kasturi marriage arrangements made by her father are quite exciting “His godown was now ransacked for the best it had to offer. There were to be at least four varieties of barfi in different colours-green pista, white almond, brown walnut and pink coconut –for the guests to eat as a side dish with every meal” (65).

Though it was the first novel Manju Kapur dealt it in a sophisticated manner. When Virmati tried to commit suicide and returned home, she used a technique of correspondence through letters between the professor and Virmati running the story enthusiastically. The reader knows everything about the incidents covered after she was locked up in the room through their letters. By the time the correspondence stops the family takes a decision and sends her to
continue her BT in Lahore. Such a good technical skill of involving the present and future events through letters is an exciting skill shown in the novel.

Manju Kapur also uses another technique of narrating the events of Post-independence activities through all the people near and dear to Virmati along with her past events. Here the reader gets a good idea of the post-independence activities linked with Virmati’s past and they can visualize them balancing the events of internal and external struggles caused to the characters. The narrations, the past mixed up with present, present mixed up with future, future mixed up with past, correspondence through letters added the beauty to the novel. Manju Kapur could well handle the situations balancing all the characters, incidents, events arranged chronologically through different techniques that made the novel more readable.

Difficult Daughters is foregrounded during the period of Indian partition. The novel covers the colonial period, yet the novel revolves around the axis of anti-colonialism. The plot throws light on the protagonist Virmati, who has fallen in love with the married man and the conflicts that she faces externally and internally. One of her daughter’s utterances in the beginning of the novel where she makes a comment about her mother gives a clear idea of her determined extroverted nature in pouring out her thoughts. Virmati throws her own self towards the society, though she faces many conflicts in the both phases of her life. Though she was strongly caught between the passion of flesh and passion for coming up, instead of being hidden under the darkness of the conventions, she breaks those chains and finds her own identity.

The original cause behind this both mental and social success is her extroverted nature which is again evident through her words when she was locked in a room. How would a grown up woman feel when locked up in a room? She has become a culprit in the eyes of her family and younger siblings. Is there any disgrace more than that? Without a heart and feelings to express her emotions, she denies the old social values, which, in the name of custom, compress women into an empty shell of seclusion. In all the stages of her troubles, Virmati, with her extroverted outlook never failed to speak out her thoughts, because of which she was able to exercise her right and choices at the point of her family, stateliness, identity and self-esteem.

Kalpana Rajput deals with the troubles of gender equality by taking reference of the novel of Manju Kapur’s Difficult Daughters. She examines the rational and emotional dilemma of Virmati, the protagonist in the partition and post partition days. She presents the picture of women in the fictional works of Indian English novelist, Manju Kapur, based on her insights of
women’s emancipation and independence within the socio-civilizing spaces and paradigms in India. Kapur’s women mirror her views on the role or religion, tradition and myth in moulding Indian women, as well as suggest a way to uphold women’s right. She throws light on the handling of the theme of marriage and issues related to marriage concerns in the novels of Manju Kapur.

Manju Kapur has very realistically dealt with the problem in her novel *Difficult Daughters*. The way she fights against the community taboos and social standards which arrest women from going out of the house, marrying the person of their choice, leading their own lives on their own terms and conditions, makes her a feminist. She reveals how social values are cherished in a family structure. The family life of Lala Diwan Chand and his struggle to live according to the social norms and values are well portrayed.

The writer shows that the women characters in Manju Kapur’s novels are not the type of women who are bound to age-old traditions giving importance to the statement that ‘marriage is their destiny and they are to obey their husbands’. The women in the novels of Manju Kapur differ from the society tagged traditional women and break all social taboos and conventions and emerge as a new woman who wants to be like herself. Manju Kapur women are the personification of the ‘new woman’ created by the modern woman.

Manju Kapur discusses how the women characters in the novels are different from that of the traditional women with cramped lives and confined thinking. She says that the women who appear in the novels are modern and away from the influence of social standards and social taboos. How these women break the male supremacy and create their world is critically discussed and analyzed. It is an attempt on the part of the writer to make the analytical study of the women’s lives and their psyche within the context of North Indian families. Kapur tries to show that the women in the Indian families are coming out of their traditional roles like confining their roles as someone’s mother, daughter and above all wife.

