

Family and Individual Life Conflict in *Difficult Daughters*

Jayajothilakshmi V

Department of English, Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education, Krishnankovil, Tamil Nadu, India

Mohan S

Department of English, Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education, Krishnankovil, Tamil Nadu, India

Kannan R

Department of Languages, Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract—Family is a well-framed structure with ethics and values. Family includes everyone's desire bounded to be one and individual's freedom is barred. At the same time freedom gives the rights to lead life with an individual's own desire and welfare. Every person has freedom to think and act. Individual's freedom should be for the betterment of his/her development. Though freedom is common for all, people find it difficult to get theirs especially when they come from an orthodox family. Their freedom is restricted to a limit and they have to accommodate themselves within that circle. In certain circumstances they break those restrictions and come out to prove who they are through their inherent talents. In this attempt, they are affected mentally and their conflict mind diverts them. Mentality of people differs from one another and it affects others in one way or another. Manju Kapur in her novel *Difficult Daughters* projects how few members in the family break the restrictions and move forward by choosing the path of their own and withstand in their choice of crossing mental tortures. In this process of struggle, except few, for others the problems they face make them a stagnant pool thinking that is their world. This is dealt in the novel with the incidents showing both physical and mental challenges even after getting freedom from the family. It also enhances the importance of family as well as the solitary state in individual life.

Index Terms—family, identity, infidelity, conflict, individual freedom

I. INTRODUCTION

Independence is indispensable in everyone's life. In every country's history one could note that the citizens would have struggled to get freedom for their country either from an individual ruler or from a colonial rule. Freedom is every single man's right that can not be controlled by any other man. But still many people live under the control of others like meek creatures either within the family or in working locations. Among these, family as a whole has certain orthodoxy, and set of values which keep the society healthy. Restrictions are necessary to follow the family construction and develop discipline among everyone in the family. Those restrictions were severe on women than men in those days. Women's freedom was limited at those times as most of them were submissive under the shadow of patriarchal world being innocent about the outside world. Women who try to come out of the family restrictions were compressed with mental stress to give up their desires and adapt with the family rules to lead a devoted marriage life. A few broke the anxiety to accomplish their aim facing critical circumstances pricking from all sides and a few diverted with the help of others. Women didn't get encouragement either from their family side or from others easily and hence found it much difficult to survive in the society solely. Women's fight over the family and society to live for her dream and men's liberty in setting their life are impeccably presented by Manju Kapur in her novel *Difficult Daughters*. A woman's journey towards her dream to become a teacher, woman's role as a dedicated home-maker, a man's freedom to frame his lifestyle and the psyche of each one in accepting the life are analysed in this article. It gives a clear picture of women's battle to acquire freedom to think and act personally and men's easy-going attitude as represented in the novel.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review helps to know the previous study on this work and the result found. The review shows the importance of this study and the improvement shown in this article. Manju Kapur wants to convey that the present scenario has changed with the spread of women education (Mehta, 2009). 'Deconstructive Feminism' is found throughout the novel (Baskaran, 2016). The novel portrays socio-political scenario of the era (Lata, 2006), pre-partition India, man-woman relationship (Barbuddhe, 2001), relationship parallels India's struggle for freedom (Kumar, 2007). The theme of gender representation is explored by Celly (2008). The novel has been focused on the women's transformation as modern (Jha, 2002), conflict of tradition and modernity (Singh, 2000), condition of women in complex family structure (Nayak, 2002), committed marriage life (Devi, 2011), and daughters' rebel against their

parents and the society (Suman, 2006). This study focuses on the conflict between family life and individual in both men and women. In this concept different family lives, search for identity, the psyche of major characters have been dealt with.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Family life makes a person to be committed with domestic activities and to think about the family members while taking decisions. They are connected not only by blood but also by love, compassion, affection, care, etc. People connected in the family bond are safeguarded and secured than the individuals. Their unconditional love shows the true hearts and it gives inner strength. Together a person steadfast with family relationship cannot relish individual freedom copiously as his or her life is bounded with the life of family members. When a person in a family takes individual rights that shake others and the love bond among them too is detached. One cannot say that people leading individual life are happy because they may lack support in their hard times. Whether they face success or failure in life, they alone have to decide further and this may bring conflict in their mind which leads to take wrong decision often. They also find it crucial to fix their own identity. In the novel *Difficult Daughters* Manju Kapur has presented family as well as individual life of the characters and explores the difficulties in the private life and endeavors to overcome that.

