

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Manju Kapur and Her Works

Manju Kapur was born in 1948 in Amritsar. She teaches English literature at Miranda House College, Delhi University. Her first novel *Difficult Daughter* was published in 1998. This novel received huge international acclaim. So it was awarded the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best first book. Her second novel *A Married Woman* was published in 2002. Her third novel *Home*, was published in 2006. She is married to Gun Nidhi Dalmia and lives in New Delhi. Manju Kapur has joined the growing number of women writers from India, like Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan, Shobha De and Meena Alexander.

Manju Kapur's second novel *A Married Women* (2002) are set at a time of political and religious upheaval. The main ideas conceived in the novel are based on family life, sexual relationship, gender discrimination, socio-political upheaval and the desire of peaceful co-existence. The novel is a sincere confession of a woman about her personality a bad marriage. Astha the sensitive daughter of an enlightened father and orthodox mother has grown in a middle-class educated family in South Delhi and becomes a housewife, her status of a married woman she fights for her self-assertions.

Manju Kapur's third novel *Home*, (2006) is set in present time depicting the complex life of a joint family of North India. Nisha is a long cherished offspring of Yaspal and Sona. Nisha the protagonist of the novel, *Home* who has been conditioned into adopting a lackadaisical attitude towards her education and predisposed to thinking that marriage is her only choice begins to feel the need to actualize her and

succeed in breaking through her blinkered existence in order to counter patriarchal ideology.

Difficult Daughter by Manju Kapur is the story of a woman torn between different forces that affect her life. Her duty towards her family, her desire to be academically well equipped and illicit love. Virmati, the protagonist of the novel is the eldest daughter of Arya Samaj family of Amritsar. Her illicit love affair with a married man and attempts to shape her own destiny stands at the core of the novel. The major portion deals with Virmati's love affairs with professor and rest part describes fighting struggle for freedom. The whole novel shows the feminism of Virmati who opposes her all family and continues her study against the wishes of her family.

The story begins with Ida's narration about mother, Virmati who has passed away. Ida recalls her mother's sayings what she had said before her death that there should not be any 'Shor Shaar' and her eyes, heart, kidneys and other useful organs should be donated. The novel is narrated in the flash- back technique. The entire events are seen through the eyes of Ida. Ida was a childless divorcee who failed to understand her mother all her life. Realization dawned only after her mother's death engulfing her into an abyss of guilty and shame. Picking up the fragments of memory, she looks back and begins to look at her mother's life in a newer light.

Although Virmati succeeds in breaking all man -made boundaries, there are certain priorities so deeply embedded within her that she struggles to shake through the shackles? She grows up from a naive girl to a woman matured by suffering and through experience. During her life time, she travels through the realms of various experiences. In addition to higher education and a much talked about illicit love affair, Virmati realizes that there are other things also to be done. She is in the quest

for true love, quest for freedom, quest for the realization of the self --- the quest does not stop. Virmati was totally deprived of her quota of love and care and she even lost track of her childhood years. "At times Virmati yearned for affection for some sign that she was special" (6).

Virmati is sent to an Arya Samaj school and then to a Samaj College. The values taught outside the home are not all different from those insisted upon at home. There is no clash between the individual needs and the family as there are no worlds with conflicting values. Arya Samaj did bring about important ideological changes and transformed a traditional society into a modern one. For instance, it discouraged child marriage and encouraged women's education. The structure of education was such that it emphasized reading, writing, balancing household accounts, sewing and above all rituals of Arya Samaj which helped women to be trained as good wives and mothers.

Manju Kapur as a Feminist

Manju Kapur has proved herself as one of the most accomplished and admitted chroniclers of middle-class of India. She is one of those few Indian novelists in English who have tried to understand closely the predicaments of their female characters. She represents the welcome "creative release of the feminine sensibility" (Rao 50) which began to emerge perceptibly on the literary horizons after the Second World War. She attempts to portray her in her works the complexity of themes Indian sensibility the quest of self-assertion and the status of women in this patriarchal social set-up. Her theme is the existential predicament embedded in the social milieu where males and females shown in contrastive terms-males being rulers, females being ruled over. Her protagonists get swayed by problems of loneliness, alienation and pessimism.

Vandita Mishra rightly comments in the *The Pioneer*:

Kapur never permits Virmati any assertion of power or freedom.

Because even as she breaks free from old prisons; she is locked into newer ones. Her relationship with the professor for instance. While it does provide an escape from a loveless arranged marriage, it is itself furtive and claustrophobic, offering only a stolen togetherness behind curtained windows. Even years of studying and working alone do not give her confidence to strike independent roots and grow. She hovers uncertainly at the age of new world; never entering lest the Professor should call and not find Professor should call and not find her near.

Eventually, marriage to the man of her choice is no triumph either. As second wife, she must fight social ostracism. (22)

Kapur's female characters are highly individualistic and sensitive; they never surrender but react against it. Virmati, Astha, Nisha, Shakuntala and Rupa, all are searching for their grounds interestingly from a wrong threshold. However, Kapur is excellent in depicting the inner furies of women and their rising tone for emancipation and empowerment. She also pays much attention to form and technique in writing. Ram Chandra is truly acceptable when he says, "Each novels of Mrs. Kapur is a masterpiece of technical skill" (Rao: 62).

When Kapur starts writing she has a theme in mind, not the story. The story takes shape gradually. Her work is transparent and seamless (7). Dr. Ram Sharma writes, "Manju Kapur desires to prove through her woman protagonist that a woman should be aware, self-controlled, strong-willed, self-reliant and rational having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense. She seems to bring out the implicit

fallacy in Aristotle's dictum that man is a social animal, " In the present socio-cultural context of India in which people fail to realize the futility of violence and the necessity of peaceful of existence for all" (32).

As Kapur's modern woman, Virmati is disillusioned with the ideologies of Satyagraha movement, strikes, academic freedom, the war, peace, rural upliftment, mass consciousness, high prices, Congress Committee, the Muslim League, anti-imperialism and realization of her lot in love as , "men do take advantage of women''(138) in the context of the Shakespearean texts and her suffering is a tragic irony. She realizes her predicament when, "male geocentricism blinds men to the situation of women who may be placed in agonizing circumstances on account of their relationship with men" (108). Ashish Nandy writes:

The most socially valued attributes of the male are a result of the natural selection imposed upon him by the female's original power to instinctively sense which mate was biologically fitter. This pre-eminence arouses in man in security, jealousy and hostility towards women. He has been trying to work through this basic hostility by imitating, the full possibilities of women through sheer oppression (35). This results the creation of feminine principal in nature. By imposing mother role in the society has decidedly trapped her true self. The importance of conjugally has been side lined by again. The challenge is nothing less than redefinition of her. The first task that faces her to device means of de-emphasizing some aspects of her role so that she may widen her identity in India it may invoice transcending the partial identity imposed by motherhood (42-43).

While Kapur presents the "psychic distress" of both Virmati and Ganga she has never left the suffering of Kasturi as a mother and Kishori Devi as a Mother-in-law when they say desperately "we have to accept this is our lot in life" (195). A loving mother always forgives her child's mistakes by lodging a mild protest through logics and reasons, morals and values of life. Kapur translates the mind of Kishori Devi when she easily realizes the situation of Ganga with the arrival of Virmati: She could only bow before the inevitable in her heart she could hear the Wife's sobs, her crumpled face, innocent and still young. Her life was over, she would be lamenting bitterly in some hidden corner of the house. How could she possibly console her? (192) composing with the situation she says in her agony. (Bhagabat Nayak)

During nineteenth century there were some women writers who focused on feminist perspective. They were Jane Austin, George Eliot and Bronte Sisters. They were pioneers of their time. They contributed a lot to the protest against the condition and status of women in the society. The wave of awareness among women enabled them to start working for the freedom of women. In 1833, Oberlin College was established first for co-education. The education offered to women was traditional and conventional. Francis Wright, who is one of the first women orators, raised her voice for the better education to be offered to women. French feminist Simon de Beauvoir wrote a famous book *The Second Sex*, one of the most important books on feminism where she writes, "One is not born but rather becomes a woman" (297). This has revolutionized the minds of people and helps to propel feminist thinking for the next fifty years or more. She touched upon questions and issues that lie at the very heart of feminist inquiry. Feminist critic and novelist Virginia Woolf in her celebrated essay "*A Room of One's Own*" aptly depicts the feminine awareness.

Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth women are supposed to be very calm generally; but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as brothers do; they suffer from too rigid restraints, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting, stockings, to playing on the piano, and embroidering bags (822).

Kapur's female protagonists are mostly educated, aspiring individuals caged within the confines of a conservative Indian society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them. They struggle between tradition and modernity. In a culture where individualism and progress have often remained alien ideas and marital bliss and the woman's role at home is a central focus. Women under the patriarchal pressure and control were subjected to much more burnt and social ostracism. They were discriminated and were biased in lieu of their sex. The impact of patriarchy on the Indian society varies from the one in the west. The women of India have lived and struggled under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society.

For Kapur it appears that feminism is both a concept and a movement in the present century and is a new dimension to contemporary thinking. She reflects Virmati's conflict both internal and external like the tragic heroines of Shakespeare who becomes serious for her duty and responsibility. Kapur's Virmati is a new woman of colonial India and stands as a metaphor to explore the possibilities for modern

women in education and economic independence who experience humiliation and disillusionment in their colonial matrix. The novelist has raised the "question of women" during a political and social movement in Colonial India for which:

We may term a novel "feminist" for its analysis of gender of socially constructed - for its understanding that change is possible and that narrative can play a part in it. Feminist fiction is the most revolutionary movement in contemporary fiction revolutionary both in that it is formally innovative and in that it helped to make a social revolution.

(Bassnett 1)

The novel evokes the problems of women in a male dominated society where laws for women are made by men in its social matrix and a husband stands as a "sheltering tree" under which a woman proves her strength through her suffering. Kapur has defended this through her Virmati with an idea that.

The Emergence of feminist ideas and feminist politics depends on the understanding that in all societies which divide the sexes into differing cultural, economic or political spheres, women are less valued than men. Feminism also depends on the premise that women can consciously and collectively change their social place (Greene2).

For Professor Harish, Virmati is an enigma, a riddle and an essential partner for his physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual satisfaction. While professor's love with Ganga is sacred and unsatisfactory with Virmati it is platonic and based on intellectual understanding. The "wind of misfortune" in both the families blow for Virmati for which she has a "bizarre obsession of grief" and in a human predicament she searched for her self- autonomy. Manju kapur's *Difficult Daughter* locates the life of Virmati against the backdrop of political happenings before and after partition. The

story of Virmati is narrated against the background of the contemporary political scenario in Europe and India. The novel focuses on gender issues, political scenario as well as the whole issue of female identity. The 1947 Indian partition lingers as a pivotal moment in the modern world. From the killings, rapes, kidnappings, looting, Satyagraha movement runs by Gandhi. Seema Malik rightly observes, “The trauma of partition and its aftermath have lingered in the collective memory and have affected the present” (Malik, 12). Manju Kapur belongs to the category of the novelists who revisit the partition scenario from the vantage point of contemporary mind set. At a larger societal level, Kapur uses the novel to criticize the politics of partition and post partition events, especially contemporary Indian issues the fire of division in Indian society on the lines of caste, creed and religion prevail even today.

Thus Manju Kapur has established the world of women in which her female characters have to struggle the problems created by males to live their own life like marriage, freedom, sexual desires and motherhood. Her female protagonists are very strong and aware to react against males like Virmati, Nisha and Astha. They never turn back and they are ready to turn to violation to be free. The world of her female characters in her novels is full of feminine awareness. In this regard, the dissertation would attempt to analyze of the following questions. Does Virmati advocate the rights of women? Are the female characters of Manju Kapur sensitive and isolated in patriarchal society? Do they react against the patriarchal society?

CHAPTER- II: Feminism and Empowerment

The term "feminism" was first used to denote the support for women's equal legal and political rights with men. Now feminism also refers to any theory which sees the relationship between the sexes as one inequality and remedies the sources of all oppression and subordination. Feminism is related to the feminist social movement that seeks equal for women giving them equal status with men and freedom to decide their careers and life pattern. Women are taken to be weak in terms of education, culture, body, religion and society, whereas males are considered as strong in every aspect of life. Because of the feminists has become to change or revolt against such misconceptions and the gender construction. The female writers have written for the emancipation of female from patriarchy as well as to establish women's position in the society.

The feminists think that feminism is their gift by god. So, they take it as the weapon to fight against patriarchy. They put female in the supreme place and show that women are also bold enough to decide whatever is better for their life. Feminism is the quest for female autonomy. Even though it is difficult to define feminist theory; it was thought that feminism could be dividend into liberal, radical and revolutionary phases in the early feminist theorizing; that is into those who argued for equality as men, those who celebrate women's supposed difference from men and those who wished to deconstruct the system of gender difference. Feminist criticism is not unified subject. It covers media, literature and civilization as well. Mark Hawkins Dady says:

Feminist critical theory has always been an interdisciplinary subject; for those who are primarily engaged in literary criticism, it has always been necessary to look beyond the boundaries of purely textual

analysis in order to explore both the factors that enable women to resist and counter domination (264).

There is no harmony between men and women in relation to their status in the society. Women are silenced in the Patriarchal ideology. There is inequality shown in the norms created by males where women are taking plight to follow in the norms created by males of their work. Maria Mies says, "Feminists are those who dare to break the conspiracy of silence about the oppressive, unequal man-woman relationship and who want to change it" (6). She talks in favor of woman's autonomy. For her autonomy is the feminist effort to maintain and recreate the innermost subjective human essence in woman. The feminist claim to autonomy is a rejection of all tendencies to subsume the women's question and the women's movement under some other apparently more general theme or movement. Feminists are in search of a situational leadership. The sense of alienation, powerlessness and dependency felt by women in their everyday life has encouraged the emergence of the study of women. The sense of difference has been felt by the female because of increasing self-awareness among women, changes in their relations with men, and desires to extend their social roles. Thus, these changes in consciousness led women to search their selfhood. Moil's concept about feminism focuses it as a political movement which aims at breaking the Patriarchal boundary and hierarchy between men and women.

In the same way, a prominent critic, M. H. Abrams has given his view in his own way. He says, "Feminist literary criticism continues in our time to be closely inter-related with the movement by political feminists for social, economic and cultural freedom and equality" (234). Abrams' view about feminism states it as women's fight for freedom. It is the search for equality in social, political, educational

and cultural aspects. Or in short, feminism is the quest for autonomous existence required by women.

Domination, suppression and inequality in every field cannot continue for long. Feminist criticism has demanded not just the recognition of women's writing but a radical rethinking of the concept of literary writing. Feminist criticism is international in its resources, and the feminist critics cross the national boundaries. They collectively demand to change the attitude of looking at women as inferior people and request to rethink the concept of literary studies.

Feminist critical theory can be said to have begun in the 1960s and 1970s with the work that questioned the representation of female characters in the male authored texts and also questioned exclusion of the women writers from the canvas. Kate Millet favors power as an inevitable matter to change the society. In *Sexual Politics*, she has cited the fact that power is exercised in the society by subjugating women. She emphasizes that women should be given power to develop their status and career. She says, "Patriarchy dominates and subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male. Power is exercised directly or indirectly in the civil and domestic life to constrain women"(137). In the large canvas of male literary works. Women are presented just as sexual objects, whose roles are subservient to those of the central male protagonist. Violence and domination seemed to be the main idea by which the unequal power relation in the area of sexual politics is maintained. Women began to understand that patriarchy had its origin not in the realm of public politics but only in men's control over women's bodies, particularly their sexuality and their generative capacities. Millet analyzed the sexual politics of literature in her work. She considers politics an institution through which power is exercised in the society. Her work paved way for the readers to reconsider their evaluations fundamentally about

some male writers. After that "sexual politics" become the catch term of many writers. She says: "The essence of politics is power" (205). Violence and suppression upon women by patriarchy is the main issue raised by Millet. She considers that patriarchy is the main cause which suppressed and dominated women from freedom. Patriarchy doesn't give the equal status for women. It always keeps women in the marginalized space. Women's place in patriarchal society is deplorable and pathetic.

An American feminist, Elaine Showalter published one influential work of feminist criticism, *Towards the Feminist poetics* (1977). In this work Showalter provides a survey of the literatures written by the famous female writers of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through this work Showalter raised a question about the problems of not including the book written by female in the literary course and to be printed. Further than this, she argued for the separate canon building of the female's literary texts. She says, "Women's literature must go beyond these scenarios of compromise, madness, and death ...its purpose is to discover the new world"(1229). She says that women are different in terms of nature, race, culture and nation so they cannot be studied universally. Women texts should have specific style of reading.

