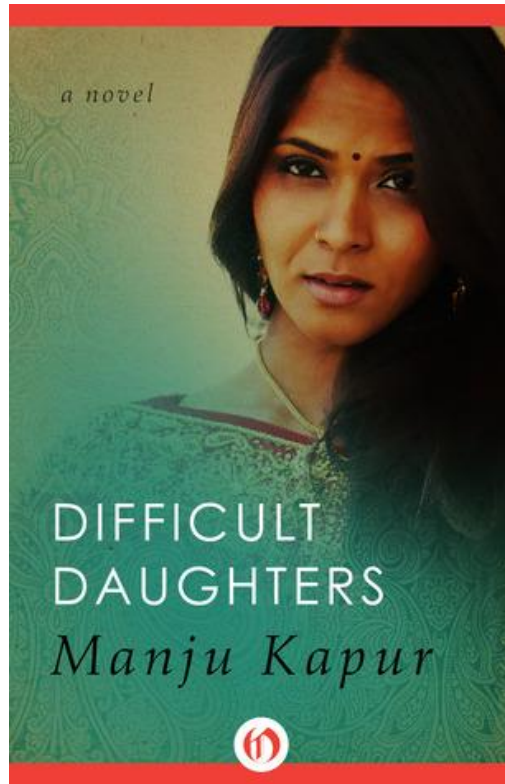


**Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters***

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**Abstract**

The birth and beginning of civilization as seen as by every society has lived by certain human values and norms. Especially Indian society is bounded with traditional culture. If we specify in particular south Indian society is made up of family culture. The girl or boy in the family needs to preserve the dignity of the family whether they like it or not. This boundary makes the people to consider the value of the relationship. At one time or another one will understand the importance of their beloved ones and it bonds the separate ones. This paper aims to compare the two women characters where the readers need to know more about the protagonist Virmati from the voice of Ida who disliked her in the beginning, so taking in account

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the complexity of life, different histories, tradition, modernity, social and different structure of values. Women under patriarchal pressure and control are subjected too, much more burnt and social ostracism. This paper attempts an analysis of Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* from the perspective of tradition and modernity of Mother and daughter relationship.

### **Manju Kapur's Theme**

Manju Kapur's theme is always based on Feminism, though she is not a full-fledged feminist. Her finest novel *Difficult Daughters* got the Commonwealth prize and went onto become a best seller in India. The aim of this paper is to shed light on feminist consciousness in the novels of Manju Kapur, particularly *Difficult Daughters*. Feminist consciousness pervades her novels. It is interesting to find that Kapur's novels abound with female protagonists. This is a feminist trait. Her female characters usually live on an edge and are driven to despair, breathing in a conventional and confined atmosphere. They put up a struggle, though it is a silent one and they refuse to be subdued. It is true that Kapur's protagonists are never able to show resentment openly, much less revolt yet they are actually conscious of suppression and oppression and are unwilling to take these in their stride.

### **Tradition and Modernism**

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* is based on the crisis in the value system of the modern society. The novel brings forth the issue of gender discrimination and the struggle of the Indian women under the oppressive mechanism of the closed society. Virmati is portrayed as a new woman of colonial India challenging old outmoded attitudes towards women. She has started exploring the possibilities for herself in education and economic independence. Her female characters are mostly educated, aspiring individual caged within the confines of a conservative society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant. They struggle between tradition and modernity. It is their individual struggle with family and society through which they plunge into a dedicated effort to carve an identity for themselves as qualified women with faultless background. The novelist has portrayed her protagonist as a woman caught in conflict between the passions of the flesh and a yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movement of the day.

## **A Story of Three Generations**

*Difficult Daughters* is a story of three generations of women, Ida, the narrator, who is divorce. Virmati, her mother, who marries an already married professor and Kasturi, her grandmother, who came to terms with a difficult daughter, Virmati. This was not a fictional family, but the story of a real, middle class home with fathers, mothers and brothers and sisters that one had seen and lived with. Merging them together was the background of the partition, which 50 years later seems to be the watershed event of modern India. In short, their popularity rested on their documentation accurately the life and times of this nation's early years, providing us with a picture that we like going through family photo album where half-forgotten people and events leapt back into our consciousness. Virmati is attracted towards in English professor who falls passionately in love with her because his illiterate wife could never prove a soul mate. After his repeated torture Virmati gives in as she is also a soul thirsting for love. This illegitimate affair leads to many troubles. Virmati has to burn alone. She is forced to abort the child. Finally she got married him. Most of her sufferings are caused by maternal apathy. Virmati does not have sympathetic shoulder to weep on and this aggravates her agony. She suffers at the hands of the patriarchal society, her family and above all her paramour.