IV. FAMILY LIFE IN *DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS*

Manju Kapur's works are based on family concepts like marriage, women's life after marriage, their sacrifices, moulding children, men's role, and women's protest to reach their aim, and so on. She presents traditional conservative families focusing on women and men's role. Families are constructed with traditions and customs in which men and women play their roles reflecting the real society. Sooryamoorthy points out, "For the individual the family is the first place where one could look for everything that is needed for his/her growth and development" (2012, p. 2). The author too was brought up in a traditional background and hence she knew the restrictions for men and women in a family. Also, her experience and the people she met in her life gave her a way to present the concept of women's struggle and their progress in life among men in the family.

Manju Kapur has depicted main characters trying to achieve their aim. Each and every behaviour and decision taken are affecting one another in the family with or without their knowledge. Hence family and people's psyche are interrelated with one another. Virmati is impressed by the life style of her cousin sister Shakuntala who does her higher studies and being modern. Virmati's inborn thirst for studies becomes massive after meeting her and hence she starts to oppose her parents for her rights. This external struggle and argument, the mental turmoil of women and reaction of men are expressed by the writer. The role of men is also very important as their actions disturb women mentally and thus reflect in their life often.

In *Difficult Daughters*, two types of families have been presented, in which one is a joint family and another one is nuclear family. In the joint family of Lala Diwan Chand, he considers everyone's feelings and the family members obey his words. In the nuclear family of Harish Chandra, he takes every decision without thinking about anyone as he is the head of the family and does whatever he desires with full freedom. In both the families head (man) is the decision maker and protector of others. Sonawat mentions, "In a patriarchal family set up, all male members, that is, husband, elder brother and father, perform duties like decision making from the rest of the family, and their physical and mental protection" (2001, p. 180). Through the two families, the author has portrayed two kinds of lifestyles and explores the lives of men and women. Women roles in both families remain alike being fit to do their household duties, caring husband and children, devoted and dedicated to the family in all aspects. In the case of men, lifestyles differ. Suraj Prakash is sincere and true to his family as a son, husband and father. He is complete in performing all the roles and leading the members in the family cautiously. The couple Suraj Prakash and Kasturi has eleven children, and as an elder sister Virmati looks after the younger siblings like a second mother. "To her younger siblings she was second mother as well" (Kapur, 1998, p. 6). The family members are lovable to one another. Virmati is interested in studies and never like to be a simple illiterate family girl. Though the family is orthodox, Suraj Prakash permits his daughter Virmati to do her higher studies as she wishes. "She studies more than any other girl in this family" (Kapur, 1998, p. 5) says her brother.

On the other hand, Harish Chandra in the nuclear family does his job of earning money for the family by working as a professor in an institution. He is not pleased with his wife as she is an illiterate and also, he does not worry about his two children. He never likes to discuss anything with his wife as he thinks that she is ignorant to discuss things with. He says, "I don't want a washerwoman. I want a companion" (Kapur, 1998, p. 216). His mind distracts when he meets Virmati and from that moment he targets on grasping her attention. As he is the head of the family, not even his wife or mother can raise question on his behaviour. The author Manju Kapur connects these two families with the bond of illicit love between Virmati and Harish. In joint family, people encourage one another in doing good things as well advice when one goes in evil path. Chadda and Deb mentions, "Family members modify behaviours in themselves and others by principles of social learning" (2013, p. 300). Therefore, after knowing Virmati's love, her parents warn her saying, "A man who is already married and a traitor to his wife can never give happiness to any woman. He is worldly person caught in his own desires. Nothing solid" (Kapur, 1998, p. 93). Things happen consistent with the words of her parents

which she failed to understand when they insisted. Virmati's illicit love breaks the happiness of the family members, and affects the family's reputation. Development of a family sticks not only with the head but also with each and every member in the family. In those days, a family's reputation, peace and orthodoxy lied in the behaviour of those family women.

