

**Ideals of Feminism and Generational Conflicts in *Difficult Daughters* by Manju Kapur**

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## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **Ideals of Feminism and Generational conflicts in *Difficult Daughters* by ManjuKapur** submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.,)** is carried out by me **HARINI M.S** during the period from **JANUARY 2025 - MAY 2025** under the guidance of **Ms. R. JAYANTHI**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education For Women (SF),Coimbatore, and,has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

**Signature of the Candidate**

## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **Ideals of Feminism and Generational conflicts in *Difficult Daughters* by ManjuKapur** submitted to in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts (M.A.,)** is carried out by **HARINI M.S** during the period from **JANUARY 2025 - MAY- 2025** under the guidance of **Ms. R. JAYANTHI** Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education For Women (SF), Coimbatore, and has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree , Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship, or similar Titles in this University or any other University or other similar Institutions of Higher Learning.

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## ABSTRACT

Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* intricately explores the tensions between feminist ideals and traditional expectations within the context of India's pre- and post-independence eras. The novel follows Virmati, a young woman who struggles against the rigid familial and societal norms that seek to define her role as a daughter, wife, and woman. Virmati's desire for education and autonomy directly challenges the traditional values upheld by her mother, Kasturi, highlighting a profound generational conflict. Through Virmati's journey, Kapur portrays the early stirrings of feminist consciousness in a society steeped in patriarchal control. The mother-daughter relationship is central to the narrative, symbolizing the broader clash between emerging feminist ideals and entrenched cultural norms. Kasturi's insistence on duty and obedience reflects a generational adherence to survival through conformity, whereas Virmati's pursuit of independence, even at great personal cost, signals the painful birth of a new female identity. Kapur does not idealize either perspective but rather presents the struggle for self-definition as complex and fraught with emotional and social consequences. The novel thus reveals how feminist aspirations are often shaped, limited, and redefined through the intimate conflicts within families. *Difficult Daughters* underscores the notion that generational conflicts are not merely personal disputes but are emblematic of larger societal shifts. In portraying Virmati's difficult path, Kapur sheds light on the intricate, often painful processes through which feminist ideals evolve within traditional frameworks, offering a nuanced depiction of women's agency across generations. Chapter 1 deals with introduction which includes information about literature, Indian literature, Fiction, Feminist Theory, author ,Contemporary writers, and Summary Chapter 2 deals with Feminist theory and the analysis of the novel. Chapter 3 deals with the conclusion part.

## **CHAPTER - I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

*Literature is a mirror that reflects the society -*

*Salman Rushdie*

Literature is an imitation of life. The real world and literature are highly correlated. Life provides the medium for the artistic development of literature. The first person to consider literature in connection to the real world was Plato. Literature is a mirror of the mind, a study of both internal and external conflict and peace. It captures the essence of both man and nature. The broad definition includes all composed manifestations of a culture.

The term literature has a qualitative connotation and is not merely a term that refers to writing in general. Without making this finding or believing which certain aspects of literature are best appreciated when someone are preferred in the order seemed to have slight need of a literary history. Over five centuries have passed since the beginning of the development of English literature. It features works by numerous authors from a wide range of historical periods and nearly every significant genre and writing style.

English literature has been influenced by the various changes that have occurred in English society from antiquity to the present. The best way to appreciate the different era of English literature is to simultaneously understand English social and political history. The predominant "modernist" element in literature from the 20th century, its experimental nature, which is believed to be a reaction to the circumstances of modern life.

In Postmodernism period since 1945, this trend has dominated English literature, favouring irony, clarity, transcendentalism, and a straightforward tone, as demonstrated by the authors like John Wain, Donald Davie, and Philip Larkin. There has been a backlash against philosophical and artistic radicalism in favour of the return to more conventional forms of expression.

In the 1950s, *kitchen-sink drama*, which explores working class life and social conflict, was a powerful form of English drama. As a result, throughout its evolution, English literature has effectively examined the social and psychological realities of the human condition. Modern authors are constantly adding to the amazing and varied body of English literature by reformulating, redefining the Literature.

Postmodernism is connected to historical and contextual references as well as the social, political, economic, and cultural development of Western capitalism. It has also been closely linked to the evolution of the media. Postmodernism emerged as a response to Western and central statements about hegemony, dominance, exploitation, and alienation, as well as structural linguistics. Additionally, postmodernism was intended to challenge Western philosophy, the deterioration of global capitalist institutions, a monopoly on the means of production, and scientific knowledge. Postmodernism has also attempted to critique logic and the logos by challenging dispersion, disassembly, and mechanisms. Colonial postmodernism is founded on a number of plug-intellectual pillars, including aesthetic, moral, artistic, and intellectual.

Therefore, it could be found in the following elements and principles Comprehensive explanatory theories have been criticized by postmodernism, which aims to undermine the moral authority of the main intellectual forms, which typically take the shape of ideologies.

The two elements of *self and subject* meet in the Western project of Modernism, whereas Postmodernism demands that self-modernism be abandoned. A new outlook on the ideas of time, place, and history by considering history as a separate field or as a starting point for numerous social sciences, humanities, and applied sciences, postmodernism created unique new concepts about history, time, and place.

Postmodernists believe that the search for the ultimate truth is the biggest human error made in the pursuit of scientific and practical goals, and they are characterized by rejecting everything that was common on the Modernist stage. The postmodern movement seeks to downplay the significance of history and does not consider his job to be limited to merely documenting the facts and bearing witness to events.

The first Indian theatre performance was thought to have been in Sanskrit, which began in the second century BC. It demonstrated Indian aristocratic and religious fervour and how it developed as a result of religious tradition. Thus, Sanskrit theatre remained popular into the 17th century.

In English-language Indian writing, broad-ranging themes are addressed. Indian literature reflects the culture and traditions of the country. In nineteenth century, the social and political history of India had a significant impact on contemporary literature. India's English education gradually improved during the first half of the 1800s.

India experienced several crises achieved independence, including social, political, and economic ones. The Indianite English was reflected in the writings of contemporary Indian authors such as Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, and Salman Rushdie. Indian English writers of the modern era were aware of their own customs and culture.

The majority of authors still write in their native tongues, though some write in English. The majority of contemporary authors have been able to preserve the distinctive character of their locale in their writing. The novel has been significantly influenced by Indian authors who write in English.

The Indian English novel's strength lies primarily in India's rich and magnificent legacy. The oppressed members of society, middle-class Indian life, and the manifestation of India's traditional and cultural ethos were the primary concerns of Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao, and R.K. Narayanan, the founding fathers of Indian English literature. Indian writings have painted a stunning picture of India, and as a result, our nation's culture, traditions, and values have been preserved.

Feminism is actually a combination of political activism, social theory, and moral philosophy. Feminism encompasses women's experiences, which must be connected to social, political, and of course, economic factors. The protection and expansion of women's rights in all areas of life is, in fact, feminism's ultimate objective. It was a topic of discussion on the literary fringes, but it has since taken centre stage in both novels and movies.

The terms *feminism* and *feminist* were initially used in French in the year 1830, the Netherlands in the year 1870, Great Britain in the year 1890, and the United States in the year 1910. The pursuit of justice for women is the intellectual goal of feminism. The goal of feminism is to eradicate oppression, exploitation, and sexism. It changes over the course of our lives and is influenced by different perspectives. A fundamental aspect of history, women's subordination or subjugation is the primary cause of all psychological disorders in society.

In the 20th century, it has also permeated discussions of political and social theory. Gender equality and Discrimination against Women Emphasizing gender discrimination, some feminists would like to demonstrate that women have to endure a number of injustices in the patriarchal society that has long existed in our nation and throughout the world.

Renowned feminist Simone De Beauvoir traces the evolution of women's status in society. She initiated the discussing about how societies treated women unfairly and thought they were less valuable than men. She described how the emergence of private property forced men to formally oppress women, who began to see themselves as property as well. Additionally, she noted that "traditional systems of oppression in the spheres of reproduction, sexuality, and labour continue to this day.

In 1785, Mary Wollstone Craft published her well-known essay on women's rights, "*A Vindication of the Rights of Women*". Feminism in an organized form there were three waves of feminism, which we will briefly discuss under the heading of "*Organized form of feminism.*"

First Wave was emerged in the year 1830. Later the Slavery abolition was existed in the year 1833. The first wave mainly focused on Women's struggle for equal right movements, education, and improved working conditions were the main goals of first-wave feminism, which was a period of feminist activity in the 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly in Europe and the Anglosphere and discrimination based on sexuality.

The term *first-wave* was created in retrospect after the phrase *second-wave feminism* started to be used to refer to a more feminist movement that was equally concerned with combating social and cultural injustices as it was with advancing political ones.

In the year 1960 to 1980 Second Wave developing the argument Following World War II, the second wave of feminism concentrated on issues related to sexuality, the workplace, families, and reproductive rights. Women were thought to have achieved their goals at a time when the US was already attempting to restructure itself. The *micro-politics* of gender equality comprised the third wave, which spanned in 1990 to the early 2000.

In 1990, the third wave of feminism emerged. Young women's perceptions of the second wave's perceived shortcomings gave rise to the movement. It was also a reaction to criticism of the second wave's movements and initiatives.

Third-wave feminism aims to disprove or stay far away of what it considers to be the *essentialist*, definitions of femininity of the second wave, which, in their opinion, placed an increasing focus on the experiences of white upper-middle-class women. In the first half of the 20th century, women were granted the right to vote in a number of nation.

Although different nations had different justifications for granting women the right to vote, granting them the right to vote during a war seemed to be a common justification. As explained previously, the liberation movement gives rise to the feminist movement, which seeks to defend women's rights, dismantle the hegemonic and dominating system, and mediate disputes between weak and strong groups. Class and racial conflict, particularly gender conflict, are closely linked to feminist theories.

Fourth-wave feminism is a vibrant and emerging movement that uses social media to rekindle interest in feminism. The rebirth of interest in feminism that started around 2012 and is linked to social media use is known as fourth-wave feminism.

The fourth wave's main goals, according to feminist scholar Prudence Chamberlain, are women's justice and resistance to sexual harassment and violence against women. She claims that "*incredulity that certain attitudes can still exist*" is its fundamental component.

She said: "*I believe that the fourth wave exists because it says that it exists,*" because Needs are considered in response to those who doubt the existence of fourth-wave feminism.

The movement of feminism and its four waves will become a success and the efforts of feminists will not go in vain when women are valued for themselves as men are. When women can walk down a street without being harassed when their interview for jobs are considered with the exact same criteria as men interviewing the wrapping up of feminism is not world peace or love and harmony, but the removal of the systemic, universal undervaluing of women and women's work by society. That will mean more competition, but also much more allocation and collaboration.

Feminism was one of the most significant symptoms in the late 20th century, particularly in the West. Considering the theory's historical background as a political, social, and economic movement, feminist analysis consequently incorporates multidisciplinary research involving a range of sciences.

Women's literary traditions, women's linguistic traits, female characters, popular novels and women, and so forth are all relevant areas of study in relation to literature. In relation to cultural studies, gender rights are more strongly connected to gender equality and the demolition of a literary evaluation system that is typically seen as male viewpoint.

Feminists fight to ensure that social society and international relations do not oppress women. However, more emphasis is placed on how women are included and given priority. Women should not be forced to live in domestic coverage. Women are universalized by feminists as well. In other words, feminists overlook other factors like class, race, and culture. However, social and global dynamics are intimately linked to all of these elements. Many women still do not share the same values or interests as feminists. Activists contended.

The Perspectives on Feminism and Engels, in his well-known book, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, published in 1984, Frederick Engels unambiguously declared that woman's primary responsibilities are to bear children care for them, and handle all domestic tasks. Therefore, the idea that women are less valuable than men began to take hold in people's minds as a result of family life. Families are the ones who teach women that women should dedicate their lives to men.

According to Engels, the family is the main social unit where women's exploitation and deprivation began. The family was also the source of men's authority over women. Prior to Engels, no one discussed how women were exploited in the home. These remarks made by Engels were also warmly received by contemporary feminists. Engels asserts that women were regarded as the entire family's property in joint families. Later, with the rise of capitalism and the dissolution of joint families in favour of husband-wife-centric nuclear families, the authority of the family's master certainly diminished, but women's status and position remained unchanged.

In addition, as patriarchal society began to dominate families, women began to lose significance when it came to inheriting the family's wealth. The feminist movement gained traction thanks to Engels writings.

The first three decades of the early 20th century to the very close of the 19th century, the primary goals were to grant women the right to vote and to be free from the exploitation of the state. In America and England, women were granted their right to vote in 1918 and 1920, respectively. The procedures to grant women the right to vote were finished by 1930. The women had a chance to come together after they were granted the right to vote because it gave them a forum to voice their opinions. After that, a number of works pertaining to women's rights began to appear.

For instance, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* was released in 1929. She wrote about women's private lives and awareness of their responsibilities and rights. She makes it apparent in her writing that she opposes the tendency of male dominance, the establishment of male authority, warlike thinking, and like mentality and also encompassed capitalism that was dominated by men.

According to authors like Virginia Woolf, a shift in the society male-dominated value consciousness is necessary to bring about peace. Woolf placed a great deal of emphasis on women's education because she believed that it was the only path to women's advancement in all areas of society.

Virginia Woolf was the first to assert that women's gender identity is a social construct rather than something that is inherent. It is important to note that, despite their claims to represent entire women's societies, the problems faced by white middle-class women in western nations were the primary focus of feminist theory and feminism that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The term woman does not imply that the group has the same interests or mind set.