The change occurring in the receptivity and mind-set of the Indian women is critically examined through the characters. The writer represents the changing roles of the women in Indian society. Change occurring in the women’s deep feeling and her manner is critically discussed. There is no doubt that the women of the modern times are wide awake of their self, individualism and subsistence. They cannot tolerate any kind of injustice done by the male
dominated society. Kapur raises the question about the consciousness of the Indian women and questions whether the women are aware of their consciousness?

As Khushwant Singh rightly remarked on Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*, ‘It’s the best work on partition. It operates at many levels – memories, boundaries *et al* that one is totally soaked in his narrative’. It is a perfect specimen of partition. The story is a narration, which swings like a pendulum from present to past and back into past. The novel makes the reader to analyse and interpret the subtle issues like partition, interpersonal relationships and religious factions. Tridib is the role model for the nameless narrator. Ila, his was niece used to aristocratic atmosphere of London wants nothing other than freedom, which is impossible in the Indian culture. The most impressive character in the story was the narrator’s grandmother, Tha’mma who helps him to weave the concept of socio-political situations.

A line, probably the shadow line hangs around imagination and reality. The interpersonal relationships are based on imagination and reality, and when they are retold by the narrator they are fresh again. Though his grandmother hates Ila, the narrator has love towards Ila, and tries to protect her. The people and the events of childhood are once again brought into focus when the adult narrator views them from an outlook of collective knowledge. The love between Tridib and May ended as a disaster but it attained Samaritan attribute, as Tridib has sacrificed his love to save May from the mob. Their love was paradoxical. All the relations in the novel are caught into the web of complexities. Another relation was between Ila and Nick. The narrator feels that the relationship between these two people is also immature and based on compromise.

Grandmother helps the narrator to let his narrative progress and thus the readers get an idea of the memories tanned with various complications and fear. He reminded ‘Over months she told me the house she had grown up in Dhaka. In my grandmother’s earliest memories her house was crowded... all the things people think about when they know that the best of their lives are already over’. He could perceive the emotional feelings of sorrow and happiness mixed together in his grandmother, when she met Mayadevi in Calcutta. She never forgets her uncle Jetha Moshai, who was left behind in Dhaka at the time of partition. When Mayadevi and she reached to Dhaka and saw their old house, her feelings were really beyond words to express. Her uncle did not have any idea of the present, but was only haunted with the memories of the past was never able to detach himself and when she wanted to relieve him, he was killed by the mob in riots. May be the past memories protected him, but present dragged him to death.
There is a great link for imagination and politics in this novel. The novel has become contemporary with the quest for political freedom. Grandmother’s past is covered with riots and struggle. Her ambition to help the people who are struggling in the freedom fight was sprouted in her mind. She gave her precious piece of jewellery for the sake of funds for the war. The spirit of freedom was predominantly seen in her. The thought of partition makes her angry. She feels if there are no differences, people on either sides will be the same. When they came to Calcutta from Dhaka, it was a safe journey. After partition, except killing nothing was more noticed.

The political commotion that had left the country totally exploded and ruined by the partition. May be to utter words about the pathetic situation, one becomes speechless. The political scenario described in Difficult Daughters, The Shadow Lines runs parallel to Khushwant Singh’s A Train to Pakistan. The concept is clear in all the novels, freedom is the focal point. Hindu-Muslim relations are vital in these novels. These novels take the readers to a contemplative mood. One question is certain, is the Independence achieved at the cost of violence to be enjoyed? These novels show the pains, bloodshed and pangs of partition.

In the novel, Virmati is also projected as a mother, always adjusted to signs of her mother’s continuous carrying and almost constantly dedicated to her siblings’ childcare. At the same time, her fertility is symbolically connected with the progressing political events and, after an abortion and amiscarriage she could become the real mother of her only child, after independence. The couple argue over naming their daughter and finally as usual, it is the father that comes up with a Persian name –neither Hindu nor Muslim– because he didn’t want his daughter to be infected with the birth of their new country.