Feminist critics like Mary Wollstonecraft, Kate Millet, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Wolf and Susan Gilbert were the renowned critics to enlighten the women about the precarious existence of women in a male governed society. These feminists talked about religion, festival, education, culture, myth, literature and so on it that the above mentioned things were the tools for male to dominate and exploit women. But with the development of time the movement named feminist came into existence to deny the male culture, male norms and values that undervalued women as complements parts of men the feminism as a movement aimed awakening in all sides.

By the contribution of female writers, women in a male governed society begin to understand the ways of exploitation upon them by their fathers, brothers and husbands. Being conscious women, they began to realize the inferior status of women not because of their sex difference but because of male culture and values. Being awakened women, they attempted to deconstruct all male values, norms and culture in order to reshape the norm and values that will make no difference between male and female. By reconstructing and reshaping the culture brought the marginalized women into centre. Feminists were always against anti -feminist's views which they claim were of narrow and conservative disposition. The male governed society of that time desired to keep women emotional and sentimental. So the society encouraged women to read sentimental and emotional type of novels.

Though the condition of women still remains same, feminist political movement emerged in 1960 with an aim to enhance the status women both in theory and practice; somehow succeeded to elevate women's status. Women, after this movement try to break the prevalent tradition that women are inferior in comparison to male ideology.

History of Indian Feminism

The women's movement in India took off in the 1920s building on the 19th century's social reform movement. The women's movement progressed the period of high nationalism and the freedom struggle both of which shaped its contours. Among the many achievements of the movement the most significant were the constitutional guarantees of equal rights for women and universal adult suffrage in independent India however these guarantees did little to bring about social and material change in the lives of most Indian women. Women's movement articulated to mass and popular politics emerged in the 1970s. Feminism generally is a theoretical discourse

advocating women's right based on belief on the equality of the sexes. It is a doctrine that redefines women's activities and goals from women centered point of view and refuses to accept the cult of masculine chauvinism and superiority that reduces women to a sex object, a second sex, and defend equal rights for women in a political economic, social, psychological, personal and aesthetic sense. Feminist thinkers regard feminism as somehow different from the mainstream – as innovative, inventive and rebellious. Chris Beasley points out that the point of view of feminist writers is that the western thought is 'male stream' and thus its authority needs to be questioned (Beasley 3). *The penguin Dictionary of sociology* disadvantaged in modern society suggesting that women are systematically disadvantaged in modern society and advocating equal opportunities for men and women (Beasley 27). *The Penguin Dictionary of Politics* considers the main common theoretical assumption as shared by all branches of the movement that there has been an historical tradition of male exploitation of women (Beasley 27). E. Porter defines feminism as a perspective that seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices women suffer because of their sex (Beasley 27). The new Columbia Encyclopedia defines feminism as, "Movement for the political, social and educational equality of women with men"(934). Feminism is a struggle of women for the womanhood. Feminist writers focus on the women's rights and their emancipation. The growing feminist movement sought to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak, passive and dependent. Feminist writers attack that a patriarchal society has prevented women from realizing their creative possibilities. Feminism affects the world politically, culturally, spiritually and economically.

Despite the longstanding and vigorous women's movement, patriarchy remains deeply entrenched in India, influencing the structure of its political and social

institutions and determining the opportunities open to women and men the negotiation and conflict between patriarchy and the women movement are central to the constitution of the nation state. "An awareness of women's oppression and exploitation in society at work and within the family and conscious action by women and men to change this situation" (Bhasin and Khan 1986).

The important moments in a historical time line which defined the status of women before the 1930s. The "golden period" of a women's status was during the Indus civilization. The matriarchal society transformed into a male-dominated system after the Aryans came to India. The third and final declination happened during the Mogul times. It was not until the 19th century when reforms began to take place opposing the practices of Sati, Purdah and child marriage. There were three major reform movements which elevated and involved women. India's civilization began in the Indus Valley 4500 to 5000 years ago. Mother Goddess was one of the major Gods of the Dravidians. Dravidians were used to live on the Indus Valley and they worshipped mother Goddess. In Hannah Fane's, "The Female Element in Indian Culture," Fane writes that the pre-Aryan society the archaeologists have unearthed figurines in Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. The figurines were adorned with necklaces and they wore a headdress. The tiger is still considered the vehicles of Goddess Lakshmi even in contemporary India. There are more depictions of gulls rather than doves in the society. The bulls are also a symbol of fertility painted beside a dancing woman. It is always found beside the Shiva-lingam in the present India (Fane 55). These depictions indicate that there was female pre-dominance in the Indus civilization. Sir John Marshall who discovered the Indus Civilization describes that the Indus civilization was matriarchal. It is evidence that the women's status could have been better than after the Aryans arrived in India. Hannah Fane's article shows that

the invasions of Aryans, Scythians and Muslims gradually denigrated the status of women in India who were revered and worshipped during the Indus civilizations.

According to Sophie M. Tharakan and Michael Tharakan's article "Status of Women in India: A Historical perspective," Tharakans explore the role of women during the Aryan period of Indian history. Tharakan and Fane describe the Aryans in a conflicting manner. Tharakan describes the Aryans a "nomadic tribe with exceptional mobility given by the horse and chariot." Fane quotes W. T. Elmore who writes that the Aryans were "barbaric invaders, provided by their horses with an immense advantage had assimilated with the conquerors of the Indus civilization". The Aryans was a nomadic tribe who had displaced Dravidians and local culture, norms and morality. The Aryans transformed the agency of women in India. The Aryans had developed a Patriarchal system overpowering the matriarchal system of the Dravidians during the time 2000 BC to 7000 BC. Although during the Vedic age, a woman's status was reasonable. Women were able to perform rituals independently. Both boys and girls received education. Due to their education, their marriage age would have been sixteen or seventeen. Until 500 B.C. Women were even allowed the privilege of "Gandharva Vivah". This marriage allowed both sexes to choose their own life partners. After 1000 B.C. the status of Indian women began to decline:

The great decline in the status of women corresponding to the consolidation of private property and commodity production seems to have occurred round about 1000 B.C. According to *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* the Aryans arrived in north India somewhere from Iran and Southern Russia at around 1500 B.C. Before the Aryans, the Dravidian people resided in India. The Aryans disregarded local cultures and impose patriarchal values. The natural division of labor between man

and woman became advantageous for the male as it was in his sphere that significant developments took place: he became the owner not only of the plough but also of the field and the surplus of the wealth produced. (Tharakan 118)

In the socio-historical context, women were not able to receive education by 300 B.C. Dharmasastra was also written in between 400 B.C. According to Tharakan, it was during this time period when the Concepts of female chastity and strict monogamous marriage took deep roots in the Hindu mind. Elizabeth Bumiller, in her sociological study of the women in India also mentions that

Manu may well have been a misogynist but the society in general was motivated by other stresses. As the Aryans spread geographically, they came into contacts with other cultures, particularly the darker-skinned Dravidian tribes of the South. In the opinion of Romila Thapar, a highly respected historian and a supporter of woman's causes in India, the oppression of women developed hand in hand with the idea of preserving caste. Manu's code of law which first set down the rules of caste in India is in her a view an illustration "of the need to rigidly define caste society", to create rules that keep the outsiders, the people viewed as "pollutants" in their place (17).

The third and final decline took place during the Mogul times. Both Tharakan and Bumiller emphasized this period because it was during this time when the concept of Purdah was emphasized:

The Muslim invasions from the eleventh century AD onwards did not help in the alleviation of woman's condition. The various interpretations of the Koran instructions corresponded to the prevailing

norm of the woman's role in the society to which Muslims came. Women were denied any place in religious organization and legal affairs. Neither did they enjoy effective property inheritance rights. The Muslim period saw the popularization of the purdah, polygamy, and unilateral right of divorce for men (Tharakan 120).