The fact that daughters are expected to help their mothers around the house, have been taught that domestic work is their destined career, have illiterate mothers who are unable to educate their children, are economically dependent on men, and are occasionally the victims of child marriage are some of the primary reasons why they are less likely to attain optimal levels of education.

India's National Policy on Education (NPE) was established in 1986, and the government started the Mahila Samakhya program, which focused on women's empowerment. In order to help women reach their full potential, learn to demand information, and acquire the knowledge necessary to take control of their own lives, the program aims to establish a learning environment. The goal of raising the educational attainment of female students to that of male students is still being pursued. It is noteworthy that in India, educated women are increasingly linked to lower fertility rates.

Women are stereotyped as the Weaker sex, suppressed in every way, and viewed as physically weaker. However, according to science, women are more resilient than men and less likely to contract specific illnesses. Additionally, a woman's body promotes a child's development.

The female community is superior to others because they bear the agony of childbirth and the monthly menstrual cycles. India has high regard for women despite being a patriarchal society; from religion to involvement in national activities, women are accorded the respect and importance they deserve. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni in her analysis of feminism that, Indian style in an Independence with social acceptance, success, and autonomy that set its boundaries but do not require a complete break from the traditional, extended, multi family structure.

The Indian family structure allows mothers-in-law to care for their grandchildren as well, which helps their development. As a result, a daughter-in-law could feel less stressed at work, something that isn't possible in other nations. Married women thus benefit from the family system. Kanchan C. Bhattacharya asserts that *women must start with their psyche if they want a change*.

Women have a lower status than men due to patriarchal norms. In order to close the gender gap and end gender inequality, more effective measures need to be implemented. People's perspectives must be altered, and efforts must be made to guarantee that they comprehend women's equal rights and the advantages of education.

Deeply embedded in society, culture is hard to eradicate because of its enduring customs and emotional ties. While some cultures are founded on scientific knowledge, others are based on non-scientific ideas. Adopting systematic cultures that uphold equality and prohibit discrimination among members of society is our duty as logical beings.

The Cultural norms have prevented the constitution's many provisions and the legislature's efforts from being properly implemented based on a patriarchal system. As rational people, we must reject cultural practices that lack scientific backing and embrace those that do, in order to maintain a balance between constitutional provisions and cultural norms.

Feminists who support the abolition of the patriarchal system in society and the development of a new society where men and women have equal rights, freedoms, and opportunities, the concept of feminism gained popularity in the second half of the 20th century. Women make up almost half of the population, the primary goal of the Indian constitution and legal system is to provide equal rights, freedom, and opportunities to men and women. However, cultural customs frequently lead to men and women having different rights and opportunities. The unequal distribution of rights and opportunities between men and women is frequently the result of cultural practices.

Men typically enjoy greater privileges as a result of patriarchal structures, which deprives women of fundamental opportunities and social support. This seeks to explain why, in India, culture is so important to the equitable distribution of opportunities and rights between men and women. Additionally, it examines how cultural norms and societal regulations limit people's capacity to speak out against the injustice, discrimination, exploitation, and inequality that permeate our society.

India is a multicultural and diverse country where culture permeates every part of daily life. Women have played a significant role in Indian culture and society since its inception. The government has attempted to advance gender equality through a number of policies, but major advancements in women's lives have been thwarted by improper implementation or sluggish progress.

Even though laws give both sexes equal rights, opportunities, and compensation, these provisions frequently only exist on paper and are not implemented in practice, underscoring the persistence of gender discrimination. The primary cause of gender inequality in India is the country's deeply ingrained cultural norms. The contradictory nature of Indian culture has prevented much progress in altering women's roles and positions, even with large investments in women's empowerment.

India has not made great strides in women's empowerment because of its complicated and inflexible past, which has made it challenging to overcome the challenges presented by antiquated cultural practices in the twenty-first century. In the study of feminism, it should also be able to highlight ways in which women oppress by men.

Gender equality and equality in general are always linked to feminist issues. And through feminism, women are able to show their authenticity. As time have changed, feminism has taken many different forms. In India, this ideology is still in its infancy. Periods are still taboo to discuss. Young girls and women must sleep on the floors of many homes because they are not permitted to touch anything. We can compare this to the concept of untouchability, which still exists in the twenty-first century

The main justification for preventing women from entering the kitchen in working households was that they were able to get some rest from their daily tasks. However, these days, this is an imposition rather than a choice. Manju Kapur teaches literature at Delhi University. She was born in Amritsar in 1948. After graduating from the women's Miranda House University College, Kapur pursued an M.Phil. Her first book, *Difficult Daughters*, became a bestseller in India.

Readers and critics praised and enjoyed her other three novels, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant*, and *Custody*. Manju Kapur and her spouse reside in New Delhi. She has three grandchildren and three daughters.

A variety of practices, including introspection, mindfulness, meditation, therapy, self-help books, and personal development courses, can be incorporated into the search for oneself. Understanding oneself better, discovering one's actual potential and purpose, and leading a more contented and genuine life are the objectives of this journey. The fight of Indian daughters to break free from the bonds of patriarchy is examined in the book. Their formal education has given them a worldly perspective that contrasts with the traditional values they have been indoctrinated to since they were young.

In a traditional society where women's education is encouraged to reinforce patriarchal values, Kapur sheds light on biases surrounding educational values, particularly those related to women's education. She expands the potential of her female characters beyond the confines of their homes and gives them a major role in nation-building.

However, this attempt to extend their horizons in terms of their abilities and responsibilities outside of their home spheres draws harsh criticism, consequences, and repercussions from their families, which represent patriarchal systems, creating problems and having an impact on their psychological well-being. It also examines the tension between tradition and modernity that educated Indian daughters encounter in their community. It draws attention to the problems facing women as they are portrayed in the book.

Manju Kapur has focused on patriarchy, interfaith marriage, family ties, male-female bonds, and the coexistence of the past and present in her writings. Her female protagonists have been portrayed as victims of circumstances, domestic abuse, gender, and biology. Therefore, the idea of feminist literary studies that centre the analysis on women is associated with feminism in literature.

According to Kapur, Every woman has a man inside of her, and every man has a woman inside of him. Womanhood becomes fragmented when manhood is questioned. Delineating inner life and subtle relationships has been a major focus of recent Indian women's writing. Women in the modern era demonstrate their resistance to their own societal exploitation by being highly educated and conscious of their rights. Manju Kapur's writings explore the complex relationship between cultural and societal norms, there are many facets of a woman's life, and her valiant struggle against the unjust systems that pervade a constrictive society.

The feminist perspective on daily life and the female psyche is legitimately introduced in this research project. It is supported by a number of ideas, including equal opportunities, dual burdens, intimate labour, and a variety of social techniques. She is portrayed by the author as a female character who is about to set out on a quest for self-discovery. When she suddenly decides to take control of her own life. This study aims to examine Manju Kapur's status as a feminist author and determine whether or not her writings represent feminist politics.

Vikram Seth is a renowned Indian novelist, poet, and travel writer. He is one of the most celebrated Indian writers of his generation, known for his nuanced and insightful portrayals of Indian society and culture. Seth's literary career spans multiple genres, including novels, poetry, and travel writing. Some of his notable works including *The Golden Gate*, *A Suitable Boy*, *An Equal Music*, *Two Lives*.

Allan Sealy is a contemporary Indian novelist and writer, known for his innovative and eclectic style. He is considered one of the most important Indian writers of his generation. Some of his notable works including *The Trotter-Nama*, *Hero*, *The Everest Hotel*, *Red*. Renowned Indian English author Upamanyu Chatterjee is most known for his novels that examine the complexities of middle-class Indian life.

Manju Kapur is a contemporary Indian novelist and writer, known for her insightful portrayals of Indian society and culture. Here are some of her notable works *Difficult Daughters*. A novel that explores the complex relationships between mother and daughter, and their struggles in a patriarchal society.

The novel *A Married Woman* that delves into the life of a married woman and her struggles with identity and relationships. The novel *Home*, revolves around the suppression of women and the favouritism shown towards sons in Indian families. The novel *The Immigrant*, that tells the story of an Indian Immigrant in Canada. The novel *Custody* explores the complexities of family relationships and the struggles of women in Indian society. The novel *Brothers*, this book is not confirmed to be written by Manju Kapur.

Her writing is known for her insightful portrayal of Indian middle class life, exploration of themes such as family, relationships, and social issues, strong female protagonists, lyricism and simplicity of language her works have been widely praised for their literary merit, cultural insight, and emotional depth.

Manju Kapur's writing style and themes are characterized by simple and lyrical language. She Kapur's writing is known for its simplicity, clarity, and lyricism. Realistic and nuanced portrayal, she provides a realistic and nuanced portrayal of Indian middle-class life, exploring the complexities of relationships, family dynamics, and social issues. Strong female protagonists by Kapur's novels often feature strong, independent female protagonists who navigate the challenges of Indian society.

She experiments with multiple narrative styles, including non-linear storytelling and multiple narrative voices. Her novel explores the complexities of family relationships, including the struggles of women, the dynamics of marriage, and the challenges of parenting. Her novels provide a nuanced portrayal of Indian society and culture, exploring themes such as social hierarchy, caste, and the role of women.

Manju Kapur's writing style and themes have been influenced by Indian literary tradition. Kapur's work is rooted in the Indian literary tradition, drawing on the works of writers such as R.K. Narayan and Kamala Markandaya. Her novel reflects a feminist perspective, exploring the lives and experiences of Indian women. Kapur's writing style is often compared to realist literature, which seeks to accurately portray everyday life and social issues. Kapur's novels often explore the theme of identity and belonging, particularly in the context of Indian women's lives.

Her novels address various social issues, including dowry, domestic violence, and the struggles of women's empowerment. Overall, Manju Kapur's writing style and themes offer a nuanced and insightful portrayal of Indian society and culture, with a particular focus on the lives and experiences of women.

Manju Kapur's debut novel *Difficult Daughters*, it tends to focus on the lives of Ida and her mother Virmati. It focuses to the challenging multigenerational relationship between a mother and daughter. The story opens is to Ida, a middle-aged woman who is divorced and whose mother had recently passed away to come to know more about her mother "Virmati's" life, she first visits Amritsar and then Lahore.

In order to create a systemic view of her mother's life, Ida expresses with her mother's family members and others who had a relationship with her. She also makes it a point to visit all the locations where her mother had been. Raised in a family of Arya Samajis, Virmati was the oldest daughter.

She represented as a second mother to her eleven siblings. Virmati as well as her youngest sibling, Parvati, have a unique bond. She has an extramarital affair with her professor Harish, Ida's father, while she is pursuing her education at AS College. She also experiences harsh treatment from her family, particularly from her mother Kasturi. After a while, Virmati marries Harish and faces numerous challenges. *Difficult Daughters*, it explores the conflict the between Virmati's desire to rise up through the use of education and the traditional role of women in society. This novel, takes place during the catastrophic moment of World War II and India's partition, also addresses the problem of maternal apathy.

The existences of three generations of women and the effects of intergenerational trauma are depicted in *Difficult Daughters*. For example, Virmati suffers in silence when she finds out she is pregnant and her pride prevents her from asking for help from her roommate. Women are frequently conditioned by society to believe that suffering alone is normal, and Virmati was too embarrassed to discuss this with anyone outside of her partner, the professor.

Manju also talks about the depressing experience of having an abortion, which ended her marriage. Like her mother, she chose to suffer in silence after giving in to social pressure. Because her mother Virmati used to think highly of her son-in-law and was particularly saddened by her daughter's separation, she never told her about her abortion.

*Difficult Daughters*, is a partition novel. In essence, it is a feminist love story that depicts strong, nuanced characters against the backdrop of those difficult phases, this novel highlights the struggles of women who made their own hardships, and they gave their contribution to India's independence. Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, is a literary classic novel that never fails to idolize readers with its ageless examination of gender, custom, and resiliency. Shubh's moving vulnerability and Virmati's unwavering spirit, Kapur challenges us to consider the complex relationship between feminine agency and societal norms.

*Difficult Daughters*, is a moving reminder of the never-ending pursuit of identity and selfdetermination in the face of hardship as we traverse the complexities of our own lives. This study aims to reveal the complex web of gender roles and societal expectations portrayed in the book by looking at the characters' hardships and victories. This study aims to clarify the ongoing significance of *Difficult Daughters* in the current conversation about gender, tradition, and culture by combining literary analysis and sociocultural Critique.

## **CHAPTER – II**

### **IDEALS OF FEMINISM AND GENERATIONAL CONFLICTS IN DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS BY MANJUKAPUR**

The feminist approach is a way to explain how literary creation and gender social formation are related. A better understanding of the feminist approach requires an understanding of the broad concept of literary. A feminist's broadest definition of literature is that it refers to writing that explores the experiences of the other. Traditional literature is frequently inaccurate in its portrayal of the other because it was written by the dominant culture.

It is crucial to understand that a large portion of literature reflects the author's life and the society in which they reside. As a result, the way an author views the world and how their environment has treated them has a significant impact on their work. Obviously, this will be different for men and women, mainly because women have historically had a much lower social status than men.

Understanding how women have been defined and their identities shaped through literacy is therefore essential to comprehending the feminist critique of literature. A succinct definition of this understanding would be inadequate due to its evident complexity.

