

A Study on the Tribulation of Women in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

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Date of Submission: 18-11-2021

Date of Acceptance: 02-12-2021

ABSTRACT

In the realm of Indian literature, Manju Kapur is a well-known female author. She is regarded as the brightest light among Indian female English writers. She is a rising literary star who has made a big contribution to Indian fiction through her work. She addresses the issue of women suffering in all of her works. The aching battle of women to find their own identity is eloquently depicted throughout her work. In all of her books, the feminist tradition plays an important part. Her debut work, *Difficult Daughters*, made her famous. In the novel *Difficult Daughter and Custody*, the importance of self-identity is discussed.

KEYWORDS: *Self-identity, Feminism, Tradition, And Modernity*

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's plight in Indian English fiction is a quiet victim of tradition and conventional family and societal beliefs. In all of her works, Kapur explores the struggle of women to find their place in the world. Her work depicted the longing efforts of women to find their individuality in a wonderful way. She generally doodles her ideas and thoughts, which she then turns into literature through her female protagonist. Feminist thought had a big effect on her. She feels that portraying men and women's relationships from a feminine point of view is unavoidable. Her works place a strong emphasis on female protagonists over male protagonists. Throughout the work, she covers the major concerns of middle-class women. Manju Kapur is the phenomenal women writer, who skillfully describes the plight of Indian middle-class women.

Her writing explores the cultural identity and the struggle for the self of women. Kapur's perception of women liberation is deeply stretched with social and cultural matters. Her novels play a

significant role to insist the self-development of every woman for the betterment of Indian society. She is the author of five novels, her first novel *Difficult Daughters* wins the commonwealth prize in the year 1999. *A Married Women* in 2002, *Home* in 2006, *The Immigrant* in 2008, *Custody* in 2011 and her new work *Brothers*.

Manju Kapur is the significant writer in presenting the female characters. Kapur's novel deeply analyses the sufferings of women who undergone many family issues. Search for one's destiny is the central theme in all her novels. Her protagonists are educated which let them think in an innovative way to tackle all odds in their life. She has successfully portrayed the conflict of tradition and modernity through her female protagonist. One can see the emergence of new women in Kapur's heroines, who do not want to be a rubber a puppet in the hands of men

As a feminist writer, Manju Kapur's novels deal with the strong protest of the male-dominated society. All her novel voices against the male domination towards women and also it presents the new Indian women voice against the male chauvinism. A New-woman in search of self-identity is her main theme and seeks liberation in all walks of life and it replaces the traditional image of Indian women.

This novel revolves around the three generations of women such as Kasthuri, Virmati, and Ida. Ida is the protagonist of this novel who recollects her mother's past in the eyes of her uncle. Kapur portrays her women characters in the sense of tradition and modern outlook. Virmati is the protagonist of this novel represents as the former category, Sakunthala her cousin presents in the latter category. Kapur shows the drastic change between these two women characters.

Kasthuri, the mother of Virmati gives birth to eleven children this makes her health becomes

weak day by day. But her husband does not care about her. She fails to enjoy her equal rights. So she is put into a situation to give birth to eleven children. She does not find her way to speak about equal rights to her husband. Virmati gets pregnant by Harish and she becomes a second wife of Harish. He compels her to abort the child but she refuses to do that.

This shows her identity of new Virmati likes her mother who treats her daughter Ida with the strict patriarchal norms. She fails to be an understanding mother for Ida. This forces Ida to suffer a lot from being independent. Ida belongs to the third generation who is the daughter of Virmati, fights for her identity, dignity, and self-confidence. She is the one who breaks all the traditional norms and male dominated society. Thus, Ida becomes the typical daughter of a “*Difficult Daughter*”, Virmati. Virmati life is fully under pressure of doing all household work.