Bumiller mentions that the Muslim is a possible cause for the denigration of the women's status "Moguls bought Islam to India on a large scale and with it, at least in the view of many Hindu, the regressive attitudes towards women that spread the practice of Purdah and Sati". The first reform movement of the status of Indian women took place during the nineteenth century among the middle class in Calcutta during the time period of British Raj. There was great struggle between the middle class households' people and the then patriarchal norms, morality and culture. These reformers challenged the practices of Sati, Purdah and child marriage. During this era, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mahadev Govind Ranade are few renowned names who were an important part of this reform. In 1856 the widow remarriage was allowed while Sati was banned in 1859. During the 1930s, a significant progress was made of the status. It was in 1937 the Hindu Woman's Right to Property Act was passed for the widows. Unlike the western feminist movement, India's movement was initiated by men and later joined by women. Some of the most influential men involved were as following:

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar

Keshav Chandra Sen

Malabari Phule

Gopal Ganesh Agarkar

Dhondo Keshav Karve

The efforts of these men included abolishing Sati, which was a widow's death by burning on her husband's funeral Pyre (8). The custom of child marriage, abolishing the disfiguring of widows banning the marriage of upper caste Hindu widows, promoting women's education, obtaining legal rights for women to own property and requiring the law to acknowledge women's status by granting them rights in matters such as adoption(4).

Feminism and Social Reform

The feminist movement sought not only to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak and passive, docile and dependent individual but also to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices women suffer because of their sex. Feminism is a part of women's movement. It is an aggressive conscious feeling of women who begin to reject their own passivity. The main aim of feminist movement is to develop women's personalities and to make them aware about the precarious women's existence in a patriarchal society.

Women were in the forefront of all the main items on the agenda of the social reform movement. For reformers, women's emancipation was a prerequisite to national regeneration and an index of national achievement in the connected discourse of civilization, progress, modernity, and nationalism (Sen 93). A series of campaigns resulted in the abolition of Sati in 1859 and the enabling of widow remarriage in 1856. The "New women" who would share the sensibilities of the men in the family and able to sustain their new class roles. The chief instrument was formal education but the issue became inextricably linked with the gender segregation and seclusion (Purdah) practiced by the upper castes and classes.

Between the 1820s and 1850s reformers who favored for legislative interventions by the colonial state and a wider program of female emancipation. The women were drawn into the public spheres of formal education and eventually into employment, political participation, and leadership. These achievements are sometimes underestimated: “elite” has often been used to categorize- and dismiss- women who struggled to gain an education and a place in India’s public life, neither of which flowed automatically or easily from their class or caste status. Women often earned “freedom” at the price of social ridicule, ostracism, and harassment. And while some women were aided by well-intentioned male relatives, others faced severe familial resistance (karlekar1991). Still, the achievements were remarkable. Rassundari Devi who was entirely self-taught and wrote the first autobiography by an Indian woman:

I was so immersed in a sea of housework that I was not conscious of what I was going through day and night. After some time the desire to learn how to read properly grew very strong in me. I was angry with myself for wanting to read books. Girls did not read. People used to despise women of learning. In fact, older women used to show a great deal of displeasure if they saw a piece of paper in the hands of a woman. But somehow I could not accept this. (Tharu and Lalita199)

Feminism is a necessary movement to diver the view of society which gives women the subordinate position. Women from the beginning of human civilization are being treated with worth ambivalence and misogyny. Women had to live in the discriminatory male-made culture on the basis of sex, race, age, class. Such culture was the main boundary for women for the freedom of expression of their experience. Jane Freedman says that the "distinction between biological sex and the social

creation of the 'eternal feminine' is a precursor of the distinction between sex and gender that is common in much feminist theory" (14). The concept of patriarchy or sexism is the major ideological value which all feminist criticism share as their motto. All the feminists agree that the entire cultural phenomena are dominated by a patriarchal value. Patriarchy plays role not only in political system but also in literary and philosophical system. There is hierarchy made between male and female where male is the standard and female is subordinate. The woman is made to subjugate by male. The words "feminists" and "feminism" are political. These two terms indicate to support the women's movement which emerged in the late 1960s.

Indian women have had little representation in institutional politics since independence. The largest share of women in Parliament occurred in 1985, when the women's movement was at its peak. Since the women's representation has fallen. The women's constituency is fragmenting rather than consolidating. There is an urgent need for political intervention. The issue of reservation is meaningful for women's leadership; feminist arguments and advocacy now have to deepen into validating claims about of leadership. Women have many ways of enhancing, transforming, and expanding the notion of power and politics and giving full meaning to the concept of representation. From the 1920s the Indian National Congress began to forge linkages with peasant, worker and women's organization to demonstrate mass support. Women's political participation was socially legitimized, completely altering equations within the women's movement. Some women were already engaged in a variety of political activity. From 1889 every meeting of the Indian National Congress included some women, a few delegates and many observers. Their participation was often token and symbolic, but the women were educated and politically

knowledgeable and were seeking new public roles. Geraldine Forbes argues that a new kind of feminine political role was fashioned in the course of this movement:

Where private and public roles were sharply divided by both ideology and physical arrangements, women's political acts were hidden from British authorities. Women hid weapons, sheltered fugitives and encouraged the men for their domestic roles providing the cover for the subversive and revolutionary acts. These activities were quite different from their representative roles in the Indian National congress. There the delegates appeared as equals of men but their true significance was symbolic. They sang in praise of Mother India and posed as regenerated Indian womanhood. (Forbes 123)

The distinction between two kinds of political activity undertaken by different groups of women continued within the nationalist movement through independence. As a result, a small group of women were able to aspire to public and leadership roles on equal terms as men, most were restricted to 'feminine' modes of participation. The latter were functionally significant and amenable to valorization in terms of "feminine" virtue. But for these very reasons, such activities were easily subsumed within traditional gender structures.

Mahatma Gandhi extended the logic of "feminine" modes of protest to the whole of the nationalist movement. He drew to the nationalist movement group and numbers of women as never before. Women's participation legitimized the mission of the British and the government's claim to be a protector of women. Police violence toward sexual abuse of female political activists helped prove the illegitimacy of colonial rule. The movement for women's right was furthered as well. The leadership of the Indian congress, for instance became committed to the civil rights program of

women's association. The radicalism of revolutionary women was seen again in the 1940s among early communist women. Many of these women questioned social restrictions on women's mobility, the values of segregation, and the discriminatory sexual morality imposed on women. From their ranks came bold social statements like intercaste and intercommunal marriage and some questioned the institution of marriage (Munshi 19).

Women have not had more than eight percent representation in legislative bodies. The enormous social and economic obstacles to women's entry into these arenas make quotas a political means of achieving social change. Equality also provides an argument against quotas. If women are equal, why do they need quotas? One of the most common defenses of the reservation bill rests on women's supposed moral superiority. Some offer visions of honest and virtuous women sweeping clean the parliamentary stables of sleaze and corruption. Women untainted by cut-throat political competition will restore harmony and cooperation to Indian politics. Some offer a muted hope that women being new players in the game of parliamentary politics will be less manipulative.

Women Awareness and *Difficult Daughter*

Feminist movement made conscious to the female about the domestic oppression by male upon women and then, it encouraged the women to challenge male-oriented social structure that prevented women in public life. Feminist movement gave inspiration to question the assigned role of female in the society. Feminists aimed at deconstructing male made position of women in a house to make them acknowledge the reality of female power. For a long period women's publications had been among the materials removed from the public and school

libraries. As a result they could not write. Virginia Woolf is quite unsatisfied of this situation. She raises question about this precarious situation and vents her ire as:

The most superficial enquiry into women's writing raises a host of questions. Why, we ask at once, was there no continuous writing done by women before the eighteenth century? Why did they then write? almost as habitually as men, and in the course of that writing produce, one after another, some of the classics of English fiction? And why did their art then, and why to some extent does their art skill, take the form of fiction? (33).

Rosemarie Tong quotes Millet's *Sexual Politics in Feminist Thought* about the male's superiority in patriarchal society as:

Patriarchal ideology according to Millet exaggerates biological differences between men and women making certain that women always have the dominant, or "masculine" roles and that women always have the subordinate, or "feminine" ones. This ideology is particularly powerful because through conditioning, men usually secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress. They do this through institutions such as the academy the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces woman's subordination to men with the result that most women internalize the sense of inferiority to men. (96)

Women followed their duties set by patriarchal society without any question and they never tried to challenge it. The modern feminist critic Virginia Woolf questions "Whether part of the housework was her task" (34). The male structured

society compelled woman to think that was their destiny and woman did not think necessary to revolt against this thinking.