Creating the identity, authority, right to development in all their diversity as well as those who experience marginalization or discrimination is essential to the feminist approach. In order to rebalance the distribution of power and create inclusive and just societies, it is also necessary to hold powerful actors, such as duty-bearers and responsibility-holders, accountable for their human rights obligations and responsibilities.

The feminist approach responds to lived experiences by considering intersectional aspects of inequality and discrimination and values diversity and inclusion as vital resources for attaining transformative change and sustainable development. Such a strategy meets international human

rights obligations, fosters advocacy and communication, and forges partnerships in the pursuit of shared goals. The majority of female authors and feminist critics are opposed to categorizing women's writing as other literature, which is important to note here. The term is helpful, though, because it has been linked to oppressed and marginalized groups.

The Feminist International Assistance Policy in 2017, they announced the elements of feminist approach into practice. Here are a few instances upholding bold pledges that promote humanitarian efforts and disability-inclusive development; creating feminist monitoring and assessment methodologies for enhanced learning in projects and programming; and growing collaborations to more efficiently mobilize resources from non-traditional partners to support women's empowerment.

A substantial percentage of other gender literature is regarded as the norms as a result of this, which is frequently reflected in works authored by men and their place in the literary canon. As a result, a female author's writing frequently reflects her attempt to define her own social position and transition from a defined to a defied state.

Therefore, a woman is more likely than a male author to recognize gender-based injustices in literature. Until his work is contrasted with that of a woman, he frequently might not have even recognized the other literature. One of the main objectives of feminist criticism is for women to reveal themselves and the nature and causes of their social situation.

The movement known as feminism fights against the oppression and inequality of women. Given the nature of its focus, feminist literary criticism uses a wide range of intricate topics, such as politics, culture, and social norms, to understand and analyse literature from an ever-widening perspective. In addition to studying characters from a scholarly perspective and evaluating how writings by men about women illustrate misconceptions, the degradation of women, subservience, and the challenges that women have faced in competition with men.

Feminist literary critics are interested in the likely ways that literary works support or

challenge the status of women in society which could include a thorough examination of the author's intentions, the motivations and personalities of the characters, or the societies the work creates also turns out to be an engaging and educational method of interpreting gender relations in literature.

In the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë is a well-known illustration of this type of criticism. The ways that studying female literary characters can shed light on the status of women in a given society or historical era have drawn the attention of a new generation of male and female non-feminist scholars in recent years. This has sparked a movement to use feminist insights to challenge the representation of male and female characters and their relationships, going beyond the specialized study of works by and about women.

Literature motivates to represent the gender have permeated every aspect of our lives, impacting everything from socioeconomic to psychological. Literature reflects and shapes hierarchical social values in addition to assisting us in communicating with others and making sense of the world. Unfortunately, women have frequently been oppressed and exploited as a result of this androcentric society.

Feminist literary criticism has arisen in response to this. The representation of women in literature is a central topic in feminist literary criticism. Characters of women have been portrayed in a variety of ways, from idealization and adoration to disgust and satire. The idea that women are merely men's accessories is strengthened by this. The function of literature in gender socialization is another significant theme. However, rather than defining women as unique individuals, these representations frequently define them in relation to male characters.

Traditional gender roles that are intended to oppress women have been taught to young boys and girls through a number of novels. Because they were not encouraged to participate in public life and because their efforts were not taken into account in history or essays, women were long viewed as the second sex in Western culture.

Men had a responsibility to ensure that women remained in their designated roles. Every progressive door was destined to open into the hands of men, who were recognized as the dynamic element in society and the masters of their own destiny.

Women lived inside the four walls of the home, were the static element, the defenders of the status quo, and their success in any profession was a natural consequence. Fiction and drama writers have frequently been influenced by the idea that men are the universal human type, representing all of humanity, and women are the unique, limited case of human being.

Women were typically portrayed as less significant than male characters, and men were primarily interested in the thoughts and deeds of female characters unless they were villains or monsters. The consensus is that all art as well as other academic evidence is infused with strange, intricate, and significant symbolism of male over female.

However, feminist critics have provided a wide range of frequently contradictory ways to describe these male and female positions in art. Though it is occasionally written off as armchair psychology, this analysis frequently results in an investigation of the authors own psychology. However, recognizing authors gender biases can serve as a solid basis for these analyses.

There is an immense potential for feminist theory. Change is a part of the future. It is undoubtedly connected in a number of ways to feminist struggles and feminist knowledge that have been generated by earlier struggles and knowledge, but it also involves a constant reevaluation of what feminism is and what outcomes it can aim to achieve.

Feminist theory has focused on rereading the past for what is cleared, suppressed, unutilized, or unconscious in it. This means that something is out of its time, either because it is inappropriate, which is another way of saying that it is not yet used up in its past, or because it still has something to offer that is untapped, or because its virtuality is still alluring and full of potential

for the present and future. In order to understand women's historical positions and their potential for change in the present and the future, feminist theory first analysed how knowledge discriminated against women and contributed to the development and progression of harms done to them, both conceptually and materially.

Its main objective has always been empirical and meaningful, speculating on how and why patriarchal power relations are expressed through practices, events, and knowledge. The area of interest has always been in the abstract and the non-determinable, not in what has been and is, but in what could be but does not yet exist, as someone who was trained in a field that drastically departs from the empirical and the concrete philosophy.

It focuses on concepts rather than empirical data, not because the latter is irrelevant but rather because, in the absence of a conceptual framework, the former is meaningless, context less. The empirical data is presented without any insight into how it came to be, without any evaluation of its historicity or potential for change. The only way to demonstrate how it might be reversed or made differently is through a framework or context that explains the forces that create it's drastically reduce.

Since the heyday of French feminism's rise in the year of 1980 and 1990. Feminist studies have seen a significant decline in the value of the abstract and the non-determinable, but its conceptual and political tasks remain unfinished. In way of comparison to the first wave, secondwave feminism sparked a great deal of theoretical debate regarding the nature of gender, the role of the family, and the causes of women's oppression.

Radical feminism sought to transform society and its institutions, which they perceived as

fundamentally patriarchal, in contrast to liberal feminism's pragmatic approach. Radicals offered the central thesis of contemporary feminism, contending that women's submissive position in society was too deeply ingrained in the social structure to be reversed short of a radical reconstruction of society. They aimed to create non-hierarchical and antiauthoritarian approaches to politics and organization, as well as to replace traditional and hierarchical power structures that they perceived as being biased toward men.

The final of the three currents, cultural or difference feminism, rejected the idea that men and women are inherently alike and promoted highlighting the traits they believed to be unique to women, such as their nurturing obsession with others and their increased concern for affective relationships. A criticism of mainstream feminism's attempt to break into traditionally male domains was ingrained in its message. By trying to make women more like men, this was perceived as demeaning women's innate tendencies.

Virmati, a Seventeen year old Amritsar student studying fine arts, arrives from a liberal and progressive Punjabi Family She develops feelings for her neighbour Harish, an English professor who returned from Oxford. The story becomes a little tangled and complicated because he is already married and has kids. Virmati's desire for education and her illicit love are in a neverending battle.

Virmati begins to challenge and dismantle her preconceived notions about marriage, love, work, and nation after being surrounded by some independent and forward-thinking women. Shakuntala, the sister of her cousin, was the one who initially ignited the desire for education in Virmati. By explaining to Virmati how independent and self-sufficient women are in Lahore, she opens her eyes to a different perspective.

She explains to her how they are participating in and demonstrating at rallies, holding political meetings, and fighting for the country's independence. Virmati observed Shakuntala play cards, badminton, smoking, riding horses, and acting independently of her mother's advice. She also bought anything she desired without considering it a waste of money. Most importantly, she observed that her sister never appeared to doubt or question anything.

Virmati is also impressed by Swarna, her roommate, who was a strong supporter of the Satyagraha movement. Swarna has a strong sense of self-advocacy. She tells Virmati to wake up from her "stale dream of marriage" and helps her realize that there are other things that are more important than marriage. Virmati changes as the narrative progresses. She has gone a long way from being a straightforward middle-class Punjabi girl whose only goals in life were to support her family and get married to paving her own way and advancing the country's literacy.

She has the opportunity to experience the various flavours of freedom in Lahore, but following her graduation from the Bachelor of Teaching program there, she grows frustrated and unhappy. She is eager to work and expand her horizons, so when she changes, she finds it uncomfortable to go back to her former self.

Harish is an annoyingly weak and pathetic character. He talks about more important things, but when it comes time to carry them out, he becomes less involved. He is hesitant to wed Virmati, even though she frequently insists on it. He eventually marries her at a friend's suggestion and brings her to his home, which is occupied by his mother, his children, and her first wife.

Virmati is expelled from both her own and her in-laws homes as a result of their marriage. But when Virmati becomes pregnant, her mother-in-law suddenly shows concern for her health and even demands that she sleep with her. The fixation on conservative views of women,

superstitions, male offspring, and the family's sacred obligation of marriage is reflected in this book.

In *Difficult Daughters*, Kapur speaks eloquently about Lahore, the heart and soul of Punjab, which was also regarded as the Mecca for all Punjabis. She writes: Anyone with a brain in their head went to study in Lahore, where students congregated on the river, around the monuments, through the mall, in the gardens, the shopping areas, the dining establishments, and the theatres. To gain knowledge, interact with others, listen to leaders, and stay up to date on social, political, and fashion trends.

The lives of three generations of women and the effects of intergenerational trauma are depicted in *Difficult Daughters*. For instance, Virmati suffers in silence when she finds out she is pregnant prior to her marriage, and her pride prevents her from asking for help from her roommate. Women are frequently conditioned by society to believe that suffering alone is normal, and Virmati was too embarrassed to discuss this with anyone outside of her partner, the professor.

Manju also talks about the depressing experience of having an abortion, which ended her marriage. Like her mother, she chose to suffer in silence after giving in to social pressure. Because her mother Virmati used to think highly of her son-in-law and was particularly disappointed by her daughter's separation, she never told her about her abortion.

*Difficult Daughters* is not precisely a partition novel, despite being set during that period. In essence, it is a feminist love story that depicts strong, nuanced characters against the backdrop of those tumultuous times. Though equally relevant today, the novel highlights the struggles of

women who, in spite of their own hardships, made a substantial contribution to India's independence.

In Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, a young woman is torn between the allure of illicit love and her family's education. The novel's female characters, Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida, are from three generations that are both different and similar to one another.

In this book, Kapur depicts a special bond between mother and daughter. The novel is dominated by the generational divide. The protagonist Virmati's daughter, Ida, serves as the narrator. Ida says she never wanted to be like her mother as she stands around the pyre crying. The primary narrative is Ida's account of her mother's life. Virmati, her mother, was raised in a traditional Hindu household. She is a victim of circumstance, torn between her personal desires and her family's obligations.

Since independence, there has been a national interest in providing girls and women with educational opportunities. The Indian constitution is dedicated to this goal, and the Supreme Court has declared the right to education to be a fundamental right.

According to Education and Socioeconomic Perspective of Women Development and Empowerment, the national policy of education in 1992, is dedicated to a well-conceived edge in favour of women. It envisions education as a tool that can influence changes in women's status.

Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida are the three main female characters in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, which is set in the 1940s, prior to independence and partition. The only reason Kasturi went to school was to find a proper husband.

Ida was a woman of the new era, a divorcee, and Virmati was hesitant to get married young and desired to pursue higher education. In the years following my divorce, my mother filled the air I breathed with melancholy and disapproval. Each of the three women fell prey to the patriarchal culture. A member of the Lala Diwan Chand family, Virmati is the main character and the eldest daughter of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash. Ida, Virmati's daughter, tells the story.

In the relationship between Kasturi and Virmati and Ida, disagreements predominated. Ida had an image of her mother that was silent, brisk, and bad-tempered. Her mother's past has always captivated her, and she takes the readers there. Virmati engages in activities that help her define herself in her family and in society. Early marriage and no education is not something she can envision. The uprising made her misery worse. She failed to recognize her significance in her fiancé life and her allure for extramarital affairs.

Virmati had no desire to follow in her mother's footsteps. It was always remembered during Kasturi's official education that marriage was her fate. Following graduation, Kasturi received at-home instruction on how to succeed over her in-laws. She made all the breads she could, including crisp and stuffed parathas, tandoori inside rotis, kulchas white and long, luchis large as plates, and puris with spicy gram inside. A typical middle-class family is the subject of this tale. The mother, father, brothers, sisters, grandfather, and grandmother make up the joint family.

Virmati is described as a challenging daughter by her grandmother Kasturi, and Ida is divorced. Because Harish, an English professor, does not view his illiterate wife Ganga as his soulmate, Virmati is drawn to him and falls deeply in love with him.

Virmati accepts the professor's repeated proposals because she is in love, but the illicit relationship had many problems and Virmati had to bear the flame by herself. Because Harish was

reticent to marry Virmati and was reticent about the relationship, she had to abort his child. At last, a friend urged the professor to wed Virmati.

Before independence, Virmati resided in Lahore, and after it, she moved to Amritsar. She came from a traditional Punjabi household where women are supposed to stay inside the house. Although Virmati's grandfather supported the social norm that prohibits girls from attending higher education, he also held the progressive opinion that girls should only receive a basic education. Being the second mother to her ten siblings, Virmati was subjected to the most difficult household tasks and unjustified abuse from her mother.

