

The Women under Subjugation of Traditional Patriarchal System in Manju Kapur's Noveldifficult Daughters.

Dr. Sonu Kumar.

Assistant Professor in English, DDM Sai College of Education, Village- Kallar. P.O. -Jalari. Tehsil- Nadaun. District- Hamirpur (H.P.)

Date of Submission: 09-03-2023

Date of Acceptance: 18-03-2023

ABSTRACT

The Indian highly enriched traditional cultural values have privileged a celebrated position not only in its native environment but throughout the world civilization since the time immemorial. Simultaneously, some controversial aspects can clearly be observed in Indiansophisticatedconventional organization of the community. The bright sides of thesetraditional frameworksare really acknowledged as commendable and also being appreciated atinternational level while the dark sides of these conventional outdated unacceptable dogmas are being disfavoured for its extreme conventionality. These unauthorized conventional rituals have paved the way to the people of most of the Indian societies to create remarkable incompatibility and discrimination between the position of the male and female category of the civilization. Subsequently, the male category of the Indian environment has enjoyed their freedom almost in every sphere of life. On contrary to this, the women category has been forced to pay their household and some other responsibilities by snatching their freedom, their expectations for their equality, their protection from their exploitation, their desire for their upliftment and betterment as compared to the male category of every contemporary civilization which is evidentlystimulating by the orthodox outdated thinking of the conventional people and their ideology which have been transferred or supposed to accept by every upcoming generation since the ancient scenario. The women in most of the Indian regions live or strictly been forced to live their lives as well as their respective conventional roles for their concerned households as invigorated by the traditional patriarchal set-up of the orthodox conservative civilization. Some aware women of the society have tried their endeavours to be free from such convictions of the cultural dogmas

through education, economic independence and through some other ways to establish their own independent identity within the society. But such women have been considered the revolutionary to break down the rules established by the forefathers and are pressurized to follow such traditional rules by becoming the submissive creature to the orthodox dogmas.

KEY WORDS: Traditional, Cultural, Conventional, Customary, Exploitation, Submissive, Orthodox and Dogmas.

INTRODUCTION

Manju Kapur has a very prominent place among the female English writers in India who has written almost all her novels with the feministic point of view to reveal the exact familial and socio-cultural position of Indian middle-class women. Being herself a woman, Manju Kapur has analyzed deeply and then witnessedthe entangled psychological conditions of the females of Indian society, who have been torn between their familial and customary duties to be played deliberately or forcefully, being the daughters and the daughters-in-law of the conservative middle-class families of the Indian civilization. Unquestionably, the people of the ancient civilizations were primitive, illiterate and unaware with their individual rights and concept of individual freedom. The modern civilizationwith the influence of new learning, impact of western culture and renaissance,intellectual development, economic, mental and social independence etc. has improved the pathetic conditions of the women of Indian civilization. But, apart from the modernity and with the acceptance of mutation, the ideology of the traditionalism and reputation of the conservative long-established values seems to have the prominent disposition in Indian rich heritage. Subsequently, the women even within the modern civilization are expected and forced to accept as

well as to play their conventional roles for their households and for the social values established by the cultural orthodox dogmas of the society.

Manju Kapur has been depicted abundant female characters in her novel *Difficult Daughters*, who have been playing or who are being enforced to play their respective traditional roles for the sake of their family reputation and at the same time to meet the desirable perspective of the Indian cultural heritage that has been considered the most important aspect of Indian civilization. The female characters in the present novel are; Ida, Shakuntala, Swaranlata, Kasturi Devi, Kishori Devi, Lajwanti and Ganga etc. while the protagonist of the novel is Virmati who represents the blend of the traditional and modernistic qualities within herself and did succeed to establish her own independent economic identity within the society but even though she did not escape from the traditional domination of civilization to be followed within herself for the sake of her family welfare and to meet the need of socio-cultural aspects of the contemporary civilization. Virmati belongs to an urban upper-middle class, joint Arya Samaj Punjabi family of Amritsar, India, having a very high reputed family traditional values-oriented background. Her grandfather, Lala Diwan Chand is an austere person and the follower of the traditional values, as it is observed:

His standing in the community was very high, and he had brought up his family by the same strict principles that had governed a life of austerity and charity. These were no indulgence permitted in his household. No festivals were observed, not even Holi and Diwali. No fancy clothes were ever worn. Their lives were plain, simple and high-minded. (21)

