

Gender Based Marginalisation: A Critical Study of Manju Kapoor's *Difficult Daughters*

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Abstract

Gender disparities remains deeply engrained in the global fabric. The underpinning factors responsible for fuelling up the term 'MARGINALISED' are the ancient social ideology. These rigid culture and traditions are sucking the peace of the society. History will be authentically carved if gender equity prevails. Literary vehicle appropriately unmask the discrepancy across -the -board. My erudite journey will analyse Manju Kapoor's "Difficult Daughters". This paper is a pioneer attempt in exploration of various ways in which women has been marginalized, not only in society but also in her own family. This paper will examine how social norms act as a catalyst to devastate the familial bonding. It will further investigate the impact of rigorous social doctrine on either gender. It will conclude by bringing forth a modern approach towards the traditional aspect, since we can witness the transformation of marginalized gender into an accredited icon.

Key Words: Familial Inequity, Social Rigidity, an Accredited Icon

Marginalisation has interwoven layers of differences practically in all the social aspects of life. These disparities, if subjugated will in turn unveil the secret of freedom that is "courage". The world according to Buddha is the result of man's inequity towards man.

Well said by Andre Lorde.... "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognise, accept and celebrate those differences".

Manju Kapoor in her novel *Difficult Daughters* has very well channelized that degree of incompetence. The title itself brings forth a straight image of disparity. "DIFFICULT".....

Is it that all sons are expected to be difficult and not the daughters?????????

Let us investigate and justify the reason behind the adjective "difficult" from the familial aspect keeping in account the blue print of marginalisation.

FAMILIAL INEQUITY

Celestial glow of a reasonably progressive Arya Samaj family is in the focal length. They believe in educating girls but not on independent thinking for their girls. The daughters are expected to ultimately settle down with their husband and raise family.

The magnitude of this situation has refashioned to certain extent as the generation progresses.

Kasturi, mother of our protagonist Virmati, was the first among the three generation.

"During Kasturi's formal education it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny....graduated at the age of twelve, to stay at home until she married.....she was going to please her in-laws."....pg 62

Here Kasturi fell into the prison, this generation willingly enter the cycle of life.

When same situation came forward to Kasturi's daughter Virmati, second among the three generation, the outcome was not the same. Virmati strongly objected to get married partly for pursuing higher studies and partly to materialize her illicit love for the professor. She had gone to the canal to end her life but the mishap was averted. When interrogated.

She replied, "I want to study...and not marry"..... 'I don't want to marry.'....pg 86-87

Virmati was inspired by her cousin sister Shakuntala who was financially independent but still a spinster...Shaku once told to Virmati, "times are changing and women are moving out of the houses why not you?....pg 18

So the second generation musters the courage to oppose the rigid family norms.

The scenario is very much different for Ida, Virmati's daughter our third generation.

Ida refused to show any signs of intellectual brightness.

'There are other things in life, 'she told her mother.

'Like what?' Asked Virmati

'Like living.'

'You mean living only for yourself. You are disappointing your father'.

'Why is it so important to please him?' Ida protested to her mother.
(Pg 278-279)

Here mother is encouraging her daughter to study but daughter has no intention to please her father by studying. It is visible that the margin of marginalisation is getting narrower with the progress of generation, as far as education is concern.

These variation wasn't visible in the male gender of the family. They had plenary liberty and flexibility to probe into the academic arena.

It isn't always true that man is the reason to bring woman under the umbrella of marginalisation. Fact is women herself is responsible for it. According to the matriarch of Arya family, education is the root cause for the freedom among girls which results in wavering conduct.

Virmati argued and blamed the loads of domestic work which she carries, has hampered her academic performance, Kasturi replied, "Leave your studies if it is going to make you so bad -tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first.".....pg 21

Mother is not analyzing the reason for the poor grade but instead advising her daughter to quit the studies. I am sure the reply wouldn't be the same if a son had argued.

When Virmati was brought back home from the canal where she had eloped to end her life,.... Kasturi yelled, "Was this all her education had taught hereto put herself before others, and damn the rest?...I will let you go to college .So that you are ruined permanently.....pg 86

Kasturi thought, What kind of learning was this.....Going to school had been a privilege ,not to be abused by going against parents. How had girls changed so much in just a generation.....pg60

When Virmati visited her parents after her controversial marriage to a married professor, Kasturi started howling, "It would have been better if you had drowned in the canal than leave to disgrace us like this!"....pg220

It is very much transparent that women herself plays a lead role to magnify the umbrella of marginalisation.

Parents are equally responsible to bring a new life on this earth then why woman is criticised alone ? Why?

When Kasturi was pregnant for the eleventh time, she was strongly condemned.

Her sister-in-law's words echoed her ears, 'Breeding like cats and dogs,' 'Harvest time again.'...pg 7

Same female has softer words for her brother -in-law... 'Your poor brothergoing every month to Dalhousie. In fixing his wife's health will ruin his own.'

Various examples from the text has been cited which proves that the difference of approach towards the gender is nothing but manmade disaster gifted since generation. Virmati signifies those breed of women who never want to settle for something which her mother settled for. This citation has symbolized the adjective 'difficult' for Virmati.

Familial inequity plays a vital role in devastating the personality of marginalized gender.

SOCIAL RIGIDNESS

Tradition can be a beautiful thing but can also murder a soul. Women are suppressed in the name of tradition and not necessarily by men. They struggle against traditional values to forge a fulfilling life for herself. These social norms haven't change though the scenario has wobbled with modernism. The rigid benchmark of tradition is authentically summed up by Manju Kapoor.