She never receives the love, attention, and care from her mother that she would typically expect as a child. Her mother constantly criticises and her, saying, that she is tired of knitting and sewing, according to the flared Virmati, and says that she Besides, there to take care of her ,she can take care of herself

After completing her high school education, Virmati is not interested in getting married and starting a family. Her mother pushes her to get married, but she doesn't listen to her. She is inspired by her cousin Shakuntala and believes that a young woman can be an alternative to a spouse. She longs for her own space, individuality, and chance. Indu, She was imprisoned by Inderjeet after Virmati declined to wed the irrigation engineer. Conflict between the younger and older generations is unavoidable, according to Kapur. Virmati wanted to finish her education and refused to get married young.

Kasturi thought that a good education would lead to a good husband. How had the girl changed? She had always had such common sense. How could she fail to see that she would be

happy if she married a good boy who had waited patiently for years and whom the family had promised? What sort of education had stripped her of her rational faculties? She was also aware of the importance of education because it had brought her husband and allowed her to spend many hours reading.

During her time, attending school was considered a privilege that should not be misused by defying one's parents. Kasturi is a symbol of the generation that believes that a girl's education is less significant and prepares her to make sacrifices for marriage,

*Please, Mati, let me study. Virmati stumbled. However, you have studied. What's left? In Lahore...I'd like to visit Lahore. Kasturi could take no more of her daughter's folly. She slammed her head against the wall while grabbing her by the hair. Perhaps this will help you make sense of things! She sobbed. "What transgressions should I be punished for in this life by having a daughter like you?" Kasturi was infuriated by Virmati's refusal to get married.*

*She fears that Virmati will bring disgrace to the family. Virmati's love for Harish Chandra, who rents her aunt's house with his family, was the cause of her rejection. Harish left Walt air College after receiving a better offer at Arya Sabha College in Amritsar. Through the sharing of food supplies, the two families grew closer. Gradually, Virmati finds herself caught up in Harish's devotion. (Pg.no 79)*

She even decides to end her life by suffocating herself in the channel because of his persistent arguments about serious love, but she is fortunately protected by the servants. When she attempts suicide and is shielded, her family members wonder was this training taught her? Virmati's desire for autonomy to pursue education and self-discovery draws her closer to her cousin

Shakuntala. Virmati chooses to follow Shakuntala because she is an independent girl who captivates him with her activities, fashion sense, and way of life. She defies society's established power structure and is the embodiment of women's empowerment.

Virmati was enthralled with Shakuntala's progressive views and aspired to emulate her. In defiance of the long-standing custom, Virmati chooses to pursue further education. In addition to seeking mental tranquillity, Virmati's mother Kasturi wished for her daughter to avoid the professor's involvement. Leading women who joined the fight for freedom, such as Radha and Mohini Dutt, were introduced to Virmati.

Virmati was torn between wanting to join the intellectuals in a political movement and her love. She had a daughter named Ida after marrying Harish. Ida was left husbandless as well as childless after Virmati's marriage failed, despite her best efforts to help her settle down.

The mother and daughter address one another through spots and happenings as the story alternates between the past and the present. Ida rummaged through her mother's memories. She can delve into her past and claim it as mine without her presence getting in the way.

She have pieced together information from vague, inconsistent, and fragmented memories in my quest to find a woman I could relate to. I knew I would never be able to fully reconstruct the fragments of the places I visited and the things I read, but they still captivated me. I experienced the thrill of exploration and the delight of integrating stories into a recognizable legacy.

The novelist illustrates the value and ramifications of education through Virmati's decision to pursue higher education in Lahore. For example, the prime minister of Sirmaur state congratulated Virmati on her accomplishments.

In 1940s, social and cultural beliefs made education for girls less important. Women were supposed to reproduce and stay in the kitchen. The impact of education on three generations is illustrated in the novel. The importance of education in fostering self-esteem and confidence is emphasized in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. As generations pass, education meaning evolves.

Virmati defies her family and tradition in her quest for identity. That instinct within her made her want to be loved as a person rather than as an object. Despite her stress and anxiety, she achieved her dream and fulfilled her desire by breaking all the family's rules. As a result of education that altered her perspective, Ida refused to accept the marriage, putting her one step ahead of her mother.

Modern women shows their resistance to their own social exploitation by being educated and conscious of their rights. In her novels, Manju Kapur examines the intricacies of a woman's life from a variety of cultural and social perspectives, values and her fight against the unjust systems of a closed society.

The author presents herself as a woman who is about to discover herself when she unexpectedly makes the choice to assume responsibility for her life. The protagonist is a woman who is searching for power and opportunity while simultaneously focusing on her inner strength. Supported by ideas like intimate jobs, double weights, equivalent freedoms, and various social strategies, among others, this research paper offers a valid preface to the women's activist perspective of daily life and the female psyche.

Kapur's writings help us understand the thoughts of a woman trapped in a web of connections, some of which she made on her own and others that were made for her. They are a prime example of the conundrum of convention and modernity that many Indian women face the internal struggle they have between wanting to take care of their husbands and kids and wanting to find deeper forms of fulfilment that flout.

Manju Kapur has successfully and skilfully portrayed the Indian way of life. She simultaneously exhibits their deep comprehension of human nature and their awareness of common issues. She examines a range of topics in her writing, such as the struggle between tradition and innovation, the heroes' personal crises, and Indian women's quest for independence.

The main theme of all of her books is the search for feminine identity, which has become a prominent social phenomenon in India since independence. The man lady relationship, human craving, yearning, sex separation, minimization, defiance, and dissent are just a few of the many subjects that are taken into consideration.

All the main female characters in these novels are Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Nina, and Shakuntala are the verge of withdrawing into themselves due to the male characters' dominance and psychological effects. Throughout her books, we witness a woman who has been exalted trying to break free from a long-standing burden. Over time, the perception of women evolves and changes.

The protagonist of the author's work departs from conventional representations of a woman who is calm, modest, suffering, and giving. These are modern depictions of self-assured, passionate, cultured, protesting, and driven people who are demonstrating their identities and bringing attention to their needs.

Indian writers, especially women writers, in recent decades have produced plentiful literary output, their focus writing being gender and the role of women in society. These writers inquire into human relationships since they are closely concerned with the mind and heart. Women's work has both inspired and been a central theme in literature.

The image of a woman is key to the investigation of writing everywhere on the world. She, when all is said and done, is likewise a maker of writing and, hence, a lady's quality in writing is all-encompassing. This is true of Indian literature in English, too. Literature records life and society's reaction to it, which is embodied in the author's image portrayed in her creation. Women writers have taken on the amazing task of their campaign against established customs in order to make the cycle of progress smooth and truly critical. Resistance and repression have always been significant problems in any society, as we all know, but they are especially relevant in the postcolonial era.

In the novels discussed in this research paper, these problems are the most pressing. The use of force or authority in an annoying, callous, or unjustified manner is known as suppression. It is accepted for anyone to mistreat and abuse a meeting, class, or group of people. Opposition is defined as the attempt to prevent something by action or dispute, as well as the refusal to accept or agree with something. It seeks to oppose, examine, and combat repression in general.

The researcher intends to use the current theorization of resistance and repression in feminist scholarship and other disciplines to further elucidate these conceptual terms. The issue this study attempts to address is how Manju Kapur's novels depict the oppression of women and what forms of resistance are revealed within them.

Manju Kapur's status as a feminist writer will be examined, as well as whether or not her

writings offer a literary representation of feminist politics. Additionally, the study will attempt to pinpoint the distinctive features of her writings in relation to India's feminist fiction tradition.

At first, women were portrayed as oppressed and exploited in the novels written by Indian English authors; however, as time has gone on, this custom has changed. These authors portray a liberal, independent, and self-sufficient woman who is capable of making all of her own decisions. She is not a sexual and recreational toy. A woman is currently preparing to be her own gravitational force beyond the allure of man-centric society, as the male, as the representative of male-centric culture, has finally been yanked away from the centre of ladies' attractive energy.

In 1980, this period existed with an emergence of fresh, imaginative female novelists who spread the word that their writing was widely appreciated. For a while, Indian English novels were dominated by men, but after women writers began to appear in the post-Independence era, they made significant contributions to Indian literature. Unquestionably, defiance runs in the family. Ida would constantly object to her mother. The opinions of the rebellious daughter, Ida, and her mother, Virmati, were at odds,

*There are different things throughout everyday life, Ida told her mother. You mean to live for yourself alone. Your dad is getting frustrated with you. Why is it so important that he is satisfied? ... Sometimes she wanted to please herself.*

*She tried to be a model girl growing up. Strive to perform day and night, look lovely and flawless, succeed academically, study classical music, practice dance, read books, etc. As a result, she always looking for ways to escape classes. There's no denying that defiance runs in the family. Ida would always protest to her mom. Virmati, the mother, and her disobedient daughter, Ida, had divergent views. "There are different things throughout everyday life, Ida told her mother. You intend to live solely for yourself. Your father is growing impatient with you. Why does his*

*satisfaction matter so much? ... She wanted to please herself sometimes. Growing up (DD.89)* Aim for success in school, to study classical music, to practice dance, to read books, to look beautiful and perfect, to perform day and night, etc. I therefore constantly search for methods to get out of classes. In the time following my separation, my mother obsessively and troublesomely covered the air I breathed. Her top mourning question was, "What will happen to you after I'm gone?" I was consumed by melancholy, depression, and despair for extended periods of time.

At the moment, her shadow doesn't longer puts me at risk. I could delve into her past and claim it as mine without her quality standing in my way. I have sorted through material from memories that were fragmented, contradictory, and jumbled in an attempt to find a woman I could get to know.

*Every word in this book is a block that I created with my heart and mind, creating a connection between my mother and me. Mother, live in it now and leave me alone. Don't bother to visit me anymore (Kapur 1998: 97).* Unlike her mother, Ida is genuinely independent, strong. She is not enmeshed in the web of her own desires, a society dominated by men, and romantic relationships

Kapur's books to examine the opposition and restraint of "female characters" through the institution of marriage reveals that providing her female characters is vital to the author. The family may be shielded from external criticism for not marrying at the ideal opportunity for social, strict, or even status-related reasons. When her husband rejects her desire and right to have children, her marriage ends. At the conclusion of the story, Ida's path toward independence and moral development is recognized. She decided on a strategy that her mother could not have implemented.

Manju Kapur's composition captures the true spirit of the problem. In families with young

girls of legal age, the way a mother reacts to the marriage question is a very common problem. The instances that follow illustrate how young women are polled with regards to their marital energy.

Similar to how her mother treated her, Virmati also applies restrictive patriarchal norms and procedures to her daughter Ida. Even she is unable to be a sympathetic and reasonable mother to her daughter. Because of this mind-set, Ida is forced to struggle as an independent girl and fight for the confidence, identity, and dignity that her mother lacked throughout her life. She defies the expectations of her family and the male-dominated culture, turning into a normal daughter. Male domination over the family or economy is also depicted in the novel.

Additionally, Virmati was denied her rights and her aspirations to discover her uniqueness and independence. Her life changes as a result of her rejection of the traditional social code for women, and she finds it difficult to discover new ways to live. Which encourages her to live a life devoid of all colonial patriarchal ideals. This makes her feel alone and like she doesn't belong, which is ultimately resolved in her marriage to Harish, a married man she loves.

Virmati's sociohistorical circumstances can be attributed to a crucial feminist stance in this regard. Virmati's departure from a conventional notion of femininity can be used to understand her feminist aspects of life and experiences. Another major theme in the book is marriage versus education. Education is portrayed in the book as a clear path to liberation, which helps Virmati become aware of her repressed existence and gives her the courage to leave the house and live the life she chooses. The *New Woman* is portrayed as strong, aspirational, logical, repulsive, and a blend of modernity and tradition. This image of a woman has caused a rift in society and in families, upending the foundations of long standing institutions.

According to Kapur, a woman should be self-aware, self-controlling, logical, independent, and possess a strong belief in her inner strength because only from within can a significant change be brought about. In her attempt to overcome her reliance, Virmati finds herself caught between the demands of modernity and antiquated customs. In the world that Kapur recreates, women's lives are limited to household duties and family ties are bound by tradition.

Virmati desperately sought a way out of her unworthy life, and she believed that obtaining a higher education would help her achieve this. She wants to forget about the professor and being away from home, but all of a sudden she realized she was pregnant and that the only thing she could do was have an abortion.

She was well aware that the professor would not help her during her most vulnerable moment. The only better and more prosperous time in her life was when she was appointed headmistress of a girl's school in Nahan. She nearly attained the control over her life that she had long desired at this point in her life. Ida, however, was unable to accept her mother's choice to abort and end the life that was developing inside of her. Because her husband Prabhakar had coerced her into aborting the baby, she had ended their marriage. Ida made the deliberate choice to be different from her mother.

Ida was unable to accept even Virmati's beliefs because she opposed her mother's. With her education and uniqueness, Virmati undoubtedly embodies the spirit of a new woman, but she falls short in demonstrating her mental fortitude when it comes to love.

Traditional and modern, moral and physical, and heart and mind are at odds with one another. Ida is a strong, logical woman who ends her marriage for the sake of her child. Ida is an educated woman who is divorced and childless. Although she appears to lead a free life, some of the same fears as her mother. The novel's title relates deliberately to the patriarchal agreement that a woman with an inclination for independence is viewed by her family and society as a challenging daughter.

From a local girl, Virmati develops into a woman who has grown through hardships and experiences. At the expense of constant mental anguish and hardship, she was successful in shattering the old patriarchal system in a traditional society, but she was unable to get rid of the label of being the other.