Being the daughter of a traditional household, she is expected to be subservient towards the rules, already laid down by her austere family household, until she is not given the safe hands of her husband after her marriage. Virmati accepts her traditional roles to be played silently, considering it as her destiny of life. She is the eldest daughter of her family household. Consequently, Virmati plays the role like a caring mother to her ten younger siblings. It has been observed during the course of novel as: "She was indispensable; to her younger siblings she was second mother as well." (06) Besides this, she has to pay the other responsibilities of household desirable from her, while her mother is on the bed, after her one after another delivery. Thus, her life is completely forced to be devoted to her family rather than for herself as Parikh has rightly put in: "Life is for everybody

else, but not for herself." (Parikh, 75) She has a strong desire to get education but on the other hand, she has to pay many other household responsibilities. She is not so much mature to manage all this skillfully. Subsequently, she remains in the state of bewilderment and perturbation all the time. Wondering about the perplexed behaviour of her daughter, her mother Kasturi Devi pronounces her profound concern for her daughter by saying: "Why was her daughter so restless all the times? In a girl, that spelt disaster." (11) Virmati's household duties and responsibilities do affect her studies and she is failed in her FA examinations. At this time, she needs the condolences and co-operation from her family so that she might be able to make balance between her household duties and her studies as per the aspirations of her austere family but rather than the conservative ideology of her family expects her to leave her study and make her sincere endeavours take care of her younger siblings and to improve her household responsibilities as well as skills for the sake of her further traditional roles to be played skillfully in the house of her in-laws. Her mother, suggests Virmati to discontinue her studies in an indirect note, after her failure in her examination: "I told you it was too much for you." (18) Not only this critical remark of her mother does perplex her but she is also haunted by her responsibilities to be played in very young age when her younger siblings do frustrate her with their undesirable mischievous behaviour which create barriers in her studies. She gently puts forth her grievances to her mother as every child does for the further relaxation and improvement but her mother reacts on her resentment with the completely undesirable behaviour which show the traditional outlook of the conservative households to skilled women also with the high level of patience to be learnt to adjust with the customary households of Indian societies. Virmati's mother says her: "Leave your studies if it is going to make you so bad-tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first." (19)

As most of the conservative Indian households want early marriage of their daughters to be free completely from their traditional responsibilities and to follow the social norms and etiquettes as well, the family wants Virmati to be married with the boy being selected by their choice, not by the wish of girl which is one another social norms of the traditional family's ideology. Following the traditional rituals of the society, her family plans to marry her to a boy named Inderjeet; a decent boy according to the family. The family need no willingness from the end of girl Virmati, who has to spend her whole life with some

unknown person, which reveals the rigidity of such traditional aspects where women are considered only the assets for their family lineage as well as for their in-laws: "Virmati had finished her BA and her wedding date was fixed." (50) Such outdated customary families want women of society to play the submissive roles for their households, advocate to establish the superiority of male category over the females of society and do consider women as mere the followers to their male-counterparts. Manju Kapur has been observed and has explored the innermost aspirations of the traditional male-dominated socio-cultural outlook of the society towards the women in her novels. Shashi Deshpande has enunciated and exploited with the same ideology of male-dominated traditional outlook: "A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband". (Deshpande) Manju Kapur has represented another idea of traditionalism which explores that the women of such orthodox families do not allow women with the freedom or little voice of their own. Virmati possesses the desire to study and to marry with Professor Harish Chandra. Her desire to be married by her own choice is completely against the norms of her family and it is certain in such families that her desire would never be permitted to be fulfilled at any cost. According to the convictions of her family, Virmati is the eldest daughter in her family so that she should become a role model of the family customs towards all her younger brothers and sisters. Consequently, Virmati's mother warns her to live her life as per the expectations of her family lineage by saying:

You are the eldest, Viru, your duty is greater. You know how much the younger ones look up to you. Your grandfather and father both have confidence in you; otherwise, would they have given you so much freedom? They thought school and college would strengthen you, not change you. Now what will they feel when you want us to break our word and destroy our good name? How will they understand it? (54)

Indian constitution advocates for the equal rights and freedom of women at par with the men of society. There is a broad difference between the theoretical and practical aspects of Indian civilization and system as well. If men of the society are involved in some illegal practices, it is considered their amusement as per the social norms but if the women involve in such practices they are contemplated as the part of sin and immorality according to the customary values of such conservative societies. After so much provocations of Virmati, Professor Harish Chandra assures her to provide her a secondary place in his life. His

statement explores the hypocrisy of the male-dominated society through such blind customs and outdated values of the society, as once he proclaims to Virmati: "Co-wives are part of our social traditions." (112) When Virmati goes against the norms of her patriarchal household, she is considered the nonconformist against the social conventions and is boycotted completely by her parental family. However, Virmati still possesses the hope to reunite with her family but when she enters in her parental house with her existing hope and expectations, she is directly encountered with her mother's unexpected furious remarks:

You've destroyed our family, you badmash, you randi! You've blackened our face everywhere! For this I gave you birth? Because of you there is shame on our family, shame on me, shame on Bade Pitaji! But what do you care, brazen that you are! (204)

Kasturi Devi, the mother of protagonist Virmati, Kishori Devi; the mother of Professor Harish Chandra and Ganga; the first wife of Professor Harish, all are the perfect example of the victimization of their oppression and exploitation under the traditional ideology of the male-dominated patriarchal conservative society. Kasturi Devi has to follow the familial rituals soon after her marriage so that she has to give birth number of children as per the expectations of her family members without caring of her degrading health and sneer remarks of the other women of the house as it has been observed in the course of novel:

