

A Quest for Identity in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

Prof. Dr. Roshanara Shaikh

Professor and Head, Dept. of English, Chhatrapati Shivaji College, Satara (M.S.) India

Abstract

Indian novelist Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar in 1948. She was an English literature instructor at Delhi University's Miranda House College. *Difficult Daughters*, her debut book, was released in 1998. She is caught between the constraints of the traditional Shackles and the demands of the contemporary, changing society. Writer Manju Kapur is a postcolonial feminist who has spoken out against the patriarchal culture of her day. The idea of a "New Woman" was first presented by her. Her 1998 book *Difficult Daughters*, which was her first published piece, earned her the 1999 Common Wealth Writer's Prize. In India, the book was likewise the top seller.

Keywords - Quest, Marriage, Horizons, conventional, Compromise, Struggle, Identity

Introduction -

Indian novelist Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar in 1948. She was an English literature instructor at Delhi University's Miranda House College. *Difficult Daughters*, her debut book, was released in 1998. She is caught between the constraints of the traditional Shackles and the demands of the contemporary, changing society. Writer Manju Kapur is a postcolonial feminist who has spoken out against the patriarchal culture of her day. The idea of a "New Woman" was first presented by her. Her 1998 book *Difficult Daughters*, which was her first published piece, earned her the 1999 Common Wealth Writer's Prize. In India, the book was likewise the top seller.

Because, in the words of Jaidev, Kapur has comprehended women as both human beings and as women, her book *Difficult Daughters* is a feminist discourse—

not because the author is a woman writing about women.

Postmodern English literature focuses on the different facets of society. Manju Kapur's creative creations focus on the predicament of Indian women residing in migrating nations. Her essay articulated the challenges faced by married women in Indian households that prioritize males. She accurately captured the image of an Indian woman who feels trapped between her personal identity and her family obligations.

Difficult Daughters is the story of a freedom struggle while India Fights for Freedom from British Raj, Virmati fights for the freedom to live life on her terms. It is the story of Virmati seen through the eyes of her daughter Ida. Virmati is a young Punjabi girl belonging to the austere family of Amritsar. Like so many other Indian girls, she wants to decide what to study and where, whom to marry and when to marry. Manju Kapur

presents the yearning for autonomy and separate identity in her women protagonists in this post-modern novel in a traditional thread. Virmati realizes that life's horizons are much wider than those that have been shown to her. However she can not totally shrug off the sense priorities so deeply. The story revolves around her love interest with a professor and her battle for freedom.

Virmati is unable of accepting a romantic relationship. Her intense sense of remorse haunts her. Even though she is the professor's second wife, her identity will be established by the social and public nature of her legal marriage. Thus, marriage represents a chance to break free from her fear of social rejection, which could help her reintegrate into society and overcome her feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. Her mother's parents saw marriage as a sign that there was no reason to rebel and that life was completely accepted. The professor's wife, Ganga, believes that marriage is a social and religious institution and that love is not the foundation of it. She also possesses excellent home awareness. Her husband, who is educated, enjoys her cooking. She is content to simply live with him and bear his children. But in Virmati, there is a conflict between the moral and the physical, the mind and the heart. Through her varied experiences, she developed from a young native girl to a woman who had been through suffering in a matter of years. While she may have set out to find genuine love, independence, and a sense of self, she soon comes to the realization that things are not always what they seem to be or that they may even alter.

Ida, the post-independence generation's daughter of Virmati, is a powerful and astute person. She divorces him because he refuses to let her become a mother. Her marriage has been ended by the forced abortion. Serving her marriage vows allows Ida to break free from both traditional social institutions that bound women and male dominance and power. She has the strength that Virmati does not. Virmati's companion Swarn Lata is a strong, level-headed woman as well. She and Virmati have arguments about marriage, but unlike Virmati, she directs her energy in a different way that helps her feel like a part of the community. Without upending the family unit, she can incorporate her independence ideals into her marriage.

Ida repeatedly states throughout the book that she wants to establish her independence and unique identity rather than become like her mother. Ida is not willing to give in like her mother did; instead, she wants freedom. Ida, the daughter of Virmati, is searching to piece together her mother's past. Hence, Ida, an educated, childless, divorced woman, lives a freer life than her mother did.

Virmati strives for self-fulfillment by expressing her individuality and defying social expectations. What does she actually get, though? She is a loser whose actions completely cut her off from her own family and who is unable to carve out the space for herself that she has been longing for.

Conclusion-

A woman's quest for her identity and existence can be indicated by her behavior as a difficult daughter. Kapur discussed

women's liberation and their desire for privacy. Virmati, the main character in the book, advocates for the predicament of Indian women who suppress their emotions

in order to provide for their families. Manju Kapur does a fantastic job of showcasing Indian women's identity struggles.

References

- 1) Bala, S. and Subhash Chandra, Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughter. An absorbing Tale of Facts and Fiction. 50 years of Indian Writing. Ed by R.K. Dhawan, New Delhi: Indian Association for English studies.
- 2) Biswal, Jayant K. 2008, Critical Study of the Novels of Manju Kapur. New Delhi: Nirmal Publishers.
- 3) Gupta-Casake, Nira, Online posting, Accessed 28 November 2000.<http://www.cohums.ohio-state.edu/comp/bulletin/nita.html>
- 4) Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa ed. 1973, Indian Literature since Independence, A Symposium, New Delhi: 'Sahitya Akademi.'
- 5) Kapur, Manju. 1998, Difficult Daughters. London: Faber and Faber.
- 6) Kossick Shirley, 1998, Review of Difficult Daughters. Online posting. Accessed 23 October 2000.
<http://www.mg.co.za/mg/books/9809/98097-newfiction.html>
- 7) Shirwadker, Meena, Image of Woman in the Indo-Anglian Novel, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers. 1979.
- 8) The Indian Diaspora: <http://indiandiaspora.nic.in/>