

Struggling women characters in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters

R.SUBATHRA

Ph.D.,Research Scholar (Part – Time)

P.G.&Research Department of English

Periyar E.V.R. College(Autonomous)

Tiruchirappalli – 23

Dr.D.DHANALAKSHMI

Associate Professor&Research Advisor

P.G&Research Department of English

Periyar E.V.R.College(Autonomous)

Tiruchirappalli – 23

ABSTRACT

Manju Kapur is one of the most prominent Indian women English novelists. She has added a new dimension to the Indian Fiction. Has focused on some of the common issues pertaining to the life of women,especially Indian women. Some of the most dominant themes found in her ficition include mzrriage, family relationship, husband- wife relationship,separation and extramarital relationship. Marriage is one of the most prominent themes in the fictions,various shades of relationship get projected evaluated and experienced in this stitution called marriage. There are characters who marry because of social pressure, there are some that feel suffocated within the bonds of marriage and eventually break free of it and there are those characters who adjust and struggled somehow or the other and make their relationship work.

Keywords: Struggle for identity,feminism, tradition and modernity

Manju Kapur has joined the growing number of modern women writers has have significantly contributed to the progression of Indian fiction the position of women in a patriarchal society and deals with the problems of women . Her novel present the longing struggle of women to establish an identity she has tride to make a space that women have to occupy in domestic relationship particularly 1940's where they had no voice to assert their rights,many manifestations of the Indian women's roles. She is a wife, a mother, a daughter and a daughter -in-law than she raises the voice against male chauvinism, social discrimination, oint family restrictions and constraints laid by the patriarchy in the tradition.

Kapur's novels focus on the hugely issues like sexual abuse ,infertility,dowry and expectations to assert her identity and achieves self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment in her life. Kapur's portrayed woman as the silent suffer and upholders of the tradition and traditional values of family and society. Traditional Indian society limits woman's individual development and growth , She has to abide by many rules and restriction as she is controlled by man through her life. Women under the patriarchal pressure and control were subjected to more brunt's and social ostracism.They were discriminated and were biased in line of their sex.

Manju Kapur emerges as one of the twinkling diamond in collection of diamonds of Indian women writers writing about women and the difficulties faced by women in this male dominated Indian society. The life of women were lived and struggled under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society were reflected in the novels of Manju Kapur. Her writing expose to the middle class or upper middle class women,she has very authentically dealt with this problem in her novels,she too writes about woman situation and conditions through her own autobiographical experience.

The female protagonists struggle in the novel of Manju Kapur,how women like Virmati in *Difficult Daughter*, Astha in *a Married Woman*, Nisha,Sona,Rupa in *Home*,and *Custody Shugan* all these women character struggle in family and society expose in her novel.

Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughter* is a struggle of a women,against age-old traditions protagonist women character of Virmati in Manju Kapur *Difficult Daughter*, the way she fights against the social taboos and social conventions which prevent women from going out of the house marrying the person of their choice,leading their own lives on their own terms and conditions. It also critically examines the intellectual and emotional dilemma of Virmati the protagonist in the partition and post partition days. Virmati that there is much more to do in life than just achieving to the social and moral patriarchal cods. Insisting on her right to be educated she manages to leave home to study in Lahore, but she falls in love with a married professor Harrish whom she thinks as a light house which shows the path of education and english tenement. This

illicit love brings disgrace to her orthodox family and throughout her life, she lives as a black sheep who spoiled the reputation of the family.

Manju Kapur as a socialist feminist, reveals the problems of Virmati, the protagonist of the novel, and her struggle for identity and self expression. In India, women have been believed inferior and weaker to men. This belief is reinforced by multifarious tragic incidents in the novel. Viramati is a simple and educated woman, She born to a traditional family, She sacrifices herself to bring up her siblings, she divides her time in taking care of her sick mother and her siblings and her studies. She longs for love and affection from her mother, but her mother has no time to express her love towards her daughter. This is the main cause of Virmati to fall in love with Harish, an already married man. She gets pregnant by Harish and Harish compels her to abort their baby, she convinces Harish to marry her.

Virmati has lost her self-esteem as she has become unwanted. As a wife she wants to perform her duties but Ganga, professor Harish first wife does not allow her to do so. She washing his cloths, to polishing his shoes, making his desk-clean, filling his fountain pen with ink. Putting his records back in the jacket mending his cloths, hemming his dhotis his first wife gets the credit of doing it all Virmati is not in that sense. A dutiful wife to do all these things. So she asks Harish with agitation.

“And- what? As your wife, am I to do nothing for you? Just be in your bed?” (p.no.217) D.D

It creates a basic question about her being marginal, she is the co wife, the second, not the first the ‘other.’ This ‘otherness’ has created a sense of frustration in her mind.

The nature of Virmati at the beginning of the novel has been presented as simple innocent and docile girl. She can not understand the suitable disguise underlying the professor’s looks and enticing talks. She admits that freely saying.

“when he talked and looked like that she could not argue further. She had to prove she trusted him”(p.no 154)D.D

This failure in the proper understanding of the character of Harish brings the tragic dimension in to her undisturbed life, she asked herself. Why had she been so upset to learn of Harish's absence?(p.no.163)D.D

Her life and her association with the professor do not allow her any ordinary options open for any ordinary girl and acceptable to the norms of the society. Her situation becomes frustrating worse and it is like a trauma for her. She tries to assert herself particularly her proper rights.

Kapur has presented the problems of the Indian women in a joint family in a male dominated society. The novel highlight the issue of patriarchy which denies woman's voice and freedom set at the time of partition, problem of men-women relationship women sexuality love infatuation jealousy marriage and gender roles have been presented at a time when women had no voice to assert their rights.

Virmati breaks the patriarchal norms to assert her individuality and hopes to achieve self- fulfillment. But she proves to be a loser, fails to create a space for herself for which she had been striving all along. Perhaps it is this inability of Virmati to strike independence roots and grow that makes Ida (Virmati's daughter), she symbolizes the changed mindset of Indian girls who want to decide their future and refuse to be treated like things. Virmati, like her mother, treats her daughter Ida with the strict patriarchal norms. This forces Ida to suffer from being independent. Only with Virmati's death Ida becomes free to lead her own life. We witness that such roots represents Virmati's enhanced personal trauma. At times various social and communal problems encompassing India disturb Virmati's peace of mind.

Kapur endeavors to exhibit the experiences faced by the women in the socio-cultural setup of the society in India. In all her novel Manju Kapur has concentrated on the middle-class women and their struggle in the specific social and cultural context of India, but if there is to be a true female independence too much remains to be done. Mostly women have to bear the burden of lone lines in life, someone de Beauvoir draws the conclusion, Kapur's heroines do not want to be 'rubber dolls' in society rather they continuously strive to assert their identity.

In the concluding lines thus through Virmati, Ida, Manju Kapur just wants to convey that now with the spread of education, the present scenario has changed. Now the women are struggling hard to find their own self in the family and the society.

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PAPER SENTING MAIL ADDRESS : drvairamoorthyptamil@gmail.com

**Address : 2/220 B ANNA NAGAR ,
MANICKA VINAYAGAR KOVIL STREET,
KULITHALAI - 639104 (CELL NO : 8760458545)
TAMIL NADU, INDIA.**