



## Tradition Vs Modernity in Manju Kapur's Novel - Difficult Daughters

### KEYWORDS

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Manju Kapur is one of the eminent Indian women novelists like Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Kamla Markanday, Bharti Mukherji etc. She has written four novels. Her first novel 'Difficult Daughter' was published in 1998. Her second novel 'Married Woman' was published in 2002. Her third novel 'Home' was in 2006 and fourth novel 'The Immigrant' was published in 2008. Difficult Daughter received the prestigious commonwealth writer's prize for the best first book (Eurasia) and was number one best seller in India. She has attained prominent status in India and in the world. This novel describes the time of India's struggle for independence.

Manju Kapur was born in 1948 in Amritsar. She is a professor in English at Miranda House College in Delhi. She did graduation from Miranda House University College for women, M.A. at Dalhousie University in Canada and further did M. Phil from Delhi University.

Manju Kapur's novel Difficult Daughters reflects India's struggle for Independence, communal tumult carnage and slaughter of partition like the novel of Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan', Raja Rao's 'Kanthapura', Chaman Nahal's 'Azadi' etc, Difficult Daughter is written during the time period of partition of 1947, The communal riots wrath in Bangal and Punjab. The main protagonist of this novel Virmati's brother named Gopi Nath describes the ken of a railway train from Pakistan was laden with hemorrhage corpses and senseless killing.

"A few days after the Assembly was dissolved, I had to go to the station. I will never forget the sight of that train. I threw up on the platform. It was taken straight to the shed to be washed. There was blood everywhere; dried and crusted, still oozing from the doorways, arms and legs hanging out, windows smashed." (D D 268).

#### According to Joya Chakravarty:

"Manju Kapur had initially named her first novel "Partition" but changed it on the suggestion of her publisher".

The novelist depicts the holy place of Sikhs "The Golden Temple", The Company Baag in Amritsar and Lahore. She also describes Gandhi's Satyagraha movement and partition as the backdrop in her novel Difficult Daughters. This novel citations to Jawarhar Lal Nehru, Gandhi, Subash Chander Bose, I.N.A. etc. We get knowledge about the Congress Leaders as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru. Gandhi was arrested and he unconditional released on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1944 at 8.00 a.m. from jail on medical treatment. During this period, women were also participating in this movement like the characters of this novel Shakuntala and Swarnalata. The novel represents traditional women characters like Kasturi, Lajwanti and Ganga. The novelist describes that how 1946 saw unrest all over the country. Muslim leaders did not want separation but the concept of Pakistan swelled day by day.

"The Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were agitated. Many Muslims do not want Pakistan. Dr. Khan Sahib says, 'I have no

desire to understand Pakistan'. Abdul Ghaffar Khan says, 'how can we divide ourselves and live?' Dr. Syed Hossain, Chairman of the national Committee for Indian freedom at Washington, states that unity has been a historical fact from the time of Akbar. Sir Khizar Hyat Khan accuses the British of being the father and mother of Pakistan. Still, the idea of Pakistan seems more of a reality day by day". (DD, 263).

But after some time the thought of partition was becoming prevalent at this time. Manju Kapur gives one more clue about partition through Swarnalata Sondhi:

"When they received the worried, secret warning from a Muslim friend they too hastily departed. They had seen too much arson, looting, and people drunk with the lust of killing to feel exceptions. As it was, they were hanging on by a long emotional thread that needed but one direct threat to snap." (DD, 136).

The novelist mentions the clash between tradition and modernity. Virmati, Shakuntala, Swarnalata and Ida are the paradigm of new women. They break the limitations of traditional values and family customs. This novel depicts three generations of women-Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. Their relations are not cordial with their mothers. Dr. Shaleen Kumar Singh writes:

"Manju Kapur has successfully portrayed the conflict of tradition and Modernity in her characters. The specialty is that her female characters are only involved in clash against male-dominated traditional world but they have also suffered this conflict in the form of generation gap. Kasturi, Virmati and Ida are three chief female characters whose relationships are much affected with the ailment of generation gap that is another modified term for clash of tradition versus modernity."

Kasturi complies to social norms and patriarchal society. She also compels her daughter Virmati to concede the family tradition. But Virmati does not care the traditional terms and eliminates her mother's view. She becomes a difficult daughter for her mother while she becomes a mother of a daughter (Ida) then she too does the same with her daughter like Kasturi. Manju Kapur writes herself: "My mother tightened her reins on me as I grew older; she said it was for my own good. As a result, I am constantly looking for escape routes."

#### Satish Kumar Harit also avers in the following lines:

"Tradition is deep-rooted in India and in the traditional system Indian society is organized around gender division giving more space to male for dominance. Right from the marriage, the bride's incorporation into the family begins. She is guided and trained into the lifestyle of her husband's family. But despite her all efforts to devote herself sincerely to the wellbeing of the family she is considered an outsider."

When Ida's husband coerces her to the removal of an embryo from the uterus, after that she gets divorce. She is a husbandless and childless. Ida breaks an unsuccessful marriage. Here her condition is very pathetic. Manju Kapur clears the picture

of her abortion:

" I knew, mother, what it was like to have an abortion. Prabhakar had insisted I have one. In denying that incipient little thing in my belly, he sowed the seeds of our breakup - as perhaps he meant to do. Yes, I knew what it was like. I had lain awake nights wondering why he wanted me to have an abortion, worrying whether he was having an affair, feeling unloved, because he didn't want a baby from me. 'Show it to her,' he had told the doctor. 'She thinks she is killing something. They thrust a stainless-steel bowl under my nose. It was full of floating blood and plasma. 'That is all it is, you silly girl.' I threw up in the red plastic basin kept under the bed." (DD, 156).

She pulls a line of latitude between her father and her husband. While Virmati concedes her husband's covet but Ida does not endure her husband's chauvinism. Manju Kapur aptly writes: "How many times had you declared that I would be lucky if I found a husband like my father? I had agreed with you. My father was on a pedestal so high that to breathe that rarefied atmosphere was an honour."

The novelist contrives the story of the pain of horrible partition, the birth of a new nation, struggle against superstition, women 's emancipation against orthodox society, unwed pregnancy, abortion, miscarriage, melancholy etc. She dem-

onstrates the Indian scenario. After her mother's death, Ida goes to her ancestral home in Amritsar. She comes to know all the information about her mother by her Mama, aunt, other-relatives and Virmati's room mate named Swarnalata .She writes herself, "my relatives gave me one view of my mother, I wanted another."

According to this novel, the relation between Virmati and Ida is not meritorious. When Ida writes the very first line that "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother and I could not remember a time it had been right between us." She traces her mother's life from childhood to cremation. The story begins with the cremation of Virmati (Ida's mother). Virmati did not want any formality after her death and wanted to bestow the organs. Possibly, any person will remember me after using my organs. Virmati wished:

"When I die, she said to me, I want my body donated. My eyes, my heart, my kidneys ,any organ that can be of use. That way someone will value me after I have gone. When I die I want no Shor - Shaar. I don't want a chauth, I don't want an uthala, I want no one called, no one informed." (DD,01).

Thus the entire Novel can be summed up as the fight of tradition Vs modernity.

## REFERENCE

1. Kapur, Manju, *Difficult Daughters*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998. | (All references to this book are shown inside). | 2. Chakravarty, Joya, *A Study of Difficult Daughters and A Married Woman*. | 3. Singh, Dr. Shaleen Kumar, *Tradition Versus Modernity in Difficult Daughters*. | 4. Harit, Satish Kumar, *Tragic Flight of the Female Protagonists in Manju Kapur's Novels*.