Manju Kapur's view on a family includes roles of both men and women. Both their responsibilities are very essential to run the family. Characters in the joint family like Suraj Prakash, Chander Prakash, Kasturi, Lajwanti, Virmati, Shakuntala as well in the nuclear family like Harish Chandra and his wife Ganga are fit to their characters and express different roles with different thoughts.

The lines of hierarchy and authority are clearly drawn, with each hierarchical strata functioning within the principal of 'Collective responsibility'. Rules of conduct are aimed at creating and maintaining family harmony and for greater readiness to cooperate with family members on decisions affecting almost all aspects of life including career choice, mate selection, and marriage. While women are expected to accept a position subservient to males, and to subordinate their personal preferences to the needs of other, males are expected to accept responsibility for meeting the needs of others. . . Psychologically, family members feel an intense emotional interdependence, empathy, closeness, and loyalty to each other (Chadda & Deb, 2013, p. 301).

In the novel *Difficult Daughters*, the author has sketched a few women characters having freedom to deliver their opinions, take decisions, and attain higher education. Lajwanti, her daughter Shakuntala and Virmati come under this category. Kasturi is humble though she can discuss anything with her husband Suraj Prakash. Ganga is good being a home-maker, voiceless to her husband Harish and admits whatever he does without opposing him. On the other hand, among men, Suraj Prakash and Chander Prakash take care of the family and give rights for their daughters to get education as they wish. Harish is absolutely a different character, not thinking about the feelings of his wife or mother and he works to fulfil his personal desires. Juxtapose characters are intelligently handled by the author through the two families.

V. QUEST FOR IDENTITY

Identity is a unique status of a person which reveals who he or she is to this world. It refers to their sense of self that empowers themselves and helps to turn up in their life as a special and notable person. It discloses the quality, character, appearance, experience, and relationship of a person. People's identity is very significant to express who they are and their role in the family or in society or in any organization. Finding and exposing the inner talent to this world is also a part of identity. Many writers have used the theme of quest for identity in their works and exhibit it through their women protagonists primarily. Diaspora writers have used this concept as they have encountered identity quest in the new land. Not only diaspora writers even Indian writers have used the same through their protagonist's struggle to fulfill their need and prove who they are. They may long for freedom or divert their path from others rebelling the rules set in the society to satisfy their identity quest. Vijaya Babu says,

Those women who feel proud of their ownership are revered and worshipped as the most ideal and those who feel irked and who voice out their frustration and long for liberty from such superstition are branded as 'rebels' and are even branded as 'fallen' (2016, p. 213).

Manju Kapur in the novel *Difficult Daughters*, portrayed Virmati and Shakuntala to protest the family members in order to find their identity through their education and lead the life they preferred. In this process Virmati loses her family, the family members' affection and respect among others, while Shakuntala shatters the hope her parents had on her marriage. Mishra states,

Manju Kapoor does not tarnish the image of her woman characters by treating them as tolerant, passive and docile. . . They find themselves in a conflict between tradition and modernity and eventually triumph over tradition in their way of life being influenced by modernity (2013, p. 114).

Identity in *Difficult Daughters* is presented through the characters' attempt to prove their originality and connecting with the people like them. Geetha states, "The search for identity for a woman is the first step towards her becoming human. Identity as defined by the self also encompasses gender, homeland, geography, occupation, and her role within the community" (2011, p. 79). Shakuntala finds her identity as a knowledgeable woman and so she denies marrying which is a blow on her mother who gave her full freedom and believed her so much. It is clear with the words "Shakuntala's refusal to marry had caused her enough heartache" (Kapur, 1998, p. 32). On the other hand Kasturi, in her childhood, studied and improved her knowledge which was simply vain that she could not do anything without her mother's concern. She says, "Study means developing the mind for the benefit of the family. I studied too, but my mother would have killed me if I had dared even to want to dress in anything other than was bought to me" (Kapur, 1998, p. 17). In her marriage life she is just a common home-maker doing household duties and breeding all the time. To her, "A woman's happiness lies in giving her husband happiness" (Kapur, 1998, p. 227). So she finds her identity as a dutiful wife to Suraj Prakash.

