

Feminist Reading of Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters

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Abstract:

In this paper deals with the writer of Indian literature who gives such wonderful writing in the subjectivity of female characters. Everyone can understand the major issues related to gender construction and its impact on the girl-child, traditional interpretations of motherhood, exploitations within and outside the family find its root how it will affect the female genders. Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters is one of the legendary novels in which much study has been already done since she is a thoroughbred feminist whose writings allure the attention of critics and researchers. Kapur's novels are essentially full of symbols and motifs which enrich the theme of her writings.

Keywords:

Feminism, Motifs, Woman, Modern Women, Culture, Gender, Family, Marriage, New Women

Indian Literature plays a central role in English Literature and strictly tells about how our Indian culture, tradition, and society. Many Indian writers get an enormous place in English literature and give their contribution to Literature through their writings. Particularly many Indian women writers have taken female subjectivity in their writings and tell about female characters' feelings, sufferings what will happen in their real life in day to day lifestyle in India. Manju Kapur is a dominant figure in Indian Literature in twentieth-century fiction.

Manju Kapur, born in 1984, in Amritsar, Delhi where she is a teacher of English Literature at Miranda House College, as a living author who's writing depends on the female gender. She is an eminent writer of Indian English Literature in English. Some other works of Manju Kapur are A Married Woman (2003), Home (2006), The Immigrant (2009) and Custody (2011). She occupies a significant place among the contemporary women novelists, who concern themselves the problems of women and their quest for identity in the society and proves themselves that they also human beings not an object or tool to anyone. In all her novels, the main characters are a woman. The novel Difficult Daughters deals with the story of three generation women and how they suffered their whole life. The mother-daughter relationship is not a good one in the novel of Difficult Daughters because of their misunderstanding or generation gap or lifestyle or customs or family. In this novel, every female character wants to identify their self-realization. Manju Kapur portrays all women characters in their own right and it is evident in this novel.

Manju Kapur speaks for the middle-class family in Punjab. The novel starts the place of India's capital Delhi where Ida lost her mother and feels lonely. Ida is the narrator who got a divorce from her husband and daughter of Virmati. Kasturi who is the mother of Virmati and had eleven children in the novel *Difficult Daughters* does not bother about her first child Virmati and her feelings. Virmati wants to study and enrich her knowledge but it all destroyed by her mother.

The narrative opens with the frank declaration of the narrator, Virmati's daughter Ida, a childless divorcee, who undertakes a journey to know her mother's history, "the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother". Through Ida's conscious decision to be different from her mother the readers are introduced to the question of defiance and generation gap. Every new generation seeks to rebel or challenge its predecessor, and fight against the anxiety of influence, Virmati challenged Kasturi's principles, Ida could not accept Virmati's principles. Although Virmati's case may be seen as representative up to a point yet she could not live up to it completely. It is true that she represents the spirit of "New Woman" in India with her assertion individuality. The happiest and perhaps the most successful phase of her life was the episode at Nahan, when she became the headmistress of a girl's school. She almost attained the autonomy over her life, which she had craved all along and eventually discovered.

Virmati is an educated young girl belongs to middle-class Punjab family. She falls in love with Professor Harish and married him. Harish starts love towards Virmati because of his illiterate wife who is not his perfect soul mate. He is the professor of Virmati during her college days. Harish is a handsome and well educated young man from Oxford University who got already married and having two children. Virmati thinks that with the relationship of Harish makes her life feel comfortable and relax. Even she is house arrested; she doesn't stop writing a letter to Harish and starts a letter to send Harish and continues her relationship. She enjoys when she is with Harish. Our Indian culture never accepts that the illegal relationship with a married husband or wife with someone. In the novel *Difficult Daughters* Virmati's family have some norms and rules. After getting marriage with Virmati, Harish takes her to his house where his first wife and two children are living. Virmati's marriage life is a disaster to her because from the starting period Harish's mother treats Virmati in the way of worst behavior. Being a woman Virmati maintains patience and accepts all kind of bad mannerism from her mother in law. At last, she gets a good name from her mother in law and her stepchildren.

The happiest time for Virmati is when she stays at Nahan where she is a teacher as well as a headmistress. These days make her life so beautiful and give to her merriment. The role of other woman characters in this novel such as Virmati's cousin Shakuntala and her friend Swarnalata would have been a great influence in Virmati's life. Somewhat they indirectly teach to Virmati that what is meant by life. After the meeting of these characters, Virmati starts to compare herself with them. She starts to think which life does her lead and how to change her life which one she needs. Thus Manju Kapur as a feminist

writer in Indian Literature we can understand through her writings. From her novels, everyone can understand those female genders emotions, feelings, and sufferings. She does not simply create the situations and characters to populate her pages but is seriously concerned with the freedom and importance of female gender in society. In *Difficult Daughters*, she stresses on every woman's self-identity and self-fulfillment autonomy.

Symbolism is a figure of speech used when an author wants to create a certain mood or emotion in a work of literature. Symbolism is the use of an object, person, situation or word to represent something else in literature. The very title of the novel *Difficult Daughters* subtly alludes to the patriarchal convention that a woman, who undertakes a quest for an individual identity, is branded as a difficult daughter by the family and the society as well. 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. In the course of the novel she grows up from a naïve girl to a woman matured by suffering and through experience. (John, P.1) Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* is a feminist discourse not because she is a woman writing about women's issues, but because she tries to understand a woman both as a woman and as a human being pressurized by visible and invisible contexts. She presents a glimpse of feminism keeping in mind the Indian context. Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* manages to be simultaneously both Indian and Universal.

Conclusion:

Kapur presents the psychic distress of women through the rebellious character of Virmati. The novel not only refers to the difficult daughter Virmati but also alludes to the several other difficult daughters leaving the confines of their household and engaged themselves in the national struggle for independence. The women characters in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* are divided into three generations, with their values, mindsets and relationships. Virmati's history is reconstructed in retrospect by her daughter Ida.

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