Virmati plays a prominent role in Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters* by taking care of her family. Virmati becomes the second mother of her siblings. She does all the responsibilities and duties of what a male heir does. She divides her time between helping her anemic mother with household works and her studies. She earns to lead a cheerful life and aspires to become an independent woman in her life. This creates her image as a strong woman in the eyes of her readers.

Shakunthala, a cousin of Virmati leads an independent life in Lahore. Her way of dressing, lifestyle and activities of Shakunthala disturbs Virmati and she strongly decides to be an independent woman. Shakunthala visits to Virmati’s house plants the seed of independency in Virmati. She wants to live like Shakunthala. She learns so many things from Shakunthala such as glamorous against restrictions. Virmati struggles from tradition and modernity. Shakunthala encourages Virmati to become an independent woman. These two women try to break the old costume and traditions women. She loses her identity and position in the society but she struggles a lot to make space for herself on her own. But she is very confident and rebellious attitude gives her strength to oppose the professor’s sexual oppression.

Manju Kapur explores the hollowness of modern life through the four adult characters, Raman, Shagun, Ashok Kanna, and Ishita, who is the childless divorcee and two children, Arjun and Roohi. In this novel, Kapur rightly shows how the marital set up is disintegrated and ending in divorce and legal custody. In this story, one is introduced by the main characters Shagun and Raman. Their relationship comes to an end when Raman comes to

know the love of Shagun towards Raman’s boss Ashok Kanna, who is working as a sales executive. Raman is a marketing professional for a major beverage business who is rapidly rising through the ranks. Shagun is his stunningly attractive wife. With his bright future, her vibrant beauty, and his two lovely children, Arjun, eight years old, who looks just like her, and Roohi, two years old, who looks exactly like him. The couple seemed to have accomplished what they set out to do.

Shagun is deeply in love with Ashok Kanna and in turn, he also loves her beauty. She has been a wife, mother at the same time a lover, is in dilemma and in constant conflict but as the affair becomes passionate and fiery, Shagun has no regrets in lying to Raman and her mother. She leaves children to her mother and goes off weekends with her lover. She also goes on changing the mindset of her children against their own father. She finally decides to go for divorce. Raman reacts violently as his male ego is hurt. Shagun’s mother does her best to unite with her husband and advised her to be faithful to her husband.

But she constantly warns her mother that she would never give up her love towards Ashok. Shagun wants to come out of the protective environment of the peaceful and well-settled family set up. According to her, money is everything. She fights for freedom which was long denied to her in married life. Once lover and companions, husband and wife become enemies locked in an ugly legal battle over their two children. Caught in their midst is the childless Ishitha who is in love with the idea of motherhood. She takes care of the two children Arjun and Roohi. Though she fell in love on Arjun and belong to modern generation she knew her responsibility as a mother. Thus, she proves herself as a good mother and a passionate lover.

Custody is both a terrifying critique of the Indian court system and a compelling narrative about how familial love can collapse into a desire to possess children, body and soul. It validates Manju Kapur's position as the outstanding historian of the modern Indian family, since it is presented with depth, affection, and clarity. In all of her works, Kapur emphasises how women in Indian culture are mistreated in the name of patriarchy or tradition. Kapur portrays the germinal concerns of women in a very appropriate manner, as well as the ill, pitiful state of Indian women.

In Manju Kapur's works, the mother's dominance is more obvious than the father's. Kasthuri makes Virmati do the home chores. Her father encouraged and supported her in her pursuit of higher education. Astha's mother compelled her to marry, and even when her family is settled, she

has more faith in Hemant than she does in Astha. Sona is paying less attention to Nisha as a result of her misfortune. Nina's mother struggles to raise her as a widow. As a result, Nina has no support in this world. Shagun also refuses to accept anything from her mother in regards to her marriage.

Ishita follows her mother in marrying Suryakanta, but reject her ideas of living with her after torturing her for her infertility. Thus one comes to know that every decision is taken by the mother in the matter of marriage of the protagonists. In spite of all their problems they try to establish their self-identity and proved their individuality.

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