



## Women in the Novel *Difficult Daughters* by Manju Kapur

V. LIZY

Vice – Principal. A.K.T.Memorial Collge of Engineering and Technology, Kallakurichi

### ABSTRACT

The study of this title “Women in the novel of difficult daughters” by Manju Kapur is a story of a young woman torn between her family, her education and the lure of illicit love. The opening statement of the author is that she does not like to be like her mother. The three generation Kasthuri, Virmathi and Ida are three different characters with a lot of similarities and dissimilarities then and there. The first character Kasthuri is not modern in her thinking in fact she doesn't want her daughter virmathi to be modern in her thinking. Virmathi wanted to excel in her studies her mother could not bear her foolishness.

The same way Virmati's modern approach used during her younger days were not accepted by her when it comes from Ida. But when it comes to Ida she wanted to have a free life, but the thoughts, advice and recalling her mother's words was haunting her because she was nothing, husbandless, childless., The outlook is a swing between tradition and modernity.

### KEYWORDS

lure, illicit love, tradition, modernity.

### Introduction

Women are an integral part of human civilization. Manju Kapur's novel is based on the supposition that women insist on freedom from patriarchal social set up. They boldly demand human rights and pride for women who remained dumb and docile for centuries in the male dominant world. Manju Kapur's novels are continuously looking for familiarity from social and moral constraints and cast a look at women's quest for having their identity. The women characters in her novel seem to be left without the freedom to act and they remain solely in the field of hallucination, mere fantasy to be dreamt and loved. Manju Kapur in *Difficult Daughters* projects the image of the rebellious, but stoic women ultimately breaking the customary confines in the backdrop of conformist narrative thread. Manju Kapur in her works, presents women who try to establish their own self. In *Difficult Daughters*, virmati, in her pursuit of identity, who is also the focal character of the novel, revolts against convention. The very name of the Manju Kapur is one of the best known celebrated post-independence writers exploring sociological and psychological sensitive issues. Kapur tries to explore the insight or human psyche of her protagonist Virmati, torn between desire for love and duty towards family. Thus, conflicting internal and external experiences, pressures and expectation produce worries. The novel “*Difficult Daughters*” are a connotation to a point that a woman, who tries to search for self, is recognized as a difficult daughter in the family and the society.

A woman is “new” if her basic concerns are deeper than purely seeking equality with men, asserting her own persona and insisting upon her own rights as a woman. The woman today has her own quest for self-discovery and self-fulfillment. A woman is trying now to be her own gravitational force, beyond the pull of patriarchy.

Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* is a story of a daughter's journey back into her mother's aching past. It spans the genres of literature and history and falters in both. The dream of sovereignty and decolonization were portrayed clearly. The incidents like orgies of rape and murder, staged in the name of freedom.

*Difficult Daughters* is a story of three generations of women: Ida, the narrator, who is a divorcee. Virmati, her mother, who marries an already married professor for love, and Kasturi, her grandmother, who come 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 breakpoint event in modern India. *Difficult Daughters* is set at the time of partition in Amritsar and Lahore. Virmati's life would have ended at an important point, had she agreed herself to be married to the eminently suitable boy, a canal engineer, her family find for her. But, fortunately for her and more for the reader, a dramatic change takes place there. Virmati passes her time by helping her ever-pregnant mother with the housework, taking care of the younger siblings. Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* has to be a mother, to all her ten siblings. The mother Kasturi is involved in the sole job of proliferation leaving the young ones for Virmati to tend upon. The absence or lack of mother's compassionate shoulders at home forces these daughters to look for sympathy outside which in turn leads to deception. At times Virmati yearned for affection, for some sign that was special. However, when she put her head next to the youngest baby, feeding in the mother's arms, Kasturi would get annoyed and push her away. “Have you seen to their food-milk-clothes-studies?” The poor girl does her best to appease her mother and at the same time pursue her studies.

Unfortunately, the other characters are dead and wooden - especially the professor. Like many Indian males, he is an irritating coward who talks big and does little. Occasionally, Kapur manages to bring alive the sad situation of his first wife. Even so, she has missed an opportunity by not building up two warm and sensitive men - Virmati's father and grandfather - who would have lifted this book to a new level.

Virmati used to get angry at the Kotha room. She felt very abandoned and disturbed. She just had the form of exchanging her feeling with the professor through letters. She writes, “Each time I hear the door shut, I burn with anger and humiliation. What have I done? I am just like the sacks of wheat and dal here, without my own life” (93). Thus, no one to understand her in her own house.