Tong sensed the hierarchy between male and female because of biological differences. She sees domination and restriction upon women by male culture and male oriented society. She finds women as an object for pleasing male. In such a miserable existence, she feels necessity to deconstruct male made culture and male oriented society in order to be free from any type of bondage. She writes:

Feminists have explicitly articulated the ways in which men have constructed female sexuality to serve not women's but men's needs, wants and interests-what women must do is to reconceived female sexuality, this time in the image and likeness of women. Although this preconception is difficult, it is potentiality empowering. Liberated from the Procrustean bed of male-defined and male controlled female sexuality women are discovering the richness and diversity of the female body sensing within it the poser of what some formal women spirit rising (72).

Difficult Daughter by Manju Kapur is the story of a woman divided between different sectors that affected her life. Her duty towards her family, her desire to be academically well established, her deep love affair with Harish and her attempts to shape her own destiny stands is the main theme of the novel. Kapur highlights the two constricting forces that impede the development of the female child in the India. The first one is the willful indifference to a girl's education and the manner in which her career is delimited to gear all her activities towards becoming the ideal *Pativrata*.

Thus feminism awakened women with the new idea to struggle against the male dominated society to free women from the male trap. By enlightening the

female, feminist advocated for emancipation and equality. But feminism as a political movement awakened them to dismantle all the disciplines of patriarchal society to address the absence of women in various academic areas by uncovering women's achievement. Female awareness tried to dismantle the conventional patterns to establish nonsexist ones. The issues like identity self individuality and freedom became the common features for feminists to awaken women.

CHAPTER – III

Suppression Causes Women Awareness

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughter* maps the lives of women who attempt to create an identity for themselves during the time period when India was a politically unstable and undergoing a major historical catastrophe during the partition of 1947. There are many important notions which Kapur investigates in the novel such as education, marriage and polygamy. The notion of education is an important element discussed in the novel and it allows the distinction between the two sets of women. Kapur presents the two different categories of women. The traditional women who adhere to the standards of society they live in and exercise their agency in a limited fashion. They are juxtaposed the modern women who not only are aggressive and follow their desires but they also control and impose their agency within the society. Ganga and Kasturi represents the former category while Swarnalata and Shakuntala are emblematic of the latter category. Swarnalata and Shakuntala challenges the patriarchal notions but Ganga and Kasturi are strict followers of traditional norms and values. Virmati is caught up and suspended within the web of the dual nature of the Indian society. She is neither successfully emancipated nor she is able to confine herself in the traditional role. Although she tries hard to define her agency within her society, she is unable to carve a strong and independent identity of herself. Virmati is trying to release herself from a woman's traditional role in the 1940s India. Virmati is a symbolic figure of India.

Manju Kapur in her novel presents women who try to establish their own identity. In *Difficult Daughter*, she presents the character like Virmati who is struggling for the quest of her self - identity and individual freedom. She is the central character of the novel. She rebels against traditional norms, culture and ethic and

impelled by the inner need to feel loved as an individual rather than as a responsible daughter. Mrs. Kapur herself asserts that “conflict between mother and daughter is inevitable and I suppose I was a difficult daughter”. The conflict carries on through generation because mothers want them to make the right choices – ‘right’ in the sense that they are socially of Kasturi, Virmati’s mother who is conversing with her sister – in-law. The narrator of the novel is Ida, Virmati’s daughter who returns to Punjab to explore her roots and learn about her mother. The novel is set in a series of flashback. The oppression of Indian woman’s status is defined in *Manusmriti*. Manu has declared that “her father protects her in children, her husband protects her in youth and her sons protect her in an old age, a woman is never fit for independence”. Shakuntala is independent and she lives her life without any inhibitions, her lifestyle is glamorous, she is confident about her identity. Shakuntala is Virmati’s ideal because her life carried responsibilities “beyond a husband and children” Shakuntala complains to her cousin:

These people don’t really understand, Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are fighting for the freedom of the nation but women are still supposed to marry and nothing else. And conduct political meetings, join rallies. I wish you could see what all the women are doing in Lahore. But for my mother, marriage is the only choice in life (Kapur 15).

Virmat does not cope with the then norms and values of the Indian society. She neither depends on her father nor is she married. She is self-sufficient and she shows no interest in marriage. Swarnalata is another example of a self-sufficient woman. She is Virmati’s roommate in Lahore. Swarnalata also has strong goals in her life which also look beyond the conventions of marriage:

“They had no choice”, Swarna arched her eyebrows, totally in control of her life. I was very clear that I wanted to do something besides getting married. I told my parents if they Congress workers against the British. And go on offering it until taken to prison. Free food and lodgings at the hands of the imperialists (Kapur 107).

would support me for two more years I would be grateful.

Otherwise I would be forced to offer Satyagraha with other

Swarnalata is passionate and fanatical about the *Satyagraha* movement. Her main purpose is to become independent. She is similar to Shakuntala and she encourages Virmati to become self-sufficient. She says that “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” (Kapur 139). Both Swarnalata and Shakuntala practice their agency and impose it on the society without worrying about the consequences of their action. They are strong and aggressive in their role and confident of their respective identities.

On the other hand Kasturi and Ganga are strict followers of patriarchal customs. Ganga remained illiterate because of her family’s upbringing that did not impose education as a necessary pre-requisite for a successful threshold:

The woman’s own mother had never read nor ever felt the need. She had taught the woman everything she knew. By the time she was ready to leave for her husband’s house at the age of twelve, she had mastered the basic items of a pure vegetarian diet. She was quick and inventive with the embroidery and knitting needle as well as with sewing

machine. After her marriage, her mother-in-law made sure that she learned the ways of her in-law's household from the movement of her arrival. She knew that all of this was part of growing up but how was she ever to dream without the desire to read and write, she was going to be defenseless into union with a man so unlike the other's she knew who didn't seem to care about her household skills at all (Kapur 37).

Kasturi is devoted daughter she is married to her parent's wishes. She had married into a "good family" where her educated nature was appreciated:

Kasturi was indignant. Did they think any kitchen work was beyond her? She came from a good family where girls were thought housekeeping from the time they could walk. All of a sudden Kasturi felt grateful to her mother for those long hours she had spent into the kitchen, cutting, stirring and frying. It paid to know these things (Kapur 188).

Kasturi viewed education as a quality which made her a better candidate as a wife in her husband's family. She was praised by her new family members. Kasturi is practicing as role of women as well as one's duty towards their family and society. Virmati screams out of frustration and anger. (Kapur102)

But Virmati does not belong to the assertive and strong women like Shakuntala and Swarnalata. At each point in her life when she encounters freedom which allows her to practice a similar agency as her cousin and friend practice. Harish's presence in her life impedes her decisions she makes:

Am I free thought Virmati. I came here to be free but I am not like these woman. They are using their minds, organizing, participating in conferences, politically active while my time is spent in love. Waiting

it. Well, not wasting time, no of course not but then how come I never have a moment for anything else? Swarna does. And she even has a 'friend' who lives in the city. Otherwise I would be completely engulfed. But isn't that what I want. What'll happen when we marry? (Kapur 131).

Virmati wants to have a life which is able to fulfill her about her love life. Virmati is in dilemmas. Virmati has got opportunities to become fully independent despite ruining her family's name. Virmati is unable to become independent like her friends. She finds herself "wasting time" like other women. Virmati represents the confusion women who were undergoing during this time. There is a struggle to gain an agency within the traditional society. She is emblematic of the transition period.

Women in Patriarchal Society

Women were biased in society of their sex. In patriarchal system, man is the legal head of the family or state coincided with the weakening of female – female bond and especially the dissolution of mother-daughter relationship (Irigaray 30). Irigaray further comments that such a system ensured that property and children belonged to the same genealogy. The women have to be lived same life and struggled under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society is reflected in *Difficult Daughter*. The conflict for autonomy and separate identity remains an unfinished combat in *Difficult Daughter*.

Feminists write for freedom, autonomy and self identity of the women. They think that men should take as their necessary counterparts and help them to come in the independent arena. Women must be regarded as important human beings. Accepting such reality some male writers began to write giving the autonomous power to women character in their literary writing. Women protagonists have

individuality in their texts. Consciousness about female as equal human being is somehow the contribution of feminist movements. Feminists view that only a feminist struggle will particularly change relations between man women that concerns issues such as sexuality, violence, gender discrimination, emancipation, freedom and equality for women.