Kasturi always insists Virmati to practice household works so that she can lead her future family perfectly as a daughter-in-law and wife. "While we do not dispute the notion that the mother is the primary caregiver and the chief source of early succour for the child in the extended family..." (Roopnarine et al., 2013, p. 229). Virmati follows her mother's words along with her education as the second thought at heart until she comes across her cousin sister

Shakuntala who transforms Virmati to give priority to education. Virmati strives to prove her originality by attaining higher position through her education. She thinks, "... I'm going to be on my own, this is a new beginning" (DD, 112). Virmati's inner desire to do higher education gets stimulated by Shakuntala's words, "...times are changing, and women are moving out of the house, so why not you?" (Kapur, 1998, p. 18) and slowly she expresses it to her father and mother. Kasturi is stubborn in deciding her life to be a home-maker and not to send her anywhere for higher studies and Suraj Prakash partially grants Virmati's love for studies even though he desires her to marry at the right age. Virmati longs to expose herself as a well-educated woman in the society before getting married. "There was a life of dedication and service ahead of her, and in that she would forge her identity" (Kapur, 1998, p. 198).

Protest against the family or society or even to self is a part of searching identity. One who begins to search identity will ignore anyone or anything strikes the path. Virmati's conflict state in choosing between family life and higher studies is clear with the presence of her cousin Shakuntala. Shakuntala's attitude, behaviour and freedom induce her to be determined in taking higher studies in hand. Virmati dreams for her own space and freedom like Shakuntala. She does not have even one member in the family to support her entirely. When marriage is arranged by her family members, she tries to drown herself in water. Her adamant nature increases and finally she is sent to Lahore to do her studies where she completes her FA, then BA, BT and at last MA too. Zagade points out, "The women of India have indeed achieved their success in half a century of Independence, but if there is to be a true female, independence, much remains to be done. The fight for autonomy remains an unfinished combat" (2015, p. 2).

Harish is not contented with his adjusting, humble, illiterate wife Ganga instead he tries to persuade Virmati to identify himself with a well-read person. Later it develops into an illegitimate relationship which ruins two innocent women's lives. At a certain point in her relationship with Harish, she realizes him as a barrier to achieve her dream. She struggles a lot to move forward and concentrate on her studies. She tries to avoid him but she could not. She finds her identity as a school Principal at Nahan where she feels solace in achieving great thing in her life.

Whatever it was, she thought, she would be able to tackle her problems on her own. She had lived away from home for almost a year, she had seen women growing in power and strength, claiming responsibility for their lives, declaring that society would be better off if its females were effective and capable (Kapur, 1998, p. 163).

Virmati's fate does not lend a hand to her desire and comes as a destroyer of her identity in the form Harish at Nahan too. She loses her name and identity she finds there. She cannot utilize her education like Shakuntala. Virmati's education provides her confidence to marry the married man Harish Chandra, who used her physique in the name of love. "Virmati's life in Lahore was isolated. She was married with a husband, a co-wife and two stepchildren. She had had one abortion and one miscarriage. These barriers divided her from her fellows" (Kapur, 1998, p. 251). After her marriage and miscarriage she goes to Lahore to do her M.A. Philosophy. Her quest for identity ends at last as a mother of a girl baby Ida. Her battle in choosing between family life and individual freedom leads her to choose family life through individual freedom. She is a loser in finding her identity. Yernani says, "Virmati comes across as a loser who has not only alienated herself from her own family and society but also as one who failed to create an identity and a space for her" (2015, p. 146).