Manju Kapur deals with the theme of travails in self, identity vis-a-vis socio-cultural identity in Difficult Daughters. Through Ida, the narrator and daughter of the protagonist Virmati, the novelist unfolds a saga of revolt against deep rooted family tradition, self doubt, revolution and acceptance of life. Ida embarks on a request to know her mother’s legacy and inner commotion after her mother dies. The novel traces a woman’s unique needs the need to be loved, not to be relegated to a secondary status of ‘Karyeshu Daasi’, the need to experience freedom, and needed meaningfully in the traditional role of daughter, wife and mother. In the end, one finds that Virmati’s life is a readjustment with tradition and a painful transition to loss of families love, and modern reality of lone some individual awareness.
Virmati reciprocates the infatuation and love of the charming professor, for she, who was tuned to medicines, reciprocated to the professor’s need. To her, the professor symbolized love. Her soul revolted and confusion increased in her mind. In her individual need for love, Virmati the protagonist rebels against tradition. Yet she is filled with self doubt. She pleads for studying further and postponement of her marriage. Her suicidal attempts make the family brands her to be restless, sick and selfish and locks her up. They allow her to study further.

There is an unresolved dichotomy in the character portrayal of Virmati, the female protagonist. While she is strong willed to resist all kinds of social and family pressure, she is not strong enough to stay away from professor’s influence. Perhaps, lack of maternal love and loss of familial affection, explains the protagonists weakness. Virmati needed love and an identity, she achieved it. The professor, symbolized at the only hope of fulfilling this need and achieving the desired identity. It could be possible that Virmati was in love with the concept of love rather than with person vis., Professor Harish.

Virmati stands as a best example for feminine suffering. This was mainly due to the conservative family structures focusing on the individual awareness and creating the sensitive woman as a rejection of mythical model of an ideal daughter. It’s quite amazing to note that Virmati was the product of austere, upper-class, culturally-minded traditional Punjabi family where due importance lies in the traditions and cultures. The novelist conveys through her portrayals the identities, legacies, futures and nations becoming more prominent when compared to traditions. The climax is parallel drawn with the pathetic condition of Indians during 1943 and Virmati’s struggle to have an independent status as the country was aiming for. ‘Ida’ meaning a ‘new slate and a blank beginning’ conveys clearly the quest for the protagonists self-identity.

Virmati’s Indian mother’s psyche once again rises to bring out her daughter to the familial systems. The title Difficult Daughters stands apt to the woman who tries to forge ‘a self-identity’ and impelled by her unique needs is branded as a difficult daughter by the society and family. Ida the narrator who feels at the very outset the one thing she wanted, was not to be like her mother, but at the end after tracing her mother’s legacy she feels it to haunt her no more. Ida, has enough turmoil in her married life and was left isolated from her individual and social contacts.

The family feels sorry for her but put it down because she was socially violated Virmati’s daughter. Difficult Daughters as in Indian Women Writing focuses on the quest for identity may be historical or temporary. The quest for identity as seen in Virmati’s life is equated with having
education and being modern in outlook. However the modern outlook can be solely recognized as an outward trapping. Ute Weber, a scholar opines that the discrepancy between the potential outer freedom of the protagonist and her actual lack of inner freedom is stirring.

Kapur presents the true replica of a woman’s turmoil to overcome the tragedy of forgoing the independent status and self-identification. Dr. Binod Misra viewed ‘I think the authoress is very much inclined to say that however educated or innovative an Indian women is, her Indian background and psyche cannot feel satisfied unless society approves of her endeavours and her relationship. Virmati’s tragedy is the tragedy of ambition, obsession and unclaimed ovation’. It is an uninviting conclusion no doubt but quite realistic given in the frame of 1940’s scenario in post-independent India.

It is truly an appreciable novel for all the generations. The traditional people, the teenage people all mirror themselves by dwelling into the characters. Virmati stands as a true example of the ‘New Woman’ as she breaks the familial ties and chooses a life of her own. Throughout her life she was choked by the tag of a surrogated mother. In spite of her struggles she succeeded in her education, worked as a principal and could ultimately lead a life she has craved for years. Finally she won the battle and had her own life.

The key element of the novel is ‘search for control over destiny’. There are many twists and turns in Virmati’s life. Her inclination towards education made her to search for her own identity, space and freedom. She doesn’t want to be like ordinary woman, whose only duty is to care about their family. So she decides not to shoulder the responsibilities that go beyond a family. As usual like the other women on the sub-continent, Virmati had no choice to live according to her dreams and was asked to accept a typical arranged marriage.