Feminist sensibility has been suppressed to a greater extent by patriarchy.

Right from the childhood the eldest female sibling is bombarded with responsibilities, that won't be true for a male.

Virmati as eldest had to run the house and look after her siblings. At the age of ten, she was attuned to signs of her mother's pregnancies. Kasturi reminded her, "You are the eldest .If you don't see to things, who will?... pg7

Seriously an example of domestic child labour under the shield of traditional and social values, at this era too it is prevailing.

The next very important example of rigidity is the ultimate destination of a girl, is to venture at her husband's dwelling by crushing her own identity. Traditional parents are people who simply want to get done with their responsibilities of marring their daughter off without acknowledging her own choice and attainment.

Kasturi's reply for Shakuntala's marvellous achievement,"What is the need to do a job?

A woman's Shaan is in her home". Now you have studied and worked enough.

Shaadi ..pg16

"What good are Shaku's degree when she is not settled."...pg22

Shaku's brother Somnath too wasn't in favour to marry inspite of being an eligible bachelor...but his rejection for marriage was happily accepted by the family.

'In my family there is only marriage for girls.' Said Virmati...pg151

Virmati was fired and punished when she objected to follow this social custom of early marriage. She was all prepared to

follow the footsteps of Sakuntala...which she did manage later after undergoing ample of mental and physical turmoil.

Kasturi advice to her, 'A woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings.'...pg111

Reflection of Kasturi's words are later seen in Virmati herself when she says 'A woman's happiness lies in giving her husband happiness,' remarked Virmati in a language she had learned long ago...pg227

This galvanic effect of tradition is very well nurtured by our modern generation too. It is all because of marginalized social ideology which results in various stereotype and other preconceived notions.

The next stringent ideology of the society is that of "PATI PARMESHWAR." which has effectively marginalized women. But I feel privilege to say that modern women are very much successful to dissolve the circumference of this doctrine to some extent.

Professor's wife Ganga was shattered when she saw him with his new wife Virmati but because of 'Pati Parmeshwar' ideology she accepted both though unwillingly. He continued to be Ganga's public statement of selfhood. Her bindi and her bangles, her toe rings and her mangalsutra, all managed to suggest that he was still her god....pg 278

This doctrine failed with Ida, she had a disastrous marriage. Ida divorced her husband as he wasn't compatible, moreover she had no regret for it but wasn't happy too.

"I was nothing, husbandless, childless. I felt myself hovering like a pencil notation on the margins of society.".....pg279

Here we have examined three stereotype norms which are still a social triumph in this global era.

ACCREDITED ICON

Marginalisation and globalisation seem to be the two extreme ends of our society. Pioneering female who took up this symbolic jaunt has been labeled as an "accredited icon". These enlightened icons give birth to new gospel which possesses the key to transform our fraternity.

The 'difficult daughter' our protagonist Virmati was a woman who was misfit for the society of her time. She falls in love with the forbidden fruit (married professor) in the era of child marriage and early age arranged marriage in the patriarchal society. She has been portrayed as a strong female character breaking social norms. She sacrificed everything so that she can be with her beloved in their scandalous relationship. Her family turns against her and she finds herself alone, trying to hold her head high against social norms.

'Virmati was sure that neither parents nor grandfather would ever forgive her.....Her husband would be everything to her.'....pg207

And now Virmati was married away from home, beaten by her mother, and declared dead. What had happened?...pg 223

Virmati prospered academically just because of the support of her professor husband. She was appointed as the headmistress.... 'Her qualification, A and BT from Lahore, were so impressive that the Maharani had dispensed with the usual interview prior to the appointment.'.....pg 183

After marriage professor encouraged her to pursue MA and send her to Lahore basically to balance between co wives. Her voyage from traditional to modern is not only by breaking the rigid norms but also by manifesting her academic growth makes her an accredited icon.

The landscaping of this novel is done during the partition time. Gandhiji is asking people to get involved in nonviolent civil disobedience and women were getting involved (and being arrested)...Swarna eloquence lit fire among the women, 'as women, it is our duty, no, not duty, that word has unpleasant connotations. It is our privilege to be able to give ourselves to the unity of our country.'....pg145

Swarna was a determinant freedom fighter involving in other people and waiting for no man. She was a true motivator for Virmati... 'We are lucky we're living in times when women can do something else. Even in Europe women gain more respect during wartime....pg152

'Marriage is not the only thing in life, Viru. The war -the Satyagraha movement - because of these things, women are coming out of their homes. Taking jobs, fighting, going to jail. Wake up from your stale dream'.....pg151

Comrades of Swarna are the blooming flowers who supported Gandhiji, form the accredited iconic garland.

Shakuntala is the next icon whom Virmati idolizes right from her childhood. She never gave into concept of destiny or fate. She was the highest qualified spinster M.sc in chemistry. All the time in the lab, doing experiments, helping the girls, studying or going for conferences and never probe into the school of marriage. She was an ideal source of inspiration for Virmati.

During the evening walk Shaku expresses her distress, 'These people don't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your life, in being independent. Here we are, fighting for the freedom the nation but women are still supposed to marry ,and nothing else.'.....pg 17

These icons have twisted the wary way of marginalisation into a remarkable and adventurous path of globalisation.

After exploring the key element, the words of Gandhiji is echoing, "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

It's so true if we wish to eradicate this dreadful notion of marginalisation we ourself should lead not by talking but by doing.

"It is not enough to be compassionate. You must act."....Dalai Lama

Reference:

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