Ida, Virmati's daughter indulges in the act of searching her mother's identity through her uncle. In the words of Bala and Chandra, "... it could be argued that the whole novel is an answer to the narrator Ida's unambiguous declaration at the beginning that she would not want to be like her mother" (1999, p. 110). Ida does not want to live her life like Virmati whose was a failure in all attempts. The novel opens with the words of Ida saying, "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (Kapur, 1998, p. 1). After Ida's divorce, she proceeds to identify herself with the birth place and relatives of her mother. She says, "Amritsar was a place I associated with my mother. Without her, I am lost. I look for ways to connect" (Kapur, 1998, p. 4).

On the other hand, Harish's identity thirst ends when he marries Virmati. Juxtapose to that, Ida ends her marriage life and finds her identity with her mother's family. Kasturi's identity ends as a house wife of Suraj Prakash. So, the journey of finding self-identity is dissimilar in all the characters. Choudhary states,

Kasturi, is the unquestioning woman accepting tradition totally, Virmati torn by conflicts resulting from the conflicts between tradition and modernity with her craving for freedom and assertion of individuality, and Ida an entirely independent woman of today without any sense of commitment (2013, p. 48).

VI. INFIDELITY AND ITS IMPACT ON FAMILY VALUES

A good family incorporates family values, morality and ethics among the family members. They respect others, and follow honesty, fidelity, truth, and good behavior overall. Values in a family are like compass which directs the right way to protect them. Fidelity is the biggest value a man or a woman should attain which reflects their brought up and honesty. A married man or woman must be true to the spouse. If so, then their marriage life will be the happiest and the couple will receive respect from others in the society. In the traditional families, only parents will decide whom their daughter or son ought to live with. They choose their partners and the children too will accept it without any dispute. In recent days, young people start to find partners of their own. Sometimes this results in failure and unhappy marriages.

Infidelity is the cause of many break-ups and fed-ups. In the novel *Difficult Daughters* Virmati unknowingly becomes the reason for the depression and pathetic state of Harish Chandra's wife Ganga. In this novel infidelity is undergone by two persons – Virmati and Harish Chandra. Virmati's loneliness and her ambition laid way to Harish to

seduce her. Virmati is oblivious of the intention of him and falls as a prey to his thirsts. Slowly she surrenders herself completely to him both physically and mentally.

The eternal female looks into her man as her ideal, but the eternal male thinks about his own needs, his own cravings. Right since the beginning Harish's behaviour shows that Virmati is to be the means to his ends. She is his need hence her needs have to take secondary position (Choubey, 2003, p. 25).

The Professor weakens the mind of Virmati to draw her towards him and creates himself as everything for her. The lack of support from her family makes her to consider his support a boon. She blindly believes him and even after knowing him as wedded, she naively accepts him leaving all her family virtues away. When she is at Lahore hostel, she tries to meet him secretly. "Her sense of guilt, her fear of her family, her terror of being exposed, prevented her from ever taking the risk of squeezing through the bars of the hostel gate as Swarna did, though the Professor did urge it a few times" (Kapur, 1998, p. 131). Harish's sexual act results in her pregnancy and she undergoes an abortion. This act makes her strong enough to oppose him later. She decides to set a bright future for her and moves forward with her studies. After completing BT, she gets a job as a Principal in Pratiba Kanya Vidyalaya, Sirmour. She focuses on her job and withstands steadily with good name until Harish reaches her. He says, "Co-wives are part of our social traditions. If you refuse me, you will be changing nothing" (Kapur, 1998, p. 122). His compulsion to fulfil his lust leads her jobless and pushes her back to old unsettled, oscillated life. Rajput comments, "It is interesting to note that Virmati talks of her identity, her freedom but her freedom is confined only to her body and heart. She does not attempt to utilize her education as Shakuntala did" (2010, p. 113). Virmati understands the real intention of Harish on her when she knows the second pregnancy of his wife Ganga. In a letter to Harish she writes,

When I first heard, how I suffered, how I cried, I thought, this is the real punishment for what I have done. I had to be strong to bear the pain, silently, without anyone knowing. I did not want them to believe I was so stupid that no matter what you did, I would go on fighting with them over you. I had already caused enough grief by trying to be different from what was expected of me. No, it is better to do as they tell you. It is safer. Then the family protects you if things go wrong. At least I would not be as lonely as now (Kapur, 1998, p. 109).