Manju Kapur in *Difficult Daughter* presents the image of the suffering but stoic women eventually breaking traditional boundaries in the back-drop of traditional narrative thread. In Post-Colonial era, partition has ever been the most prolific and prominent area for creative writers. A number of novels were written on the theme of the destruction it brought and the plight of the refugees. They faithfully record the reign of violence that characterized the period and provide a sad, telling commentary on the breakdown on human values” (Dhawan 14). Manju Kapur has invigorated the English language to suit narration of what she felt about her women and their lives in post modern India in a culture where individualism has often remained an alien idea and marital bliss-the women’s role at home is a central focus. Dora Sales Salvador (356) in her note appropriately stresses: Kapur emphasizes the efforts made at that time by numerous women who demanding equal opportunities, equal access to education and life – opportunities going beyond convention were a visible force in the non – violent resistance to the British.

Self-Identity and Autonomy

Rollason (2004) comments in the micro – state to which her destiny leads her, she has no family and close friends. She attains a near exemplary level of female autonomy. For the first and only time, she has her own place to live. Lalaji dismissed Virmati so she decided to go to Nariniketan but on the way she meets Harish’s close friend Poet who is already aware of their intimate relationship. She resolves that if

Professor does not accept her she will desert him for good but eventually he gives consent. So Poet does not let her go and calls Harish. He performs all the rituals of marriage. During her conjugal life Virmati feels that it would have been better if she had not been married with Harish. Suman Bala and Subhas Chandra rightly analysis the man – woman relationship and argue:

“But her acceptance of the treatment meted out to her by her lover, the Professor totally believes her expectations. The Professor's pursuit of Virmati even after she has been sent to Lahore. Reluctance and constant postponing of the marriage in spite of her frequent entreaties. Malegeocentrism blinds them to the situation of women”. (Bala and Chandra108)

The concepts of self-identity and autonomy are closely related and inseparable. The concept 'autonomy' expresses the positive goal for the feminist movement. It is the freedom from domination regarding the bodies and lives, Maria Mies says, "the feminists claim to autonomy means a rejection of all tendencies to subsume the women's question and the women's movement under some other apparently more general theme or movement"(41). Self- identity and autonomy are associated with persons. We are autonomous to social processes which bring us into being for ourselves and others.

The new education and the life of Kasturi generate a new urge and emotion in Virmati to herself free from the bondage of patriarchy that denies her freedom and choice. Virmati is committed to continue her study in spite of her family's order and norms. Virmati becomes center of focus because of her revolutionary Zeal. She doesn't yields to the age old traditions of Arya – Samaj family. Virmati thinks of her love while the entire nation is busy in freedom movement. Mrs. Kapur writes: “strike,

academic freedom, the war, peace, rural upliftment independence Day, Movement, rally, speeches, all these activities were going on. All women were fighting for the nation but Virmati was thinking about Harish and love. She must be satisfied with that” (Kumar 104).

There are so many concepts about selfhood and autonomy in the feminist movements. But the most common concept among feminists is 'Individual and independence', 'self determination of the individual woman', or 'the right to individual choice'. The emphasis on individualism refers to the autonomous existence. Women in the Patriarchy fight for their individuality. Women have united for their self-identity which is taken as the essential thing for women's development. If the person is independent she/he can live her/his life well. Feminists think that women are a biological persons or subject. This is the main feature of women which characterizes the feminist writing. In Louis Marin's view, "writing of the self gives rise to a theoretical and methodological occasion allowing us to grasp with greater rigor and precision the manner in which these two sets of significance function" (199-100).

The individualistic sense of uniqueness and self consciousness is wide spread which is not shared to the same extent by people. Self is inseparable from to the network of kinship relation and nation use the pronouns 'I'. Every person has feelings of self-identity and need their own autonomous. Identity is the social construction. Women in the patriarchal society had false identity. They were restricted to go outside from the house. Feminism is the movement which demands autonomous existence and true identity of female. The identity of person is the cultural representation. For true identity and autonomous are the necessary components. Writing for self is for visual portrait and significance. All the markers of possession and of the appropriation of the written object emerge from the tensions inscribed within 'I'. Self is the

representation of 'I'. Women are in search of 'I' or subjectivity Simone De Beauvoir says; "In sexuality and maternity woman as subject can claim autonomy; but to be a "true woman" she must accept herself as the other" (1000). The feminist ambition to maintain and recreate this innermost subjective human essence in women is expressed and preserved in the concept of autonomy. Everyone is free to fulfill all her/his desires and needs that individual freedom is identical

With the choice of the- activity and subjectivity of the person Maria Mies focuses her view on autonomy and says:

Autonomy means the preservation of human essence in women. It is also Struggle concept which was developed to demonstrate the women Wanted to separate from their autonomous organization, with their own analysis, programs and methods (40-41).

The feminist approaches mentioned above are useful to find out the main causes how Virmati, the protagonist, of Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughter* struggles to establish her true identity by challenging the deep-rooted patriarchal norms and values. The feminist discourse has provided chances to understand the text better. It has shown the way to know the female problems, identity, existence and their struggle for self- identity and autonomy.

Struggle for Identity

Virmati has to fight against the power of the mother as well as the oppressive forces of patriarchy symbolized by the mother figure. Virmati wants to bring change in the society by abolishing a kind of slavery system within family. But towards the end, Virmati becomes free by getting the oppressive love of her husband. Virmati is not allowed attending the funeral of father. It is believed that parents can depend on sons for support in old age and they looked upon as potential builders of family

prestige and prosperity. On the contrary, daughters are considered to be destined for others, their upbringing and marriages further detract from her desirability. Even today for a large number of Hindu households the birth of son is an occasion for rejoicing but the birth of a daughter is a cause for anxiety. (Vishishta,1976)

Manju Kapur in *Difficult Daughter* presents the image of the suffering but stoic women eventually breaking traditional boundaries in the back-drop of traditional narrative thread. In Post-Colonial era, partition has ever been the most prolific and prominent area for creative writers. "A number of novels were written on the theme of the destruction it brought and the plight of the refugees. They faithfully record the reign of violence that characterized the period and provide a sad, telling commentary on the breakdown on human values" (Dhawan 14). Manju Kapur has invigorated the English language to suit narration of what she felt about her women and their lives in post modern India in a culture where individualism has often remained an alien idea and marital bliss-the women's role at home is a central focus. Dora Sales Salvador (356) in her note appropriately stresses: Kapur emphasizes the efforts made at that time by numerous women who demanding equal opportunities, equal access to education and life – opportunities going beyond convention were a visible force in the non – violent resistance to the British.

Virmati does not care to the age old tradition of daughter in Indian society but she makes her daughter Ida to fit in the channel of the family. Virmati shows her futile attempt to keep her daughter under control. But Ida shows her disinterest towards her mother. The statement which is made by Ida is "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (1). Ida could not develop an understanding with her mother during her life time but she realized herself as guilty after the death of her mother. Sumita Pal on the autobiographical nature of the novel says:

“Like Virmati, ManjuKapur was born in Amritsar and teaches in College. Her family was victim partition. Her family was belonging to Arya - Samaj like Virmati’s family. Manju kapur realizes that she herself has been a difficult daughter for her mother whose priority was marriage and she wants her daughters to have good jobs” (Pal 137).

Virmati tries to assert her autonomy and separate identity. She is repulsed and ordered to be part of the contemporary society, its culture and rituals by psychotherapy of the professor. Virmati’s academy temperament and achievements also do not help her to assert her separate identity in front of the intellectual height of the professor. Harish’s role as a vehicle of English cultural influences to Virmati’s exclusively Indian existence is a minor piece of the novel’s mechanism defined by Nadia Ahmad as “a collusion of patriarchy with Colonialism” (211). Harish’s English literature lessons only serve to reinforce the male- dominant discourse which is already present in the schemes of the Hindu nationalist project. Virmati is educated much to her family’s discontent yet in a tightly controlled way which is under the conservative spirit of the Arya Samaj, first in her childhood years in the Arya Kanya Mahavidyalaya and later in the BT College in Lahore.

Tradition and Modernity – An Unfinished Combat for Feminist Identity

The novelist has portrayed her protagonists as a woman caught in the conflict between the passions of the flesh and a yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movements of the day. Gur Pyari Jandial (2003) correctly points about the unfruitful attempt of Virmati: “What is necessary is to break the patriarchal mould and for Virmati to have tried to do that in the forties was a great achievement.” Dora Sales in an essay on the novel in English comments: “In *Difficult Daughter* we do not listen to Virmati’s voice. She could not speak out, being certainly situated at the

juncture of two oppressions: Colonialism and patriarchy". The fight for autonomy and separate identity remains an unfinished combat and many questions remained to be answered. Throughout the novel Ida's declaration echoes that she doesn't want to be like her mother. She does not assert her mother's autonomy and separate identity. Ida wants liberty but she does not want to compromise as her mother did in the past. This idea of the novel can be summed up in the utterance of angry Ida:

“This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word-brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, mama and leave me be. Do not haunt me anymore” (Kumar 108).