Even the same condition is reflected in the life of professor. Even though he is married but still he craves for someone with whom he can share his intellectual, which he found in Virmati. He tells Virmati, “What takes me away from the women I live with? Apart from the planets in the house of marriage, of course! She is a good woman, runs the house to perfection, and looks after my family as though they were her own. De-

spite all this, I am lonely, lonely, lonely" (103).

The above statements by different characters demonstrate the loneliness in their life that makes them feel alienated. The characters try to find their wants in each other. Stress has become part and parcel of man's life. This stress has its tremendous effect on a person's attitude. Sometime people take stress in a positive way and are able to come out with good result. But when a person is unable to come out s/he becomes very introvert. And later on sometime s/he would go into depression, which will even lead them to commit suicide or feel alienated and isolated from their near and dear ones. Alienation from philosopher William Hegel's view is to separate one's own self or essence. It is a state where a person feels very lonely and different from other people. The person will not be able to cope up with present life and situation. The individual will constantly have the feeling of loneliness even though he is in a crowd. The person will surely suffer through the sense of a lack of self-worth, and absence of meaning in one's life. Alienation problem can be easily traced in *Virmati*. Due to her love for professor, she was not willing to marry Inderjit and for this she was locked in 'Kotha' room. There she felt alienated for the first time away from all her near ones. She even wrote her feeling in a letter to the professor, "This long period is the first time serves my life I have been left completely to myself. Away from my brothers and sisters, away from household activity, I feel strange, one pea... I have to get used to it, for this is my fate" (100).

Even after her marriage the way she was treated at her husband's home make her feel insecure. She use to think over why can't she do all her husband's washing, cooking, clean his books, fill his pen with ink, all work which Ganga supposed to do. Even on the first day in her husband's house she felt isolated which made her to give a statement, "I should have never married you" (121).

In her own house, she felt alienated. Thus the small tit-bits between the wives made professor little bit worry. Even *Virmati* got pregnant, but within no time got miscarriage. After her sulk period she was sent to study M.A. here she felt alive again. She didn't want to face Ganga again. And during the time of partition she accepted to go to her house as she was quite aware of Ganga's absence. During this time again she was pregnant. The mental torture and the inner conflict which the individual faces are difficult. But still, one should be able to negotiate from this situation and overcome such situation and finds his / her own identity. If the individual is unable to come over such difficulty, then a kind of negativity gets developed in them. The individual even can take wrong steps such as runs away from home, commits suicide, takes wrong decision, join some of the wrong groups such as terrorist group etc. Thus the negotiation at a certain stage is needed when a person suffers from this alienation and isolation condition. Hence, after tremendous suffering, at the end she resolves these stages and gives birth to a baby girl named *Ida*.

Female characters in novels by Virginia Woolf and E. M. Foster are studied in their relationship as wives, mothers, daughters and prospective brides. The central theme of the novels *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a view* (1908), *Howards End* (1910) is the mother daughter relationship which is analyzed in its components of love and resentment often revealed in an interior monologue. The same similar is also observed in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*.

The life cycle of a woman goes through various ups and downs while bearing the responsibilities of wifehood, motherhood and above all womanhood. Even in the most difficult circumstances, she remains like a strong rock unaffected by the uncountable hardships faced by her at every stage of her life and ultimately emerges as a fighter and survivor. The novel gives a strong feminist approach and in fact a new perception when it comes from generation to generation. The outlook of *Kasthuri*, *virmati* and *Ida* is very different, but they

stick to reality facing the role as a mother, daughter, wife and a woman. Each and every character try to learn from their mother and make their life still more strong with a new persecution. They have their own white and black cards in their life to come across, which is common to all. The conclusive part of the novel is the reality that every woman has to have a deeper vision towards her strength and weakness and come across male chauvinism in an elegant manner with her own limitations.

#### WORKS CITED

1. Kapur Manju, *Difficult Daughters*, Penguin Books, India, 1998.
2. Theme of Alienation and Isolation in Manju Kapur's "Difficult Daughter" Monali Joshi, Assistant. Professor, Sabar Institute of technology for Girls Gujarat
3. The Position Of Women In Arundhati Roy's *The God Of Small Things* And Anita Desai's *Clear Light Of Day* Asli Kutluk Middle East Technical University 06800 Çankaya, Ankara, Turkey