This makes her understand the real intention of Harish on her. It is a heavy blow on her and she becomes hopeless, jobless, lacking family love and even lost the taste of freedom. She says "... I know I have failed in my duty and I will be punished one day. Nobody can escape their karma. Maybe what is happening to me now is part of it, and there is no use protesting" (Kapur, 1998, p. 92). But her illicit pregnancy drives her to marry Harish without any appeal and love. She lives in the house where his first wife lives. Her infidelity leaves her in a depressed state which she opposed once. She marries a cunning man leaving the best lives provided by her parents. Harish's infidelity does not affect him in any way as he lives with both the wives in the same house with his mother's approval without any guilt of spoiling the lives of two innocent women. On the other hand, Virmati's illicit love and marriage spoils her dreamt life, her family name and ruins the life of Ganga too. Here Virmati's freedom directs her to commit infidelity and that heads her to prison life for which she opposed her family members. Her education and modern life drown her life. Virmati says, "My mother keeps saying that all my education has achieved is the destruction of my family" (Kapur, 1998, p. 99).

VII. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Manju Kapur in *Desirable Daughters* has presented how Virmati defeats the impediments in her life and triumph over it. The adversities she overcomes in her life are huge obstacles denied her being blocks in each step. In her lifetime she tastes love, hatred, sympathy, hostility, harsh words, loving words, satisfaction, disappointments, happiness, sorrow, family, and at the same time loneliness. In her life Virmati gets true love, affection, care and protection from the side of her parents and from Harish's selfish and illicit love. Dwivedi mentions,

Love has multi-faceted characterization as the quest for love makes Virmati weak as it has to be found outside her parental home. . . The psychological aspects make the novel interesting as English Literature love laced sentences impress her and she wants to live a life described in the novels and poetry of English Literature (2016, p. 129).

Virmati never imagined that her life will be biting. Being at Lahore, she thinks, "Am I free, thought Virmati. I came here to be free, but I am not like these women. They are using their minds, organizing, participating in conferences, politically active, while my time is spent being in love. Wasting it" (Kapur, 1998, p. 14). Psyche of a person is disturbed when he or she confronts constant struggle in life. The hope, aim, and joy everything dwindles and makes that person empty. In this hollowness the person believes that whatever grace pours on them or path opens in life is good for them, which comes to rescue and to make their life flourish. In this way, Virmati believes Harish's entry in her life is to enlighten her future as she desires. On contrary his aim is to seduce her. Her critical and lonely state leads her to take wrong decision in life.

An individual's personal life emerges the unconscious desires in one or other way which lead the person to forget the outer world or live in a confused state in choosing between good and evil. Harish's hatred for his wife is reflected in the way he treats Ganga and his sense of craving is revealed when she is pregnant for the second time. Personality of people denotes their behavior, habit, emotions, stress, conflict, and so on. "In psychoanalytic theory, personality is understood as a multilayered phenomenon that consists of habitual or characteristic ways in which the individual organizes his/her

mental functioning and engagement with the world” (Kenny, 2017, p. 2). As per the Psychoanalysis theory, ‘id’ of Harish makes him to seek pleasure from Virmati too uncaring her future and family. He gives way to ‘id’ to dominate him and as a result he disregards everything around him going behind Virmati. Virmati is a good natured woman struggling to come up in life opposing her whole family. In this process she loses her family members’ affection and love. Still she does not give up her aim and takes next step with her father’s small support in the beginning and alone in the later part. She says, “... I am lonely, lonely, lonely” (Kapur, 1998, p. 103). Even she drowns when the family plans her marriage preventing her procuring higher studies. The same woman’s mind is unstable to keep her aside from Harish as he continuously pesters her. She cannot give up him as well as accept him whole heartedly. She explodes to him saying,

I break my engagement because of you, blacken my family’s name, am locked up inside my house, get sent to Lahore because no one knows what to do with me. Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace ... and why? Because I am an idiot” (Kapur, 1998, p. 149).