The happiest moments in her life were only the time, which she spends at Nahan. She becomes a good administrator and could control self. She was recognised and respected as a good teacher. It was only in Nahan that she could exercise her responsibilities entirely by herself. Though she has no family and close friends, she attains a near exemplary level of female autonomy. Maybe for the first time she had her own place to live in as Virginia Woolf’s famous A room of one’s own, but she falls? The visits of the professor made the employers to send her out of the independent life in school, house and employment.
Virmati is a new woman of colonial India and stands as a metaphor to search the prospects for modern women in education and financial independence who experiences embarrassment and discontent in their colonial matrix. Though Swarna Latha and Shakuntala were her role models, there was a difference in which she could fulfil her dreams. Though Shakuntala knew that her family or her friend’s families were not happy with their decisions, they have a clear idea of how they have to lead their life. Her perception is clear in her words. They have a life of their own, which is scheduled by them.

They move out, read or attend intellectual sessions. One among them is also crossing the oceans to pursue higher studies. Their life is in their hands. Swarna Latha is another female character who knows about her vision. She gets out of life what she wants, without compromising too much. She takes active part in the political parties before and after her marriage. In the Punjab Women’s Student Conference, her speech was amazing. Virmati could hear the roar of applauds even after she returned to her room.

These two ladies had left a great impression on her and she wanted to flutter her wings like them. But the growth was not healthy and the wings couldn’t support to fly. Virmati breaks the patriarchal norms to claim her independence and hopes to achieve self-reliance. But finally she proves to be a loser, fails to create her own space, which she had been striving all long. Perhaps in the male dominated society where laws are made by men and a husband stands as a ‘sheltering tree’ under which a woman has to prove her potential by undergoing a lot of predicaments would be too difficult for her to withstand in her position. Kapur has defended this through her protagonist Virmati that feminism differs from one place to another. In some places it depends upon the division of the socio-economic conditions. If the domination of men is more natural the subordination will be more. Feminism stands for the assumption that women can be conscious to change their position and place.

Virmati was attuned to ‘womanly’ tasks by her mother. Being the eldest she had to run the house as her mother was always sick. She had learned to cherish at an early age because of her mother’s frequent pregnancies. Her resentment is conspicuous because she finds it difficult to pursue her studies. This early training of cherishing does not help her in her later life for she is unable to build a strong bond with her only daughter, Ida. Ida knows her mother only as a bad tempered woman. She doesn’t remember a single incident when it was right between them. May be the failure to develop an intimate relationship with her daughter by the power of her motherly
nurturing can be featured to the fact that the glut of nurturing at an early age might have slaked her. Simon de Beauvoir is right in saying that “in particular, the elder sister is often concerned in this way motherly tasks, whether for convenience or because of hostility and sadism, the mother thus rids herself of many of her functions, the girl in this manner is made to fit precociously into the universe of serious affairs” (Beauvoir, 1997, 312).

Empathy, care, nurturing, tolerance, sensitivity and self-sacrifice are considered as the feminine traits. Autonomy, individuation, success, power and careerism are considered as masculine traits. The feminine traits are considered inferior and devalued when compared to the masculine traits. This can be treated as the chief consequence of patriarchal culture. Being raised as daughters in a patriarchal society, women feel they are inferior beings and accept their identity as subordinates to men. In a country like India, girls are trained in household chores at an early age, even before they enter puberty. In a patriarchal family set-up, the masculine and feminine traits are valued differently. Though Virmati is a loving and nurturing sister, unfortunately she is so entrapped in her relationship with the professor and fails to nurture her own daughter.

Women are ignored and blamed whenever they raise questions concerning their lives and reflecting issues that matter to them. It is too sorrowful that a woman cannot even question against her family towards their partial behaviour. The strength and power of women, which is useful to lead their family are not recognized and valued. The efforts of women writers and their characters have been to confirm the self so that a woman attains her subjectivity. What a woman needs is self-introspection and an ability to look at her from various angles. Manju Kapur has greatly portrayed the characters and made the readers to think over the situation of women and understand her agonies which will be discussed in the following chapter *A Married Woman*. 