Feminist psychoanalytic theory argues that “Individuality is properly, ideally, a balance of separation and rightful capacities for agency and relatedness” (Benjamin 82). A common thread running through all Kapur's novels is the obvious need of the protagonists to reconcile autonomy with the urge to remain united with the family. (91)

Gilbert and Gubar's main argument is that artistic creativity of the nineteenth century tradition which is perceived basically as a male quality is in fact patriarchal superimposition upon the women writer who is imprisoned within it. In the image of 'Divine Creator' the male author fathers his text. But taking the same masculine cosmic author as their model, women end up copying or identifying with the dominant literary images of feminist which comes out of the phallogocentric myth of creativity. They suggest the female writers first to struggle against the effect of socialization that becomes struggle against men's oppressive reading of women. But they further argue that the women can begin such struggle only by actively seeking a female precursor who far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal authority is possible.

The nation in 1899 had seen vast changes in the Indian way of life and action. But the idea of a true autonomy for women or more astounding yet a single sexual standard for men and women-was too much to imagine. Manju Kapur's presentation of the awakening of her heroine Virmati, her unblinking recognition that respectable women did indeed have sexual feelings proved too strong for many who read her novel. The patriarchal institutions of nineteenth-century required women to be objects in marriage and in motherhood existing as vessels of maternity and sexuality with little opportunity for individuality. They were supposed to be good daughters, wives and mothers moving only from the protection of their father's roof to the protection of their husbands. They were expected to be chaste and obedient to their husbands and motherly and protective to their children.

Although Manju Kapur hints that Virmati is one of those who will perish in the tangled fin-de-siècle struggle for gender equality, the heroine herself is not yet aware of it. Virmati is a smart and overly naive woman. The New Woman exemplified by Virmati wants freedom and deserves it but has not been given the skills necessary for survival. Virmati has become the caged-bird who cannot do anything suggests that the new Women is a bird with broken wings. In the best way she knows how to escape her caged domestic life, Virmati chains herself to man because she is unable to choose freedom in the way later feminists would claim she must. As a distinctive and concerted approach to literature, feminist criticism was not inaugurated until late in 1960s. Behind it however lie two centuries of struggle for the recognition of women's cultural roles and achievements and for women's social and political rights marked by such books as:

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the rights of woman* (1792). John Stuart Mill's *The subjection of women* (1869) and the American Margaret Fuller's

Women in the nineteenth Century (1845). Since 1969 there has been an explosion of feminist writings without parallel in previous critical innovations in the movement that as Elaine Showalter has remarked, "Displays the urgency and excitement of a religious awakening" (116).

According to French Feminist theorist Helene Cixous, "Female body and sexuality have been negated and repressed by centuries of male power" (Hawthorne 117). She argues that the relationship between feminine writing and the female body lies in the heterogeneity and multiplicity.

Freedom is central issue for Virmati who struggle against the social conventions of an age that regards it as the primary role through which a woman defines herself. Virmati attempts to escape from her confinement in the role of a woman demand that she pays a price. Finally, she is unable to reconcile sexual to death. *Difficult Daughter* makes references to sexual pleasure and to sexual life of a woman. "The figure of Virmati," Critic Emma Jones writes, 'marks a departure from the female characters of earlier nineteenth-century Indian novels' such as the character of Hester Prynne of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Cora Munro from James Fennimore, Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1).

Nineteenth Century society gave heightened meaning to what it means to be a woman. According to commonly known "code of true womanhood", women were supposed to be docile, domestic creatures whose main concerns in life were to raise their children and show submissiveness to their better halves. Kapur startled her public with a frank portrayal of a woman's social, sexual and spiritual awakening.

Virmati seems to be half-awakened because she is like a child not knowing what to do with patriarchal society. She doesn't possess skills to turn idealism into realism. Michael T. Gilmore writes, "Virmati struggles to free herself from her

society's ideal of female identity never relinquishes a limiting Victorian notion of what constitutes a real self" (60).

As a pioneer female character, Virmati has only trodden the half of the long and perilous path. The other half remains untraded. Chopin's story implies that Virmati needs to become more significantly independent of men and to adjust to being self-reliant before she can have a successful and fulfilling love relationship. Professor Harish awakens her senses and she begins to break with some of society's conventions but she is still consumed by romantic need for a bond with a man. Life with Harish would be passionate, at least, but still domestic (Seyersted 141).

Critic Peggy Skaggs notes, "Virmati had awakened found her selfhood only to have that process and victory denied by Harish. He wants her to be his' mother-woman' his wife with all the social conventions in place denies her identity. Virmati could not face this reality and chose not to exist if existence meant living in the societal cage in which all men wanted her to reside. Her life has become inseparable from her role her husband, lover and society choose for her. Her identity is intertwined with the maternal nature that others decree should be her world" (13).

Love and passionate, marriage and independence, freedom and restraint and the like are the themes of Kapur's work. Another critic opines:

Ambition, striving, overcoming odds, the focusing of energy on a goal are habits of mind associated with masculine mastery. A woman who wants to defy a centuries-old tradition of passive feminist. (Martin 22).

Virmati's awakening forces her inner questionings and ideological conformity becomes stifling force. She does not realize her position in a system of ideology but she feels a growing sense of self-awareness. Critic Margit Stange says,

Virmati's adoption of the 'free-woman' role partially overlaps with her experimentation. Both roles reject the interpellation of female objects rather than as subjects. She leaves the home purchased with the wealth of her husband, the acceptance of which hails her as an object and enters home of her own (509).

Feminist Critic Sandra Gilbert remarks:

"Virmati begins to comprehend the quest for significant desire that has shaped her life. Virmati becomes conscious that the very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her body'"(360).

Elaine Showalter believes that *Difficult Daughter* may be read as an account of Virmati's evolution from romantic fantasies of fusion with another person to self-definition and self-reliance but Virmati never reaches this final position (33). Manju Kapur, in her edifying essay on the *Difficult Daughter* further says:

Paradoxically, however, it is just Virmati's realistic awakening specially, I would argue Virmati awakens to the possibilities as well as the problems of "her position in the universe not only because she finds herself enclosed in woman's literal spaces and inhabiting a figurative house of women but also because she has come to spend the summer in what is both literally and figuratively a female colony" (Gilbert 356).

Under the main premise that the facture reconstruction of nation is hardly ever ignorant of gender, Ell eke Boehner deconstructs *Difficult Daughter* precisely as what it is not pointing to the significant marginality to political issues of a female protagonist whose private struggles through domesticity and academia so blatantly

mirror the political tensions that surround her:

The psychological annihilation of Virmati at the hands of her own family and her husband's should not be read as a fatality. What happens to Virmati is no doubt the most representative destiny of the Indian Woman quantitatively or statistically but Kapur's novel shows the other paths also exist while further stressing that choices are by no means simple or either-or. There are types of female negotiation that work and others that do not but nothing is predetermined (2004:184).

The women have been suppressed from the beginning of the human civilization. The social structure began to keep them under their male counterpart when they were born. Women are expected to serve men physically taking care of their homes, property, clothing and persons; economically doing countless jobs for which women are ill paid or not paid at all sexually as wives, mistress or prostitutes and reproductively assuring men of paternity through female chastity.

The thought of women as man's complement offers an extremely effective support mechanism for the masculine self-image. The misogynist picture of women as sub standard's not quite human. Incompetent, petty, evil and lacking in irresponsibility and moral aptitude stands as clear justification to the masculinity for their subordination and suffering womanhood, it would seem them closer to nature than manhood more compelling as well as more disastrous of defined not only the women themselves suffer but the whole world goes topsy-turvy; it is askew even in danger. Men lose their manhood, children become psychotic, society dissolves and the natural order is disturbed. When they are people who indeed understand they to be subject not object. They respect both their humanity and womanhood. They take their direction and definition from values that are their own born of their own-selves

perceived qualities and goals as well as those of other women. They contribute to the society. Their beliefs culminate in the attitude that demean their body's abilities, characters, and efforts and imply that they must be controlled, dominated, subdued, abused and used not only for male benefit but for their own.