Virmati is always in a conflict state and selects wrong route being a prey to his cravings. Virmati could not decide between good and bad. Harish uses her solitude and confused state in studies and occupies her mind. Virmati was travelling between good and bad unknowing to choose one. Virmati’s ‘ego’ state induces her to do correct thing at a certain point and so she completes her higher studies and becomes a teacher in a reputed school. At the same time the same ‘ego’ forces her to marry that unworthy person leaving herself to think as a woman of morality who marries the person seduced her. While completing M.A at Lahore, Virmati denies going to Amritsar and there starts a clash between the couple. In the argument Virmati understands the real intention of Harish.

Virmati’s head was spinning. Distress enveloped her heart. She tried to think, but it was too painful. ... If Harish’s love for her wasn’t strong enough to survive an MA, it certainly wasn’t going to survive a lifetime. She thought of how often he had said he would die for her, and decided men were liars. She didn’t care if she never had a home, children, if she cut off her nose to spite her face. Right now, everything about her was aching so much, to cut off her nose would be a relief. At least the incision would be definite, sharp and localized (Kapur, 1998, p. 262).

Fate brings her to Harish again at the time of India’s freedom struggle and she renews her life in Amritsar delivering a girl baby. Until Virmati was with her family she was secured and protected by them both physically and mentally and when she moved on her own decision innocently everything becomes upside down. Jandial says, “We find in Kapur’s treatment a radical retelling which emphasizes the strength and endurance which are essential for survival in a violent world” (2001, p. 99).

VIII. RESPONSE TO ISSUE

In the novel *Difficult Daughters*, Virmati’s individual freedom and her struggle to achieve it is appreciable as she comes out from the society in which women are considered as a child bearing machine. In the novel, one who is fit to this society is Kasturi. In her childhood she learned reading, writing, doing household accounts and sewing too. But after her marriage everything she learned was in vain as she was tied with the household duties alone and not even with the household accounts. Her only job for the first seventeen years of marriage was child bearing. She gave birth to eleven children and became weak physically. It took her months to recover from that condition. Still, she accepts her life hopefully and thinks to settle her children. She cannot blame anyone for her condition and obeys the words of her in-laws and her husband. She is very conscious in bringing up her girl children to get good name in their future in-laws’ homes.

Virmati faces many troubles in her life. The circumstances around her are entirely different from Kasturi. Kasturi is under secured family whereas Virmati tries to protect herself within her own hope and no other base. To Kasturi, “A woman without her home and family is a woman without moorings” (Kapur, 1998, p. 111). Like Kasturi, Virmati too learns but unlike her she crosses the border of traditional conventions taking Shakuntala as her role model. Unfortunately, Virmati’s life takes diversion with the interference of Harish. He cunningly takes each and every step to get closer with Virmati. Virmati is innocent in knowing the intention of Harish. Virmati is a stubborn lady in achieving her aim. Though she is trapped by the plans of Harish, she completes her education as she desires. She is courageous in taking decision to complete her studies and find a job even after her abortion. She does not go down or keep herself in depression till her marriage. Instead with the motivation of her friend Swarnalata she overcomes the critical situation and achieves what she aims for. In her marriage life, she cannot go smoothly with Ganga, the first wife of Harish, with whom she had good conversations once. In the despair state of that family bond, she decides to take up her studies and moves forward to do her M.A. She is not a stagnant pool in her life. The biggest mistake she committed in her life was believing Harish blindly. Apart from that she tries to the core to achieve what she wants in her life.