Her character here illustrates women's psychological distress and rebellious tendencies. In addition to Virmati's story, it also mentions a number of other challenging daughters who crossed household boundaries and joined the national struggle for independence. In terms of their relationships, values, and mind sets the female characters in this book are split into three generations.

This novel has received a great deal of praise for its moving depiction of women's lives in colonial India, providing a complex web of feelings, struggles, and ambitions. The book chronicles the journey of Virmati, a vibrant young woman battling the demands of independence and the limitations of tradition, against the tumultuous backdrop of the Indian freedom movement.

Kapur deftly crafts a story of love, self-discovery, and sacrifice through Virmati's story, challenging readers to face deeply embedded patriarchal systems and the unwavering spirit of feminine agency. With *Difficult Daughters* frequently praised as a foundational work that cuts across national and cultural boundaries, Kapur's body of work holds a prominent position in the field of Indian English literature. The ability of Kapur to capture the spirit of a bygone era while still connecting with modern audiences has been formulated by critics for her evocative prose and nuanced characterizations. From the conflict between tradition and modernity to the intricacies of femininity, scholars have examined a number of the novel's thematic threads. Identity in a society where men predominate.

Furthermore, academic interest in the interaction of love, responsibility, and autonomy has increased as a result of Kapur's examination of familial relationships, especially the mother daughter dynamic.

The protagonist Virmati, whose journey embodies the fight for self-actualization in the face of social constraints, is at the centre of *Difficult Daughters*. Virmati, who was raised in a traditional Punjabi household, breaks with tradition by going to college and having an illicit relationship with Harish, a married professor. Kapur challenges ideas of love, responsibility, and personal fulfilment through Virmati's covert meetings with Harish and her eventual marriage to a respectable widower.

Virmati is liberated from her family's expectations and begins to question the conventional roles that women are expected to play in society as a result of her covert affair with Harish. But Virmati's defiance has a cost, as she struggles with the fallout from her decisions and the subsequent social backlash.

In addition, *Difficult Daughters*, it explores the intricacies of mother-daughter bonds, especially Virmati's tense exchanges with her controlling mother, Shubh. By forcing her inflexible views on Virmati and sustaining the cycle of repression and conformity, Shubh exemplifies patriarchal ideals.

However, beneath Shubh's tough exterior is a woman who is weighed down by both social norms and her own unmet desires, highlighting the cyclical nature of female oppression. Kapur sheds light on the generational fight for agency and autonomy through the turbulent relationship between Virmati and Shubh, underscoring the long-lasting effects of familial expectations on women's lives.

Women are not given the freedom to live their lives as they see qualified, even though they comprise roughly half of the world's population. The male population is responsible for establishing the rules that govern their existence. As a result, people face discrimination based only on their gender. "*Difficult Daughters*" by Manju Kapur examines the lives of three distinct generations of women within the sociohistorical setting of India.

Manju Kapur's deft blending of social history and the political history of the time period is what makes her fictional story so brilliant. Lajwanti and Kasturi are members of the original group. Despite being biologically feminine, they behave primarily in a male-oriented manner. They expect others to follow the norms of a culture that values men and acknowledge those norms. Swarnalata, Shakuntala, and Virmati are all in the same age range. To some degree, they claim their individuality and defy the rules set forth by the male-dominated social structure. Ida is a third generation member and Virmati's daughter. She is the most liberated female character in the book.

She defies the standards of behaviour and dress that are dominated by men. The moment her partner forces her to end her pregnancy, she breaks off their relationship. Throughout history,

women's status has advanced, as the presentation illustrates.

Manju Kapur's fictional story *Difficult Daughters* depicts many subtleties of orientation inequality over time, and this study intends to examine these nuances. Along with the trade of labour and goods and the trade of ideas, the exchange of women has historically been one of the three basic transactions that have advanced society. A framework for family relationships has been established as a result of this trade.

Moreover, the male orientation has led to the establishment of rules for this profession, including who should be traded and with whom. Girls who fit these standards, which are linked to attributes like virtue and devotion, like Devi and savitri, are respected and acknowledged by society. On the other hand, people who disregard these rules are called whores and paramours. The main character of the book, Virmati, her cousin Shakuntala, and her friend Swarnalata are all part of the future. They make an effort to stand out from the crowd and defy the norms set by the male dominated society.

Their degree of compliance or, on the other hand, their departure from the norms determines how happy or depressed they are. Virmati's daughter Ida is a member of the most recent generation. She declares her individuality and chooses to divorce her husband because he makes her abort the unborn child. Out of all the female characters introduced in the book, she is the most liberated. The disparity in these women's circumstances across age groups can be partially ascribed to their unique identities and behaviours as well as to changes in the socio-historical setting.

The story's first generation of women are represented by Kasturi, Lajwanti, and Kishori Devi. They are traditional women with traits that are more geared toward men. They believe that getting married and starting a family should be a woman's top priorities.

Kasturi has produced eleven children, six of whom are female and five of whom are male, in keeping with this tradition that emphasizes men. She becomes quite angry when her eldest

daughter, Virmati, refuses to marry the person chosen by her elders. She firmly adheres to the marriage laws set forth by a male dominated society as a result of its influence.

The guardians have the power to choose their young daughters' life partners. She ridicules her and calls her bad mash and Randi. She gives her strict instructions to avoid running into her ever again. Her sister-in-law, Lajwanti, is also a product of a society that is primarily focused on men.

In addition to having three miscarriages, she is the mother of two children. Like her sister in-law Kasturi, she is primarily focused on her daughter Shakuntala, who has decided to live an independent life in Lahore rather than get married. She shares the belief of other traditional women that a woman's life is not complete until she is married and has the children. The book presents Harish Chander's mother, Kishori Devi, as a traditional woman. Harish Chander is a teacher.

When she learns of her child's covert activities with Virmati, she becomes extremely irritated. The woman is taken aback when her child unexpectedly shows up in front of her along with a second spouse who recently got married. Finally, after finding out about Virmati's pregnancy, she takes on the role of a loving stepmother. When we look at the situation that younger women face, it is clear that women's orientation is being mistreated.

The protagonist of the book, Virmati, chooses the unconventional route on purpose, leading to the most profound life experiences. She makes the decision to pursue higher education rather than follow the traditional custom of getting married young. She develops an obsession with Teacher Harish Chander and has physical relationships with him without permission, becoming the only person who has survived her obsession. She is overly conscious of her role in her sweetheart's life, though.

*When she has doubts about his intentions, she does not value him. "She renouncing her commitment because of his actions, tarnishing the reputation of my loved ones," she says,*

*confronting him. She've been sent to Lahore because no one knows how to deal with my predicament, and I feel trapped inside my own house. (DD.149).*

She certainly asks him where she stands in his life. "Why don't we get married?" she asks, offering a socially acceptable position in the form of a marital alliance. You assert that there is no influence from your family. But at the same time, you take pleasure in acting that way. With the exception of this ongoing indecision, I can put up with anything. Swarna is a model man who genuinely exploits women. She ends up becoming his second wife.

However, because her guardians see her as a disgrace to the family, this union causes a rift between them. She couldn't make it to the funeral service for her grandfather and father. She doesn't even receive an invitation to her husband's house. His most memorable wife, Ganga, firmly establishes her dominance over the home. When it comes to her spouse and kids, she begins to perform her duties with greater intensity.

Seema Malik comments on Virmati's situation, saying, "Although she tries to cross one male-dominated barrier, She is imprisoned in a different world where her independence is stifled and she is limited to adapting, compromising, and conforming, Harish is respected in both his social and professional circles despite being the one who truly betrayed his most important partner.

Another woman from the second generation is Shakuntala. She has more freedom than her mom. She has given Virmati a deep yearning. She is currently employed as a teacher at a Lahore school and holds a Master of Science degree.

She is someone who has seen the advantages of taking advantage of opportunities and who has an unusual kind of self-confidence. She smokes, plays card games like badminton, dresses nicely, participates in horse riding activities, and freely buys goods and services.

She tells her cousin Virmati about how she and her friends travel, keep themselves busy in the evenings, keep an eye on each other's work, understand documents, and go to classes. She gives Virmati the confidence to break through the conventional barriers that keep women in their homes and makes the statement, the times are evolving and women are venturing out of their homes.

When the other members of her family turn away from her, she becomes a vital and profound source of support for Virmati. Numerous female novelists have contributed to the advancement of Indian English literature in the final ten years of the twentieth century. Among them, Manju Kapur is a well-known author.

She has discussed the issues faced by Indian women living in joint families in a society where men predominate. Her fiction offers a fresh perspective on Indian women. In 1999, Manju Kapur won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book for her debut book, *Difficult Daughters* (1998).

She examines her female characters in her book *Difficult Daughters*, some of whom have contemporary styles. Virmati, the primary character in this book, is a traditional. She is completely different from Shakuntala. She is a woman who is westernized. Swami Dayanand's idea of women's education served as the inspiration for Virmati. Manju Kapur exposes the conventional notion that marriage is a must for all women.

Thus, she purposefully portrays Shakuntala and Virmati as having two distinct mind-sets. The latter has a modern perspective, while the former has a traditional one. Shakuntala works in Lahore and holds a M.Sc. in Chemistry.

She is a sophisticated, intelligent, independent modern girl who feels strongly against the traditional idea of marriage and does not believe in it. She says, "But women are still supposed to marry and do nothing else," in reference to Virmati. "Times are changing and women are moving out of the house, so why not you?" she asks, urging her to live freely. Shakuntala's response reveals her perspective on marriage. As a result, Manju Kapur emphasizes freedom and education for Indian women while portraying this female character herself as self-optimistic person.

The author does, however, emphasize her views on women and their interactions with others, as well as their sexuality, love, infatuation, jealousy, marriage, gender roles, self-discovery, and other issues. Virmati is a strong, outspoken individual who understands her rights to economic independence and education. Kapur illustrates the problems, hardships, and other concerns of contemporary women through the character of Virmati.

She struggles to balance her desire for education, her family responsibilities, and her extramarital affair with the professor, who is already married and has two kids. She adores her romantic professor, her parents, her family, and her education. Like a contemporary woman, she believes that since "*a girl lives*," "study means developing the mind for the benefit of the family." *not for herself*, but for others. As a result, Kapur has researched Virmati's issues as a socialist feminist in light of her circumstances and fight for self-expression and identity.

In addition to the conversation, the majority of the book focuses on Virmati's issues as her parents' challenging daughter. She was aware at the start of her romance that Professor Sahib wasn't strong, but she later finds herself torn between "education versus marriage." The professor's refusal to marry her causes her to rebel.

Through her novels, Manju Kapur gives us a glimpse of the feminist fight against prejudice. One may get the sense from reading her books that a woman's life is similar to the love of a country going through many hardships.

Virmati was sure that neither parents nor grandfather would ever forgive her. Examining the development of feminist power and the appearance of new women in the book "*Difficult Daughters*" is the aim of this essay.

Renowned novelist Manju Kapur belongs to the group of female authors who significantly changed how women are portrayed in literature. She addresses a number of feminist issues, including gender equality, freedom from discrimination, and the right to education, marriage, abortion, autonomy, women's property rights, oppression, and more.

As a woman, she is also concerned with the issues faced by Indian women in patriarchal households. As Virmati defies the patriarchal standards for self-identity, she is a typical daughter to her mother in the book *Difficult Daughters*. In the patriarchal society, women face discrimination and are denied their fundamental rights.

Her female characters are well-educated, autonomous thinkers who adhere to their own beliefs. The status of women and their struggles in modern Indian society are depicted in her novels. She effectively draws attention to the feminist fight against patriarchy and exploitation as a woman. Her female characters demonstrate feminist power and stand in for the new generation of women who are logical, inquisitive, and thinking individuals who speak up for their survival, self-identity, and fundamental rights.

Virmati, the protagonist of *Difficult Daughters*, was born in Amritsar into an Arya Samaji Punjabi family. She is under pressure to take care of the house and other family duties because she is the oldest daughter. She was sixteen years old when her mother became pregnant with her eleventh sibling.

Since she was a young child, she has been occupied with caring for her siblings and assisting her mother Kasturi with other household tasks. Here, Kapur depicts an Indian family in which the

eldest girl child is expected to assist her mother in carrying out household chores and other responsibilities. Virmati is also expected to handle household chores and other duties pertaining to her siblings.

The author refers to Virmati as her siblings' "second mother." She is very eager to learn and work, but her mother Kasturi, a traditional woman, believes that a girl should only learn to read and write since her primary needs are to learn how to cook, knit, sew, and do other household chores. The growing tension between the mother and daughter is clear because Virmati and Kasturi hold divergent views.

Virmati aspires to be as educated as her forward-thinking, self-reliant cousin Shakuntala. Because educated women are more successful and demonstrate their individuality, Manju Kapur acknowledges that women who have completed higher education are more self-assured and ambitious. Shakuntala is a recent woman who disagrees with the early marriage customs of her family. She teaches science at a college in Lahore and holds a M.Sc. in Chemistry. Her activities, fashion sense, and contemporary lifestyle greatly impress Virmati.

Manju Kapur portrays an empowered woman living a free life of her choosing through Shakuntala because of her contemporary perspective. She is an assertive new woman who fights for her rights and disobeys patriarchal norms. She encourages Virmati to study and to look outside for education and freedom as times change because she is fearless, assertive, and tenacious. She has influenced Virmati so much that she believes that education is a great tool for achieving freedom and happiness. According to the novelist, Virmati's aspirations were sown by Shakuntala's visit. One could be something other than a wife.