Women had played an essential role in the making of human civilization and had been a force in the human history. But the patriarchal structure of our society always dominates them. From the starting of the civilization male suppressed them and they were undervalued. "The female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities" Aristotle. We should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness. St. Thomas for his part pronounced women to be an "Imperfect man" and "Incidental being" (Seldon 134). Women could not get any opportunities to be unified and get any freedom; they did not have any idea because of their illiteracy. In this context Simon De Beauvoir writes in her *The second sex*, "the reason for this is that women lack concrete means for organizing themselves in a unit, which can stand face to face with correlative unit" (Beauvoir 9). The society did not allow them to break the four walls. They are defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference with her: she is the incidental the essential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he the absolute; she is the other. Even in the Shakespearean time the role of the women characters in the drama were performed by males. They were not given opportunities. Males idea about them are physically, mentally and economically weak so that women have always been man's dependent. And even today women are heavily handicapped though her situation is begun to change. Beauvoir adds, "Women have no past, no history, no religion of their own and they have no such solitary of work and interest as that of the proletariat" (Beauvoir 9).

The religions invented by men reflect the wish of domination. St. Augustine,

declared that woman is a creator neither decisive nor constant. Slowly women began to discover by an individual of herself consciousness as women. They have massive complaint against patriarchy because they have not been allowed to study or go to school as the male. They were not given any systematic training.

Mary Wollstonecraft first raised the voices in support of the education and emancipation of women. In this context Virmati points out in Wollstonecraft's *The Vindication of Right's of women* and adds:

the neglected of my fellow creature is the grand source of the misery. Women are turned into weak and pity creatures by sheer neglect of proper education and by the morals and manners which are set by the society (Virmati 444).

The lack of the sufficient training was felt to be one of the major disabilities in woman's struggle for independence. The dominated independence for themselves political, social, economic as well as personal development, they reject the attitudes that regard the traditional masculine characteristic of aggression, power and competition.

The psychological consequences for women of gender discrimination were not examined in much depth in the beginning. But later on psychological and psychoanalytical dogma on women nevertheless insisted on the central importance of female liberation of women's consciousness. They develop the innovative of consciousness rising by means of which women could help each other overcome negative feelings about themselves and their place in the world. Roman Seldon says:

Women have been made interiors and the oppression has been compounded by men's belief that women are inferiors by nature. However, the abstract notion of equality receives lip service but

demand for real equal will usually be resisted. (Seldon 135)

The feminist movement emerged with an aim to enhance the states of women both in theory as well as in practice. In Victorian age the emancipation of women had become chief motto of women social workers. Male and female activists tried their best to raise the voice in favor of women emancipation. John Stuart Mills, Friedrich Engels, Henric Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw and Virginia Woolf have written literary texts helping women to highlight their voices for emancipation. Bernard Shaw regards women in high degree because the foundation of his life force theory is female characters are very conscious about their rights and values. They extend their ideas to fulfill the desire and freedom. The novel *Difficult Daughter* has been written in the narrative technique. The major part of the story is told by the author herself as she appears to be omnipresent and does not take part in the story. Mukul Kesvan, a famous novelist comments *Difficult Daughter* as "a first rate realistic novel" (Bala and Chandra 106). A close analysis of the novel reveals that realism also promotes a high degree of reliability. The reader develops a bond of trust with the author who is the main narrator in the novel. Her omniscient nature can be felt by her presence as a story teller in about 250 pages of the novel which runs into 259 pages. This is also realized by her familiarity with the characters' innermost thoughts and feelings, her knowledge of past and present and her presence in locations where characters meet in total privacy. In addition, what makes this novel lucid and distinguishes it from other tales of adulterous love and romantic intrigue is the sympathy and integrity with which the author and Ida reconstruct the past of Virmati (Gupta-Casale)

The novel is full of instances where readers get the impression of being participants or observers themselves. For example, Virmati's traumatic experience of unwanted pregnancy mitigates the gap between a reader and a participant.

CHAPTER- IV

Conclusion: Suppression and Awareness

We know all that every individual desires for self- identity, a desire for self- recognition. They want social, political, psychological, economic independence in general. However, identity also evolves out of the person's free actions: to think one's own thought, to see and feel with one's heart and having no authority to govern except the authority of one's own reason. This liberty determines a person's individual space, authenticity and self dignity. Only in the exaltation of such liberty, a person can experience life and love to the fullest extent. The free play of these rights does not belong exclusively to one gender or another, for both the sexes struggle to maintain their own identity in the ever changing society. However, the society does place restriction on the basis of gender and put the fulfillment of female identity at stake. Since a long time in human history, woman's identity remained submerged and pressurized under various guises like culture, religion and convention. The orientation of feminism is to help women overcome the state of inferiority and the lack of identity. This research has analyzed Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughter* from feminist point of view. It has studied the central character Virmati's relentless struggle from childhood to death for establishing her free identity in the patriarchal society. It is the hierarchy made between men and women by the patriarchal society that has marginalized women from enjoying the social position. For a long time women could not develop themselves for raising voice for their rights. But gradually they started it. In this 21st Century number of conscious women have been raising question against such discrimination and trying to stand on their own. To be direct they are highly eager to create their position in the society. They are not only willing for their identity but also working it too. Virmati is a representative character of such female figures. Her

entire life journey in the novel explicitly shows her strong desire to be something in her society. As a result, she turns herself as a spiritual leader of her city.

If we see in our contemporary society, still it can be easily seen that a girl child is taught by the mother to be silent, obedient and swallow from the infancy. More or less, it is the nature of every society. This forces girls to remain silent usually. This silence of woman kills herself-the essence which holds and molds an individual together in order to form a complete organism. The 'self' is the sense of individuality that supports the view that before anything else we are human. A woman without self-identity is no more than an empty shell. The orientation of feminism is to help women overcome the state of inferiority and the lack of identity. During the course of the development of human Rights, the concept of the development of women rights can be found. Though the voice of women rights had been raised since eighteenth century the institutional effort towards women rights and gender equality as well could not found until twentieth century. It can be said that only in the twentieth century, the formal efforts regarding to women right in the field of economic, social, political educational and all other socio-economic sphere.

It is patriarchal ideology of the male dominated society that restricts women walk freely and do as their desire. It binds women only remain inside the home and take care of her children. They are restricted from enjoying and joining the different professions. The objective of such rules is to transform them into puppet. Even most of the females under such male dominated social structures are developed against female freedom. They speak for the existing society and want their daughters get married and bear children as they have done. Virmati's mother in the novel has also attempted persuading her daughter to follow her, settle a family and live a happy life. But Virmati is not as the general females. She does not follow every rules and

regulations of the society as it is. She does everything as her intuition tells her. The status of women from the legal point of view is not so bad. The sensitization of gender equality can be seemed in Indian society. The women are still unaware and incapable to enjoy their rights due to the lack of education and deeply rooted tradition, social norms and values. Female heroism is one of the salient features of Manju Kapur's writing. The necessity of female heroism in the literary texts is to keep female in social dignity. To bring women in the world of freedom and equality, it is necessary to give women the role of the protagonist in the literary texts and to help women to come in the open ground without hesitation.

Manju Kapur has fully understood the women's status and their power in society. That's why she can be taken as feminist writer. Thus the Portrayal of Virmati's struggle in *Difficult Daughter* can be taken as a female's effort for creating equal status in the society. It can be concluded that Kapur has demonstrated Virmati as a conscious, bold and courageous woman who fights for women's right against patriarchal society. Her courage and behavior help her to challenge the patriarchal society and get victory over it in order to attain the autonomy and identity in her life. She realizes that it is useless to look for answers inside the home. A woman should be aware, self controlled, strong willed, self reliant and rational having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. The fight for autonomy is an unfinished attempt of Virmati. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense. The women of India have indeed achieved their successes in half a century but it remains many to be done.

The whole novel shows the feminism of Virmati who opposes her all family and continues her study against the wishes of her family. Virmati is bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented revolutionary but she is a loser whose actions totally

alienate her from her family and society. She fails to create her own identity which she had desired. It is Virmati's inability to strike independent roots. She had come to Lahore to fulfill her dream but she gets involved in a useless love, doubtful marriage and unwed pregnancy. The fight for freedom is an unfinished attempt of Virmati. She could not break the patriarchal boundaries but rather she has been caught by traditional norms and values of patriarchal society.

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