## **Centres around Young Traditional Punjabi Girl**

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* set in 1940's centres around young traditional Punjabi girl, the eldest of eleven children. She has been conditioned, since her childhood that the duty of the girl is to get married. She is even engaged to a suitable boy, an engineer by profession. However influenced by her cousin, Shakuntala, a lady with progressive outlook, Virmati desires higher education. She also nurtures a desire to be independent and lead a life of her own. She sees that her marriage is postponed and thus gets an opportunity to study. As chance would have it, she comes into contact with an Oxford returned English professor, a married man and a tenant of her aunt, Harish, dissatisfied in an incompatible marriage with an illiterate wife, Harish is attracted towards Virmati who resists initially but subsequently gives in. Her misplaced passion for an already married man forces her to cancel her engagement through an attempt suicide. She realizes for the first time, her hopelessness of illicit love with she learn about her pregnancy of Harish first wife. For a while, she realizes that she is being use and hence resolves to forget him

and burns all his letters.

She goes to Lahore to do B.T. but Harsh follows her there and makes her a target of his sexual desires. She surrenders before him. Her position is reduced to that of a concubine. Even after an abortion, Harish pays no heed to her request to marry her. However Virmati finally succeed in getting married to him after some forceful threats and with the help of a mutual friend. After her marriage she does not get any space in his family. As a second wife, her quest for identity is replaced by the struggle for existence. Eventually, she acquires the much awaited status wife and mother. Still she feels depressed and alienated may be due to her subdued and suppressed position in her own house as Harish's high handed behavior does not permit her any assertion of power of freedom.

### **Virmati's Quest for Identity**

In her quest for identity, Virmati is the central character of the novel, rebels against tradition. She is impelled by the inner need to feel loved as an individual. The title of the novel *Difficult Daughters* is an indication to the message that a women, who tries to search of an identity, is branded as a difficult daughters by the family and the society as well the story tells how she is torn between family duty and illicit love. Virmati falls in love with the professor who develops an intimate relationship with Virmati. She has fight against the power of the mother as well as the oppressive forces of patriarchy symbolized by the mother figures. In the patriarchal Indian society, marriage is means of deliverance from being socially condemned and it relieves a woman from the sense of insecurity and uncertainly. The older generation marriage is no reason to rebel, it was accepted as part of life's pleasure and was a phase of imitating certain dharma's associate with social and religious institutions. Of course love was not the prerequisite or desired basis for marriage.

Virmati's mother, Kasturi seeks pleasure in domestic work, Virmati struggles between the physical and the moral. Finally, she gives the way to the dictations of the heart and the body. Virmati asserts her individuality and aspires for the self-reliance through education. Virmati nurtures the desires to be independent. Kapur's heroines have their own passions. Their passions

are nothing but choice not everyone dare to make. They take a choice to walk down a path less travelled. They decide to pursue their passion whole heartedly. Virmati desires to continue her further education and determination to marry the professor places her in difficult situation.

### **How to Step Out of the Framework Defined By Men**

*Difficult Daughters* focuses on how to step out of the framework defined by men and patriarchal values and how to identify and create a tradition of their own. Virmati's mother, a construct of patriarchy, exercises her special prerogative to train her daughter into cultural morals so that she takes up the assigned role of a daughter, a wife and a mother without interrogation and learns the importance of self-sacrifice and devotion. Susie Orbach reflects that in order to prepare her daughter for a life of inequality, the mother tries to hold back a child's desire to be powerful, self - directed, energetic, productive human being. But Virmati's body becomes a site of terrifying alienation because she is not able to meet the demands of her society represent by the mother, as well as by the demands of her psyche. Resistance to patriarchy starts with Virmati's insistence on education and refusal for marriage.

She believes education teaches us to think for ourselves. She wants to live an intellectual life of mind, but the society in the guise of the parents reminds her that a women is more than a body and the patriarchal society permits to alternative to marriage and holds in pity and contempt those who attempt to thwart it. Virmati resist the colonization of her body an becomes a self-directed women of new generation and chooses her life partner. Manju Kapur discusses these issues in the context of patriarchy, inter religious marriage, family bound, male - female bond, co - existence of past and present in the socio - political facts. She has shown her woman as a victim of biology, gender, domestic violence and circumstances.

### **Marginal Becomes the Central Figure**

Virmati represents the forties of our century when the ideal of revolt was in the air. Ida represents the nineties of the metros, chiefly Delhi, where the judgment of the absolute individualism is going ahead without hiccups. The domination if her mother has always investigated her to search for escape routes. Her position as a divorced woman obviously does

not help matters. In order to survive Ida also strives for centrality. She fights the label of marginality that the society has cast upon her assuming the role of the omnipotent creator. In her imaginative reconstruction, she frees her mother from the bounds of periphery and in doing so she asserts her own centrality as a creator of the central figure. By becoming Virmati's creator Ida frees herself from the dominance of her mother. The marginal becomes the central figure Ida is thus bound to her mother as well as free from her.

## To Conclude

Manju Kapur's novel projects the problem of teenagers through the protagonist Virmati narrator Ida and other teenage like strong separation for higher education and various obstacles in it, teenagers perversion of illicit love, generation gap between teenage daughter and her mother, search for identity, strong desire or aspiration for education and even they achieve it one sacrifice the marriage proposal, suicide attempt by the protagonist ,alienation and loneliness , divorce states in early young age, premarital sexual exploitation, ordeals like abortions and premature miscarriages and predicaments due to bigamy status in the life.

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