After earning her Master of Science in Chemistry, Shakuntala Pehnji went about tasting wine of freedom, and she couldn't get the images out of her head. No, she needed to travel to Lahore, even if it meant battling her mother, who was certain that her schooling was all but over.

In this instance, the novelist portrays Virmati as the personification of freedom.

Virmati wants to pursue her education further, and she is even willing to battle her mother Kasturi if she disagrees. Kasturi is a believer in the ancient, widely accepted Indian myth that a girl is Paraya Dhan and that it is her destiny to marry and uphold her family's customs.

She dislikes Shakuntala's way of life since it goes against family customs. As a mother, Kasturi worries about her five daughters and is responsible for their marriages. She believes that Virmati shouldn't think like Shakuntala because education fosters mental growth for the good of the family and doesn't mean to violate or disgrace family customs.

*Leave your studies if it going to make you so bad tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first. what good are Shaku's degrees when she is not settled. Will they look after her when she is old? Demanded Kasturi irritably.' At your age I was already expecting you, not fighting with my mother'. (DD, 210-212)*

All the same, the novelist portrays the authentic image of a traditional Indian family that opposes women's modernization. The argument between Virmati and her mother Kasturi illustrates the tension between conventional and contemporary thinking.

Although Shakuntala is the epitome of modernity, traditional women like Kasturi disapprove of her methods because they value marriage and family over education and independence. Kasturi is a representation of patriarchy and tradition. When marriage and education are juxtaposed, education is either framed as a threat or as a dead end, reducing successful female characters to submissive wifhood and dependency rather than allowing them to profit from their training, according to Vera Alexander.

Virmati feels constrained by the conventional, patriarchal shackles of patriarchy, despite her

desire to live a free life like Shakuntala. The author illustrates the distinction between Shakuntala and Virmati here by comparing the former to a free bird and the latter to a caged bird flapping its wings to open the cage.

Inderjit, a canal engineer, becomes her fiancé after the family quickly finds a suitable match. However, even after getting engaged, Virmati shows incredible bravery and never gives up on her studies. She is a strong-willed woman who makes a lot of effort to pursue her education and goes her own way.

She meets Harish when she enrolls in AS College to pursue a B.A. in Oxford return married Professor. Since Kasturi lacks the time to comprehend or share her daughter's emotions and excitement, she fails to recognize her need for love as a mother. As a result, Virmati confides in Harish, the professor, and develops feelings for him. She is unaware at this time that her

Virmati will suffer in the future because of her affair with a married man. Her refusal to wed Inderjit is a brave move that goes against patriarchal norms and family tradition. Here, Virmati is the archetype of a free woman who acts bravely against her family's wishes and only considers her happiness.

Virmati refuses to get married despite being conflicted between her passion and her obligation to her family. Because she longs to be loved, she defies the family custom. She rejects the idea of marriage even though she knows she has failed to fulfil her role as a responsible sister and has brought shame to the family. P. Sudhashri's statement

*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.'*(P.Sudhashri, 2005).

The novelist depicts Virmati as a woman with unwavering willpower who chooses to end her relationship with the professor because she is determined to live a free and meaningful life. She tells the professor that she wants to become a teacher like Shakuntala and is traveling to Lahore for additional education. She has high hopes for the future because she is an optimist. She therefore makes the decision to break up with the Professor and destroys every letter he has ever written to her. Because she defies family custom, she is referred to as the family's difficult daughter.

Virmati family opposed her studies, but they had to grant her request, and she was eventually sent to Lahore to continue her education. This marks the beginning of a new chapter in her life and a positive turn in her life. She chooses to give her life a new direction because she is a strong woman with mental fortitude.

She was influenced by strong, independent women in Lahore like Shakuntala and Swarnalata, who never stopped encouraging her to get involved in social and political causes. Her roommate Swarnalata, who actively participates in the freedom struggle movement, greatly inspires her.

Swarnalata is a new woman who is a devoted, clear-headed activist who fights for women's liberation and the advancement of social values. The author presents a strong advocate for womanhood through the character of Swarnalata, who is assertive, dynamic, and modern. She is a young woman who is firm, progressive, and action-oriented, and she is a dedicated feminist. She invites Virmati to participate in the protest against the proposed Hindu Code Bill.

*Come and demonstrate with us against the 'Draft Hindu Code Bill' next Saturday outside the railway station. Men don't want family wealth to be divided among women. Say their sisters get dowry, that's their share and the family structure will be threatened, because sisters and wives will be seen as rivals, instead of dependents who have to be nurtured and protected. As a result women will lose their moral position in society! Imagine! (DD, 211-212)*

She claims that it is shocking that women with the same mental and intellectual capacity as men are treated as less valuable in patriarchal households. Swarna Lata could be considered the novelist's spokesperson since Kapur uses her to voice her own opinions about women's equality in patriarchal households.

Her dynamic and sophisticated lifestyle has such an impact on Virmati that she aspires to be as intelligent and dynamic as she is. Swarnalata wants to pursue a career outside of marriage and family, so she attends a variety of political conferences and rallies. Her conversation with Virmati clearly demonstrates her modern outlook:

*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, going to jail, wake up from your stale dream. (DD, 251).*

Even though Virmati is greatly impressed by her viewpoints, she cannot control her feelings for the professor who visits her in Lahore. She becomes pregnant after falling for the Professor's easy prey. Swarnalata encourages her to participate in women's liberation social activities and assists her in having the baby aborted. Swarnalata is a sophisticated, direct, and mature thinker who acts fearlessly and without hesitation when pursuing her own opinions.

Manju Kapur, a realist, has effectively conveyed the idea that women actively participated in the Satyagraha movement as well as other social and political movements pertaining to the fight for women's rights and freedom. Virmati observed that women are leaving their houses and going outside to participate in social events.

Along with Swarnalata, she frequently attends conferences and rallies where she hears motivational speeches from powerful intellectuals like Leela Mehta and other female nationalists. She understands that these women are totally committed to the cause of women's liberation and

national independence. She struggles with herself and wonders,

*"Am I an intellectual like these strong, independent women who are fighting for their freedom?" Is she free 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 conferences, politically active, while my time is spent being in love. Wasting it. Well, not wasting time, no, of course not, but then how come. I never have a moment for anything else? (DD, 216)*

She accuses the professor of interfering with her Lahore life. She curses herself for being Harish's easy target. She once more demonstrates incredible willpower by putting aside her love for Harish and accepting a position as headmistress of a Nahan girl's school. It is a respectable job, and she is now a self-sufficient woman leading a trouble-free life .She became financially independent thanks to her job, and her life took a turn for the better during the happiest time of her life.

She earns her own money and finds a suitable place to live, away from her family. She teaches girls at school and is living a happy life. She successfully asserts herself and forges her unique identity in society as an educated woman.

But Virmati comes out as a strong, independent woman with an optimistic outlook on life. She adapts to her new environment and demonstrates incredible bravery and self-control. . She has a sense of self-worth as an educated woman and eventually finds a suitable position in society. As a rebel, she opposes social norms, removes the restrictions that keep women inside the house, and establishes her own identity. She doesn't want to live a lonely life, even though she is content and happy with her free life here. She feels that she needs a man in her life because she wants to live a loving life.

When the school administration learns of her extramarital affair with the professor, she regrettably rekindles their relationship and loses her job. Despite losing her job, she shows bravery

by traveling to Shantiniketan. She makes the decision to wed the Professor, becoming his second wife.

However, she continues to experience restlessness because she feels cut off from the family. She is not accepted by his family, and she must endure taunts at home. Virmati got married in the hopes of finding love, happiness, security, and peace, but it appears that she is not living the life she had hoped for.

Even though she is successful in obtaining marital status, she must deal with opposition in the family, which causes her quest for identity and a rightful place in her law's household to resume. The only thing that gives her comfort is her husband Harish's love, who is constantly looking for an educated partner.

Since her family opposes her marriage to the professor, she is actually well aware that she will face some social backlash as the second wife. Although she is happy with the man of her choice and promises herself a happy marriage, she is certain that her family will never approve of her relationship with him because she has shamed them in the past and been cursed by her mother and family. Since her spouse is everything to her, she accepts her marriage. By marrying the married professor, she thus makes a daring move. Being a fearless woman, she is able to demonstrate to society that women are capable of bringing about a revolution by challenging conservative taboos and patriarchal ideology.

She does her best to fit in at her husband's house despite having to endure the animosity and curses of Harish's mother and first wife, Ganga. When the entire family moves to Kanpur because of the partition riots, she finally gets to enjoy her husband's company at his house. She has fought hard for free space, which she finally has.

However, she occasionally feels bad because she is the reason Ganga suffers. She also acknowledges that she ruined her family's reputation by failing to fulfil her obligations as a sister and daughter. She must endure a great deal of suffering despite having the courage to break through social and traditional barriers. Ida is the daughter she conceives and gives birth to.

*Virmati has to fight against the power of the mother as well as the oppressive forces of patriarchy symbolised by the mother figure. The rebel in Virmati might have actually exchanged one kind of slavery for another. But towards the end, she becomes free, free even from the oppressive love of her husband. Once she succeeds in doing that, she gets her husband all by herself, her child and reconciliation with her family (DD.268)*

Ida, Virmati's daughter is also portrayed as a rebel who revolts against social conventions. She is not ready to be used as a puppet by her husband, Prabhakar, who was given the all-clear by her parents. As Ida states: *"because you thought Prabhakar was so wonderful and I was glad that in choosing my husband I have pleased you," (DD.229)*

She married him in order to appease her parents. Ida is forced to have an abortion after Prabhakar denies her maternity leave. Ida ends her marriage because he doesn't want her to have a child. She defies the deeply ingrained family norms of a male-dominated society as a new woman. Having grown up in the post-independence era, Ida makes a name for herself as a new independent woman. She battles for her individuality, dignity, and identity despite social constraints.

As the novel's opening line, "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother," illustrates the complex bond between Ida and her mother Virmati, the author once more highlights the challenging relationship between mother and daughter.

Her goal is to comprehend the life of her mother, Virmati. When she learns that her mother, Virmati, also had an abortion, she starts to relate to her. Ida feels terrible because she did not choose her husband or have an abortion. Because they were not different, the mother and daughter are connected in the book. She claims to have a close relationship with her, saying, *"I look for ways to connect because without her, I am lost."*

Ida, a strong, self-reliant woman, bravely breaks free from the stale relationship. However, Virmati, an educated woman who also defies patriarchal norms and is unique, lacks the courage to pursue love and is limited to thinking about her husband and marriage.

However, since Prabhakar had coerced her into aborting the baby, Ida had the courage to break up with him. Ida's deliberate choice demonstrates her mental and emotional fortitude. Thus, it is evident that Manju Kapur is a dedicated author who firmly believes in the power of women. She has effectively conveyed the idea of New Women and their fight for independence in patriarchal society as a feminist author.

Her female characters, Ida, Shakuntala, Virmati, and Swarnalata, are strong, independent, progressive women who exhibit incredible willpower and break through long-standing social norms. The novelist depicts the aspirations, expectations, and desires of women through their portrayal.

They are strong-willed women who strive for freedom from outdated social constraints. They speak out against social injustice and gender inequality, defeat it by forging their own identities, and are conscious of gender discrimination, women's liberation, and their empowerment. They take part in political and social movements for the fight for freedom as new women. They believe in the inner strength of women and are self-aware, independent, and strong-willed individuals.

*Difficult Daughters* follows the complicated path of Virmati, who is caught between her desire for education, her family obligations, and illicit love. She depends on her family for both financial and emotional support. The developing girl is protected by her family from the harsh realities of being a woman in a patriarchal culture. The girl's innocence is maintained by her purity.

Virmati's world is shaped by other people, particularly her parents. She must move to her family's music. She is compelled to submit to the expectations of sociocultural norms and the taboos and conventions established by her parents. Who see her as a temporary possession, something to be kept in its purest form until her husband can take her into safe custody. Virmati, the main character in Manju Kapur, voluntarily accepts a fortune that is managed by others and is governed by a set of traditional values, beliefs, and roles. As long as Virmati adheres to these family values, she is allowed to live in the house.

Virmati is initially prepared to live by conventional principles. The opinions of her cousin Shakuntala, who works in Lahore and holds her M.Sc. in chemistry, ignited a spark inside of her. Her fearless and self-reliant opinions inspire Virmati and aid in her transformation into a new woman.

Her beliefs are a reflection of her feminist outlook, and they have a lasting effect on Virmati, who begins to consider alternative options for her life. She envisions herself as someone other than a wife. She can't stop thinking about Shakuntala's perspectives.

Virmati fondly remembers the time when Shakuntala “*turned her face to her, caressed the flushed cheek and touched the loose strands of hair on either side behind the ears*”.

Despite using Shakuntala as a role model, Virmati is unable to transform herself into a new Shakuntala-like woman. While Virmati is a destructive new woman, Shakuntala is a positive one. Virmati's ideas for development are sparked by Shakuntala's information about Indian women organizing meetings, holding rallies, and holding demonstrations across the country.

She tells her cousin about the activities of her new, free lifestyle, which she shares with a group of friends. *“we travel, entertain ourselves in the evening follow each other’s works, read papers, attend seminars, one of them is going abroad for higher studies”* (p.230).