She had filled the house as her in-laws had wanted, but with another child there would be nothing left of her... Her life seemed such a burden, her body so much difficult to carry. Her sister-in-law's words echoed in her ears, 'Breeding like cats and dogs,' harvest time again. (07)

Kasturi Devi has devoted her whole life to her household for the sake of her family welfare and happiness as well as to keep her family's traditional values alive. She wants the same to be followed by her daughters to adjust her daughters in the houses of their in-laws soon after their marriages. Therefore, she prepares her daughters mentally by expostulating them: "Still, it is the duty of every girl to get married," remarked Kasturi mildly....' A woman's shaan is in her home." (13)... "A woman's happiness lies in giving her husband happiness." (210) After the second marriage of her son Professor Harish Chandra, Kishori Devi is afflicted for her first daughter-in-law; Ganga but being tied in bound of traditional values of the conservative civilization, she is obliged to teach Ganga, the lesson with, to be

obedient to the traditional customary values to run the family affairs smoothly:

In this life we can do nothing but our duty. Serve our elders, look after our children, walk along the path that has been marked for us, and no pine and yearn for those things we cannot have. Since our destiny is predetermined, that is the only control ourselves... we have to accept-this is our lot in life. (194-195)

Ganga is well aware with her humiliation in her own family after the second marriage of her husband but she saliently considers it as her destiny in life as: "The women did not have the courage to say anything more." (185) Ganga, is in fact a very obedient and caring wife to her husband and to her family being highly inspired and subservient to the traditional rituals of the household and the civilization as well. She does all the household activities to make her husband happy and feeling proud to keep customary values vigorous among the family as it has been perceived in the novel:

From washing his clothes to polishing his shoes, to tidying his desk, dusting his precious books, filling his fountain pens with ink, putting his records back in their jackets, mending his clothes, stitching his shirts and kurtas, hemming his dhotis, seeing that they were properly attached- Ganga did it all. (200)

Kasturi Devi, the mother of the protagonist does not want to cross the narrow line of her conventional household and wants the same from her daughters. So, when she comes to know the secret desires and intentions of her elder daughter Virmati, she is disturbed psychologically and feels the burden of responsibilities she has been unable to pay according to the etiquettes of her antediluvian family: "As for herself, she could never wipe out the stigma of having a child thoughtless enough to contemplate ending her life without consideration for what her family would suffer." (75) Kishori Devi is a blind follower to her social conventional norms of culturesame as Kasturi Devi. Being the sincere fanatic to social norms and family welfare, she is grieved when her only son Professor Harish gets Virmati home as his second lawful wife. Being mother and the responsible parent of the household she might have the authority to take stern action against her son for his extremely wrong deed but on the other side she is entangled within her traditional values and moreover a woman of the male-dominated society where her protest might be useless. Subsequently, she shows her disapproval in a tone which is completely dominated by the traditional values within her:

Beta,' began Kishori Devi, 'at least you could have told me you were going for this reason. So suddenly to bring a new wife home! Is it fair to that one, or even this one?... 'This is marriage, not a game. You must have thought something'... What about your wife, your children?(192-193)

Lajwanti, Swaranlata, Shakuntala and Ida are some other female characters in this novel who seems to have the modernistic values within them but under the influence of their traditional family environment they have to feel the touch of some traditional values even after their unwillingness. Shakuntala appears in the novel as the role model of modernity but does not remain successful while leading her life out of traditional touch as Doris has observed: "She would walk out her road alone." (Doris)

The Indian civilization has been remained under the widespread influence of its orthodox backward rituals and dogmas as well as some superstitious beliefs and values within the customary traditions of different civilizations. These customary rituals demand more sacrifices on part of the women category only and some discriminatory practices can be seen clearly on the basis of gender -based identity of women category when it is seen that the male category of the society has been enjoyed a prominent respectable place in social, cultural, and some other important walks of life. Undoubtedly, with the advancement of civilization the position of women has been improved to a great extent but the traditional conservative thinking of the society is still there in its existing social milieu. Most of the traditional people in some Indian regions are still the followers of these conservative dogmas, considering them as one of the most important parts of their cultural values. This very ideology of some orthodox members of the society creates the barriers in the way towards the development, progress and upliftment of women being the victimized and marginalized creature to the respectable and responsible member of the Indian civilization.

WORKS CITED

- [1]. Deshpande, Shashi. *The Dark Holds No Terror*. New Delhi: Penguin.1993.
- [2]. Kapur, Manju. *Difficult Daughters*. London: Faber and Faber.1999.
- [3]. Lessing, Doris. *The Grass is Singing*. London: Michael Joseph.1950.
- [4]. Parikh. J. and Pulink Garg. *Indian Women: An Inner Dialogue*. New Delhi: Sage Publication,1989. P,75.
- [5].