Ida, Virmati’s daughter, is bold enough to face anything unlike her mother who has that traditional brought up at the back. Ida decides to divorce her husband when she cannot give birth to a child. She is not ready to accept the traditional condition of living with her husband hearing all the worrisome words from others. She finds her way to be one with her mother’s family. She searches her root and her mother’s past. Her decision is entirely different from her mother. It

shows, "... in *Difficult Daughters*, Manju Kapur shows that nowadays women cannot be treated as dolls or as decorative ornaments" (Mehta, 2009, p. 127).

Harish Chandra is not willing to resign his job in England and settle in Amritsar. He does it for his mother and in the mother-land he finds a job in college as Professor of English. He feels her wife's illiteracy as a big issue and neglects her for her ignorance. He tries to teach her and make her knowledgeable but nothing works out. Later he turns towards Virmati for her beauty and thirst for knowledge. Her response to Harish's cunningness spoils her precious days. Harish Chandra rectifies the issues in his life by marrying Virmati.

In the novel *Difficult Daughters* the author has put forth the problems in the life of major characters. A few find it as problem and struggle and a few accepts it as life and moves on. Mishra and Dabir say,

The novelist expresses her absorbing ideas of women relationship, women sexuality, love, infatuation, jealousy, marriage, gender roles and self-discovery. Kapur has made Virmati more vocal for her right for education and economic independence (2012, p. 100).

IX. OUTCOME OF THE STUDY

Through the novel *Difficult Daughters* the author has brought out the thirst in every individual in attaining freedom to think, decide, speak and lead life. Through the major characters like Virmati, Harish, Kasturi and Ida, Manju Kapur has well presented the merits and demerits in family life and individual life. In family life Virmati cannot achieve her aim carrying out the duties as a girl child. But she gets love, care and protection from her parents, brothers and sisters. In individual life she could achieve her dream but fails to get protection and true love from her family members. Through the other characters too the author has portrayed the necessity of family and the consequences to be faced when taking individual freedom in hands. The conflict arises in the mind of Virmati persists till the end of her life even after having a family of her own. The achievement she attains in her life is her only happiness yet the path is thorny.

X. CONCLUSION

This article has been focused on the major characters' dilemmatic life between family and individual freedom in the novel *Desirable Daughters*. The society people live in is a protection circle with certain conventions and beliefs which they have to follow to lead a moral life. In the same way family is a secured place with ethics and morality driving the members to be truthful, loyal, caring, affectionate, and supportive. Achieving dreams with the encouragement of family is blessed. Virmati's achievement with her father's support was the first success in her life. Later her thought for being liberal like her cousin brings all the disappointments and worries in her life. Even as an individual her steady mind gives her good path than the conflict mind which washes away her hope often. The major characters in the novel *Difficult Daughters* project the conflict between family and individual life with clear display of reality.

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V. Jayajothilakshmi has completed her M.A., B.Ed., M. Phil., M.Sc (Psy.), and pursuing her Ph.D in part-time in Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education. She is doing her research in Indian Writing in English. She has been working as Assistant Professor for nine years. Her teaching areas are Indian writing, British Poetry, Canadian Literature, American Literature and others at both under and postgraduate levels. She has presented papers at conferences and published six articles in various journals.

S. Mohan is a faculty of English at Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education, Tamil Nadu, India. He has taught a number of courses on World Literature and Language Teaching over the years, as well as more general courses on Communicative English, Business Communication and Soft Skills. His research and publication interests include ESP, ELT, African-American Literature and Education. He has published and presented more than fifty articles in various reputed journals and conferences. He also served as an External Examiner for Ph.D scholars in different universities and Associate Editor, Editorial member in various International Journal publications in home and abroad.

R. Kannan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Languages, Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science, Chennai, India. He has an experience of over 17 years in the field of Teaching and Research. His research interests include Literature. He has published research articles in Scopus Indexed Journals besides being actively participating in national and international conferences and seminars. He is a certified Speaking Examiner for Business English Certificate Courses by Cambridge Assessment English, UK. He has completed TEFL and many courses on NPTEL by AICTE. Recognized research supervisor for Ph.D. and an External Examiner for Ph.D. Scholars in different Universities across India. He is also an Editorial member for the Scopus Indexed Journal.