For Shakuntala, there are other life goals besides marriage. She wants other women to have the freedom because she has enjoyed it. She believes that women should fight for their own freedom in addition to the freedom of the nation. She steadfastly maintains her happy single status in spite of her mother's disapproval. She loves to make her own decisions and possesses all the qualities of a new woman.

Assuming that education is primarily meant to help a woman marry well, be socially useful to her husband, be good at raising her children, equip her to provide social service, and most importantly, *an insurance policy*, against a broken marriage, the Virmati family is not openminded. Virmati is taught that marriage is the end of the world and that she can only obtain respect in her family and society by getting married. When Kasturi and Lajwanti discuss their daughters' marriages early on in the book, the tone is established.

According to Kasturi, it is every girl's responsibility to get married and further, *“A woman’s shaan is in her home and that a woman without her home and family is a woman without mooring”* (p. 232).

While her mother, Kasturi, spends her life procreating, Virmati, the oldest of the eleven children, spends her time caring for her siblings as a nurse and mother. She continues to assist her pregnant mother with housework, childcare, and education. As it happens, Kasturi gradually begins to take Virmati for granted. She considers her daughter to be her children's governess. Virmati is supposed to prioritize taking care of the kids and doing housework over her studies, treating them as a secondary job. Although Virmati views her cousin Shakuntala, who is studying in Lahore, as an inspiration, Studies don't fit into Kasturi's other dreams for her daughter.

According to her mother, education leads to immorality. She is certain that it resulted in moral decay. Fortunately, though, her father is liberal, so she attends school and college. From Virmati's perspective, education serves as a means of escape from the demands of family life. However, her mother wants her to settle down like a good girl and marry a suitable boy of her elders' choosing. However, fortune has set the girl on a different path.

She sympathizes with him and is persuaded that he needs appropriate company when this foreign-educated professor tells her that his wife, Ganga, is not ready to learn anything and is unable to understand music or share his ideas. They have a teacher-student relationship at first, but Virmati eventually develops feelings for Professor Harish. Despite being married, he is attracted to her because Virmati fits his romantic idea of the perfect partner. The foundation for Virmati's exclusion from her family, society, and home is laid by her appearance in Harish's fantastical world. Manju Kapur explores Virmati's romantic relationship in defiance of patriarchal and traditional norms. She was already betrothed to a canal engineer who was a Panjabi boy from their own caste.

However, she has already grown to love Professor Harish and wants to wed him during this graduation phase. She has a point of contention with this choice as well. She believes that her reliance on Harish will increase her capacity for growth and that he is the only one who can provide her with a respectable position in society.

She is committed to getting married to the professor as *"he is ..... successful academician, a writer of books, a connoisseur of culture, a disseminator of knowledge"* (p.144). She suffers from the idea of the sinful burden as a result of the ongoing illicit relationship. When she aborts the child, she feels empty and regrets, *"That a child of their union, the product of all those speeches on freedom and the right to individuality, the tyranny of social and religious restraints, and the sanity of human love, should meet its end like this!"* (DD 237).

She makes fruitless attempts to get in touch with him in an attempt to resolve the looming threat. She tells the professor about it and offers him her own marriage when they first meet. However, he declines out of concern for damaging his family name and reputation. Virmati then retaliates.

Depressed by her family's insistence on her marriage to Inderjeet and under pressure from Professor Harish to call off their engagement, Virmati is on the verge of suicide and writes to the professor explaining her intentions. The Professor reroutes the letter to her family because she is perplexed by the circumstances. The family is now aware of their affair and is appalled by her desire to wed a professor who is already married.

After being saved from drowning by her grandfather's employees, she only returns home with a renewed desire to pursue her education rather than get married. Only a new woman who possesses the bravery of conviction and confidence can take all these actions.

Virmati uses her studies as a pretext to forget her married lover and to get out of the forced marriage: Like a mantra, Study muttered "*Virmati*," and she swallowed. "*Study... and not to marry...*" *Virmati's face twisted "I don't want to marry," then she had to explain, "the boy I don't like the boy" ... Her silence though was not of acquiescence, but refusal she would not marry*" (239).

Virmati is opposing the patriarchal family decisions, isn't she? She has come out as a new modern woman, hasn't she? She is ultimately sent to Lahore for additional coursework in the vain hope that she will forget the professor there. On the contrary, she feels totally free and they meet without interruption in Lahore. Virmati wants Harish to explain the importance of education to her, so he does.

However, when Virmati brings up the subject of marriage with Harish, he begins discussing his family's reputation, demonstrating how deeply ingrained the patriarchal system of tradition is in men's minds.

Virmati is a devout woman who harbors romantic feelings for the professor. However, Professor Views love as nothing more than a physical relationship. As they keep seeing each other, Virmati gets pregnant, which is illegal in Indian culture to get pregnant before getting married. Harish assures her that she has made the right decision when she has an abortion. Harish is pursuing Eve like a serpent, attempting to woo her on all fronts. Even though their relationship is founded on infidelity and disloyalty, he makes the reckless decision not to marry her because he appears to be taking responsibility for Ganga, his first wife, and her children.

Virmati eventually assumes the position of Principal of the Pratibha Kanya Vidyalaya, which is administered by the Maharani Pratibha in the state of Sirmaur. The Diwan of Sirmaur, a family friend, makes a proposal that her family, especially her father, accepts. Since Virmati has vowed not to get married, her father gives her the opportunity to work because they believe it will help her develop into a responsible and sensible adult.

Her life is greatly impacted by education, which holds the key to opening all the doors to success. Because of her education, she can support herself financially and is resilient enough to handle any challenging circumstance. She believes that her life is now very well-structured and that she is successful and satisfied. She can do anything because she is financially independent.

However, she can't stop writing to Harish because she can't forget him. She feels bad about having sex with Harish and understands that his body is hers. She believes that the Professor is the only one who can keep her safe and secure.

*“Talked much romance and beauty, he came to be the spectre that lay between her and her life as principal, so that she too began to look upon her stay there as a period of waiting rather than a beginning of a career” (DD.240)*

In *Difficult Daughters*, Manju Kapur embodies both of the protagonist's traits. Although Virmati is a strong-willed daughter who defies her parents, her relationship with the Professor portrays her as being extremely weak. When Harish unexpectedly shows up at her door one day, she lets him stay in her cottage even though she knows it will jeopardize her job.

Virmati finds herself in a precarious situation once more due to her passion and desire to regain her status as a member of the family. She recognizes that her fate is to have

*Only this series of fair-time meetings in borrowed place (p 243).* She ultimately makes the decision to work in Shantiniketan when circumstances become unmanageable.

Before catching the connecting train to Calcutta, Virmati must wait seventeen hours in Delhi. She chooses to have a final meeting with Harish's poet friend, whom she knew well and who lived in civil lines. Harish is forced to marry the Professor's friend in order to resolve the issue. There is hardly any element of free personal choice when she eventually marries Harish. Harish is still worried about his family and status. He mentions his powerlessness,

*What can I do? I am hemmed in and tortured on all sides... everybody will condemn her. My children will never accept it, not my mother... what can I do? My wife, my son... (DD.245).*

There is very clear indication that he would have slipped out of marrying with Virmati.

This is an additional facet of Manju Kapur's feminist perspective in this instance. At last, Virmati is brought to Professor Harish's home and his family. Together with his wife and two kids, the Professor lives in a tiny home with only one bedroom. The veranda is used by his mother, Kishori Devi, and her daughter, Guddiya. The family is not alone. Virmati has access to her husband's study and is given a meagre space in the dressing room. She is therefore considered the other woman in Harish's household rather than the wife in her married home.

Virmati must be content to be the Professor's second wife because her marriage does not grant her the desired position as a wife. She dissolves like a soft doll after marriage. She must live like an outsider in her husband's home, losing any identity she may have had in her father. She is extremely distressed, and her thoughts of her lost independence and her resentful place in her husband's family are causing her mind and heart to become incredibly agitated, rippling, and intense: *Thought not overtly hostile, in the warring factions that existed in the house she belonged to the opposition. (249).*

Both Virmati and Ganga appear to be taking a bath in murky water, and while Virmati becomes passive because she is disillusioned with her husband's family, Ganga becomes aggressive when she fears exclusion from the family. She acknowledges that she has no other option and views her predicament as the just reward for her efforts.

Therefore, one could consider Virmati to be a ripe fruit of feminism. She acknowledges that every decision she makes is predetermined by providence and that she is a puppet controlled by her destiny. She comes to believe that although people cannot change fate or chance, they must modify their social norms because they are rational beings. This will allow them to resist these forces or adjust to them.

She escapes from older prisons but is imprisoned in more recent ones. Her problems are exacerbated by her feelings of guilt, anxiety, resentment, and anger. Virmati frequently experiences a range of emotions. She feels somewhat proud of her husband's clear interest in her, but she also feels vulnerable in social situations.

Though Ganga's position is undignified, she is more observant than Virmati and the Professor. Within the family, Ganga and Virmati are fighting over a single man. Ganga is able to value her husband and his more refined tastes. Virmati is also prohibited from her mother's family. She has no place here. Virmati does not have the appropriate freedom in either of the houses. She writes and informs her own mother's family that she is married upon her arrival in Amritsar, but no one pays her a visit. Only after her father's passing does Virmati find the courage to go there. She arrives at the house, but instead of going through the front door, she enters through the backyard, where the cows are housed. This has symbolic meaning since it is believed that a significant family member no longer has the legal and timely right to enter the house.

Manju Kapur follows Virmati, her main character, as she comes to terms with her transgression. She is no longer connected to her family in any way. The dishonour she brought to the family by marrying a married man has caused all of the care, concern, sacrifice, and responsibility she carried out as the family's daughter to be thrown away.

When her mother sees her attending the funeral, she yells at her and tells her to leave the house right away because her father died without forgiving her.

*You have destroyed our family, you bad mash, you Randi; you have blackened our face everywhere; for this I gave you birth? Because of you there is shame on our family, shame on me, and shame on Bade Pitaji. But what do you care, brazen that you are (DD.250)*

Virmati is therefore permanently removed from her birthplace due to her marriage to Professor. Harish was committed to claiming her right to self-affirmation through education in Lahore because of the lack of love in her family and the humiliation she experienced in both homes. Once more, this choice makes things better for her.

She is free and independent there, something she does not have in Amritsar. Additionally, Harish feels relieved of stress and accountability when Virmati departs for further education. The tension-filled clouds have now been cleared from all sides:

In her book *Difficult Daughters*, Manju Kapur also explores the role that women played in the Independence Movement. Virmati takes part in this movement in Lahore, which was also her own fight for freedom. The fight for independence that Virmati began as a young girl is being vigorously pursued once more.

Virmati's perspective changes significantly as a result of her freedom in Lahore, becoming more assertive. She consequently starts her own non-cooperation movement by refusing to comply with Harish's requests. Virmati categorically dismisses Harish's criticism for not taking part in the Indian liberation movement. Virmati has made many sacrifices throughout her life, yet she still doesn't care about who she is. She also started the process of releasing women from the grasp of egoistic male society, but her daughter Ida brings this to the conclusion

She wants to exercise her right to equality and is adamantly against male supremacy. She vehemently rejects the roles that dominant males in society have played in her victimization. Ida can clearly see that if women want the world to acknowledge them, they must firmly believe in the power of their femininity.

She criticizes the patriarchal system in its entirety. As she traces her mother's life events, she discovers her shortcomings and the pugnacity Virmati endures in order to make room for herself. Additionally, Manju Kapur notes that education and knowledge are insufficient to engender feelings and emotions. It only gives them Professor and Prabhakar a superhuman quality, something that women like Virmati and Ida can admire or aspire to. Men don't comprehend what motherhood means to a woman.

Virmati's attraction to Harish stems mainly from the difference she perceives between Harish and her mother. Harish is understanding and patient. Additionally, he makes it apparent right away that he desperately needs her. Virmati experiences a sense of love and desire that her mother was never able to create.

Virmati handles her household chores in a very robotic manner. She is adept at running her mother's house, but she comes across as distant and uninvolved. A feeling of alienation, particularly maternal alienation, is present. She doesn't appear to be her mother's property. She yearns for her mother's love as a young child, but her desire fades when it seems unattainable.

It is possible to detect maternal alienation in the thoughts and actions of daughters. This feeling of alienation is the result of the mother's initial indifference. Consequently, the daughters never experience a sense of unity with their mothers. There is always a sense of alienation in the relationship. Daughters suffer in silence because they are unable to talk to their mothers about their personal problems.

First, the mother is reluctant to share, and second, and perhaps more significantly, the mother causes the majority of these tragedies herself. This relationship, which is the most important aspect of a woman's life, sadly lacks the sense of belonging that is the foundation of a healthy partnership.

The absence of the understanding shoulders of the mother at when their mothers are not there to provide them with empathy, these daughters turn to others for support, which ultimately results in dishonesty. Additionally, they become susceptible to external influences.

As a result, it is the lengthy process of conditioning women that begins with their mothers. As women, mothers are conditioned by society at large after being conditioned by their mothers. It is the responsibility of mothers to raise their daughters according to patriarchal social norms. The earlier the procedure is started, the daughter will benefit more from it.

The Victorian mind-set of "*men for sword and women for hearth*" has become so ingrained in our minds that it is difficult to shake. The actual business of life is a nightmare that poses a threat to the daughter's mental stability. The story of Virmati is about a woman's fight against a narrowminded society.

Women must support women in this struggle. The idea of sisterhood is discussed by the feminists. Although mothers rarely live up to this idea, there have been numerous instances where it has been successfully realized. Unfortunately, this is one relationship where these concepts are lacking, even though understanding and support are highly expected.

In a patriarchal society where identity is viewed as a ridiculous concept for women, identity crisis is a problem that all conscious and awake women face. A daughter's identification with her mother is the first step in her identity quest. Daughters look to their mothers for self-realization. In *Difficult Daughters*, Ida sets out on a quest to learn more about herself by delving into her mother's past.

It's ironic that when daughters begin their quest, the relationship's conflict starts. The relationship functions well as long as daughters do not recognize their feminine status and are not aware of their uniqueness. However, the tension begins to increase as soon as the child recognizes her femininity and begins to express her uniqueness.

In the course of her identity quest, Ida starts looking for her mother. She starts off resolving that she would not be like her mother, but as the narrative progresses, she starts to identify with her. Complete identification is the result of what began as alienation. However, not every daughter has Ida's luck. Kasturi, Virmati's mother, could never have her. Her private sorrows continued to include her pleasures, her sufferings, and her pitiful life as a mistress and later a second wife. Her mother would never be able to see them. She is incomprehensible to Kasturi, who never makes an effort to comprehend her. Virmati grows accustomed to Kasturi's sour tone. They appear to be separated by a barrier that Virmati is unable to remove.

*They have constructed the infamous logic of anti-love (Helen Cixous, 336). Towering this line of thought on which Manju Kapur has written her novel “Difficult Daughters”, Ismat Chughtai rightly quotes: It was a man’s world, made and marred by man – woman was just part of this world – the means for his expression of love and hate. He either worships her or rejects her depending on his mood. Women have to resort to feminine wiles to achieve their goals – patience, cleverness, intelligence and the ability to make a man dependent on her.*

*For this she has to be coy while fixing buttons, to die making rotis, to do with her own hands those trivial, facile jobs that could quite easily be done by servants and to take his excesses with a bowed head so that he would ultimately be shamed into falling at her feet.*

*To me, femininity was a hoax- to my mind a display of contentedness, cowardice and hypocrisy- deceitful (Ismat Chughtai: the Heart Breaker Free ( DD 257)..*

Therefore, through the experiences of her female character, Virmati, Manju Kapur realistically depicts the hardships faced by women in traditional Indian society as well as their desire and attempts to lead independent and meaningful lives.

The diverse range of female characters in the book *Difficult Daughters* highlights Manju Kapur's comprehension of the various facets of women's lives, including their issues and compulsions within the specific social context. Because they are unaware of their rights, some women, like Kasturi, are content with their situation. Some women, such as Ganga and Virmati's mother-in-law, provide a lesson in compromise and adaptability. Women who are ahead of their time and believe in living life on their own terms and conditions include Shakuntala and Swarnalata.

Economic independence and education are the two things that give the modern woman the ability to make her voice heard. Virmati presents herself as a modern woman who is educated and employed prior to marriage. It is a huge accomplishment in and of itself that she was able to disrupt the patriarchal trend of the 1940s. Her daughter Ida, who is educated, divorced, and childless, lives a considerably more liberated life than her mother. She has actually accomplished a great deal more than her mother did. As stated by Dora Sales Salvador, *Difficult Daughters'* Spanish translator, "*Virmati's voice is not heard in Difficult Daughters.*" She was unable to speak up because she was undoubtedly caught between two forms of oppression: patriarchy and colonialism.

Additionally, some women, like Ida, try to come to a cultural crisis that has caused them to come to terms with their lives. They make an effort to uphold the traditional role that has been assigned to them and keeping tabs on their own uniqueness. During India's partition, all of the women in the book transcend patriarchal boundaries and become new women in one way or another.

Virmati was fighting to live her life according to her own terms in the story *Difficult Daughters*, which is about her fight for independence. Every woman in the book is modern and well-educated. They refuse to mindlessly adhere to the antiquated ideas and convictions that limit women's personal freedom. These are women who aspired to fulfil their own dreams and demonstrate their uniqueness.

For Virmati, a formal marriage is a social and public declaration. Even if she becomes the Professor's second wife, this is what will define her identity. Therefore, marriage represents a way for her to be freed from the fear of social rejection, a possibility that could reunite her with others and alleviate her feelings of uncertainty and insecurity. Her mother's older generation hasn't seen any cause for rebellion. In life, there was total acceptance. The typical feminine attitude of procreating to create life and pleasure is exemplified by Kasturi. She is happy to manage her house, first as a joint family and then as her own.

In the case of Kasturi, her parents threatened to wed her. The possibility of Kasturi getting married is out of the question. Child marriage is a wicked practice. According to Swami Dayanandji, marriage is a union of consenting, reasonable adults. According to him, the numerous marriages.

Avoid widows. He is aware of his sister-in-law's distress. Kasturi is the first girl in her family to delay the wedding guest's arrival. She stays at home until she gets married after graduating at the age of twelve. It was always remembered during Kasturi's formal education that marriage was her fate.

Virmati understands that a woman must play a significant role in the outside world and in the empowerment of her country; her life is not limited to love, marriage, education, and domestic limbo. As a result, she chooses to join the Indian independence movement like her friends, but her decision is immediately influenced by her deep love for Harish.

Virmati is left in a depressed psychological state as a result of the abortion due to her illicit relationship with the professor. Her friend Swarnalata then brought her back, telling her that life is about much more than this. Like her roommate Swarnalata, a freedom activist, she aspires to lead a meaningful life.

Virmati alternates between her desire to be a part of the intellectual and political movements of her era and her heart's desires. She is moved by what Swarnalata said, claiming: In contrast to Swarnalata, Shakuntala, and even her daughter Ida, Virmati does not gain social acceptance. However, she is commended for her courageous fight against colonialism and patriarchy.

*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 . . . Most families look upon the marriage of a daughter as a sacred duty or sacred burden. We are lucky we're living in times when women can do something else. Even in Europe women gain more respect during wartime. And here we have that war and our Satyagraha as well. (DD 261-262)*

Virmati desires to take part in the fight for freedom. Harish wants her to focus more on their child, so she is not permitted to do that. The naming ceremony for the daughter is held. Since the name Bharati is linked to the nation's founding, Virmati wishes to use it for the daughter.

Virmati informs Harish that the name *Ida*, which Harish suggests, sounds Persian. Harish, however, defends his statement by stating, *Let anybody think what they like*. It signifies a fresh start and a new state for us DD 277. In that regard, naming a child seems like a minor matter. Despite the fact that he did not pick the name that his wife did.

In reality, a man who advocates for national freedom denies his wife the same privilege. We read papers, attend seminars, follow each other's work, and amuse ourselves in the evenings. Swarnalata is an extremely devoted activist who lives a similar lifestyle. She is an excellent speaker at the Punjab Women's Students Conference They chose a free lifestyle as a result of their qualification.

Shakuntala, Virmati's cousin, is portrayed right away as the epitome of the modern or liberated woman in her extended family. She participates in the Gandhian political movement,

studies, and teaches. She continues to stand firmly for her independence, freedom of movement, and freedom of thought.

Ida, Virmati's daughter, is a strong and logical member of the post-independence generation. Since her marriage forbids her from having children, she dissolves it. Ida's marriage bond releases her from both traditional social structures that bind women and from male dominance and power.

She possesses the strength that Virmati does not. Ida had never told her mother her secret. Ida continues by sharing her thoughts on her mother: Ida, who struggled as a child to be the ideal daughter, lacks the courage to turn down Virmati. But after learning about Virmati's past, she rejects her as a woman.

The novelist appears to be implying that a woman can preserve her individuality and follow her interests without endangering the family structures through Ida's admiration for Swarnalata, who ventures into a broader socio-political realm. Therefore, a woman should essentially aim for a harmonious, mutually beneficial relationship.

However, if she feels choked, someone should speak up and she should completely break away, just like Ida did. A woman should believe in the inner strength of womanhood and be self-aware, self-reliant, strong-willed, self-controlled, and logical.

## CHAPTER – III

### CONCLUSION

For women, identity crisis is seen as a ridiculous idea. When a daughter identifies with her mother, her search for identity starts. Daughters look to their mothers for self-realization. In *Difficult Daughters*, Ida sets out on a quest to learn more about herself by delving into her mother's past. Complete identification is the result of what began as alienation.

However, not every daughter has Ida's luck. Virmati herself was never her mother's property. As a result, when they are young, they both yearn for their mothers' love, but when that seems impossible, they stop. Thus, daughters' lives undergo significant changes as a result of maternal alienation. For women, identity crisis is seen as a ridiculous idea. When a daughter identifies with her mother, her search for identity starts. Daughters look to their mothers for self-realization. Her pathetic life as a mistress and later a second wife, along with her pleasures and pains, remained her personal tragedies.

She was never able to tell her mother about them. Kasturi never makes an effort to comprehend her. They appear to be separated by a barrier that Virmati is unable to remove. Ida informs the readers maternal indifference causes a great number of promising lives to end in failure. A married man like Harish would not be able to harm Virmati. A mother's authoritarian and autocratic behavior can affect a daughter's personality, as in the case of Uma, and can turn a disciplined and driven daughter, like Virmati, into a pseudo-rebel. The first is when she deserts her family, religions, and political authorities who pose as captors. She is drawn to her seducer's strong figure by her freedom and limitless potential.

In her article titled "*The Mother-Daughter conflict in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters*," Sumita Pal states that although the story takes place during the partition, it does not specifically address the trauma of the division. It tells the tale of Virmati's love, who, in her quest for autonomy, divides the world around her. She turns out to be a challenging daughter for her mother, just as she had been a challenging daughter for her. Self-affirmation, man-woman relationships, familial bonds, and most importantly, the universal mother-daughter conflict are all powerful themes in this book.

According to R.K. Dhawan's *article Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters: A Saga of Conflict and Crisis, Separation, the devastation it caused, and the refugee flight were the subjects of several novels*. They accurately document the violent reign that defined the time and offer a poignant and poignant reflection on the decline of human principles. A strain of disappointment and hopelessness

The story of a struggle for freedom is told in *Difficult Daughters*. Virmati fights for the right to live her life as she sees fit, while India fights for independence from the British Raj. She wants to choose who to marry and when, as well as what to study and where, like a lot of other Indian girls.

Ultimately, it seems that even though she may have accomplished all of that, it no longer matters. Because she loses a piece of herself during the struggle. The side she is fighting against is one of the two halves that are tearing her apart. When India achieves freedom, all of this will occur. However, it did so at the expense of dividing and losing half of its soul.

As the title implies, *Difficult Daughters* tells the tale of daughters and challenges as well as challenging daughters. As the intended title, *The Partitions*, implies, it is also the story of freedom and partitions at both the national and personal levels. It is impossible to overlook the stark and obvious analogy. India gained independence in 1947, but not before suffering from division and bloodshed. In this book, women are also granted equality, freedom, and education, but the overall atmosphere is still quite depressing.

Therefore, through the experiences of her female character, Virmati, Manju Kapur realistically depicts the hardships faced by women in traditional Indian society as well as their desire and attempts to lead independent and meaningful lives. The diverse range of female characters in the book *Difficult Daughters* highlights Manju Kapur's comprehension of the various facets of women's lives, including their issues and compulsions within the specific social context.

Women who are ahead of their time and believe in living life on their own terms and conditions include Shakuntala and Swarnalata. Because of the cultural crisis, some women, like Ida, also try to make sense of their lives. They make an effort to maintain their individuality while also fitting into the traditional role that has been assigned to them. Because they are unaware of their rights, some women, like Kasturi, are content with their situation. However, there are also women like Virmati who protest patriarchy and suffer the repercussions.

During India's partition, all of the women in the book transcend patriarchal boundaries and become new women in one way or another. Considering how prevalent violence against women has become, it need not be written off as the norm. It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of feminist awareness.

It must be regarded as each person's sacred obligation, regardless of whether it is *he or she* in an effort to attain this feminist consciousness. This is precisely what contemporary female writers accomplish with their artistic endeavours through their written works. It is impossible to write off their argument that women are the ultimate losers as a mere polemical juggernaut.

Their passion for social justice is genuine. With an emphasis on the ecstasy and suffering that women go through in her novels, Kapur has painted an intriguing and captivating picture of women. The proverbial homemaker's constant compromises and adjustments lead to marriage. A family becomes a force; it weathers all the storms and makes it through all the difficult times because of a woman's wisdom and patience.

The events in the novels suggest that while women do not always desire equality with men, they do desire to be viewed as subjects, and subjectivity varies depending on the individual. The lives of women are significantly impacted by internalized patriarchal values. There has been a noticeable shift in the mind-set of contemporary literary artists, especially women, regarding the emancipation and empowerment of women. Most of them exhibit social consciousness in the themes they choose and the way they define their characters, particularly the characters.

By doing this, they demonstrate a sentiment that wrongs are wrongs and ought to be addressed in the same way that sensitive people ought to react to wrongs. This is the main explanation for why women novelists have made women's emancipation and empowerment the central themes of their works, both in English and regional languages.

Women can advance on their journey to emancipation if they start to bring these ideals to the fore. Studying the novels makes it evident that women are strong; the issue is that they must progress toward self-realization, but each person experiences this process in a unique way, they become entangled in the patriarchal web and lose sight of their own power.

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