



Reflection of Difficult Relationship in *Difficult Daughters*

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Abstract:

The article evaluates the difficult relations among characters of *Difficult Daughters* by Manju Kapur (1998). This is the story of a real, middle-class family with fathers, mothers and siblings that one has seen and lived with. Manju Kapur has depicted the delicate and complicated relations among family members, especially among the women of the family. Her female characters rebel against patriarchal society and attempt to stand on their own. This novel projects images of dysfunctional families in society. In this patriarchal society where women are considered inferior, and senior women hold matriarchal sentiments for the young women of the family, she feels that what she has faced is the rule of life, and so she restrains their daughter's dreams and desires for the sake of family honour in society. This novel portrayed how a girl is deceived by her lover, and their conjugal relationship with each other becomes delicate and even breaks. The author picturizes a relationship between husband and wife which is ruined by the male character's deception and selfishness, as well as the pursuit of money and power.

Key Words: Relationship, patriarchy, gender, marriage.

Introduction:

India is a multicultural country; there are certain rituals that Indians adhere to religiously and are also bound by responsibilities and duties that are part of the country's culture. Women and men are the two fundamental gender modules of every culture; they establish norms, and their positions reveal a long history in human society. Since he was physically powerful, a man was expected to be the family's primary earner and he eventually gained superior status over women in the family and community. This gender-based structure gradually gained acceptance in society, resulting in long-term patrilineal standards for women to obey. The hollowness of our culture and everyday life is the product of modernity's deviations. According to Merriam Webster, "a state of being linked or a relationship may be said to be significant only when there is an emotional bond between individuals".

The Context of Novel:

Difficult Daughters is the story of Virmati, the chief protagonist, her mother (Kasturi), her daughter (Ida) the narrator, and their difficult relationship. This story is set at the time of

partition in Amritsar and Lahore in the 1940s. The novel portrays both the submissive and rebellious characters of women, as well as their relationships with their mothers, siblings, friends and other family members. It also describes the mentality of educated urban middle-class women entangled between tradition and modernity. Virmati, Ida's mother, gets ready to become the second wife of a professor (Harish) for love, and Kasturi, Ida's grandmother, is dealing with a difficult daughter, Virmati.

Ida's father wants her to have a good education, but she married and divorced her husband and shows up in a difficult relationship. She became a troublesome daughter for Virmati as a result of this.

This whole story begins with Ida going back to Amritsar with Virmati's ashes to meet her mother's family. Both the past of the mother's remarkable life and the tumult of the years leading up to our country's independence are traced within this framework. In cities like Amritsar, there was a community known as a 'genry', which included eminent educators, teachers, lawyers, and landed families. Virmati's grandfather is a prominent landowner and adamant Arya Samaj supporter who is optimistic about women's education, and her father and uncle own and run a prosperous jewellery business. Virmati, the eldest of eleven daughters, splits her time between helping her anaemic mother with housework and studying, but not wholeheartedly. Virmati's interest in studies is disconcerting to her family, who believe she is capable of handling life as she is skilled in sewing, cooking, writing, and reading. As Ida concludes the novel by saying, "This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be. Do not haunt me anymore."(DD280) she says, revealing a lot about the relationship between her and her mother, Virmati.

Difficult relationship of a family in paradigm society:

Women suppress themselves, console themselves, and reveal their false faces of happiness outside. Society, or in some cases, women themselves, never accept that women must be respected and treated equally. Most pitiful of all, men do not recognize or respect women's sacrifices. As a result, family and conjugal relationships become difficult and lose their significance, and women want to be independent and self-sufficient. The majority of Indian women see themselves as subsidiary individuals, like mere tools of men. This lowers their identity. As a person she accepted herself as the daughter-wife-mother portrait, their roles began to become stereotyped. They bury their true emotions, making it impossible for them to separate their true selves from their social positions.

She agrees that she must remain on the societal periphery. Even if a woman overcomes her flaws, society never allows her to reach her full potential. As a result, women are constantly marginalized throughout their entire lives. Cultures may play an important role in establishing boundaries for them. Women may also feel neglected because their families play such an important role in their lives, leaving their hopes unfulfilled. Because of men's lack of affection and ignorance towards them, women are alone, and their other relationships as well as their marital relationships are shattered.

In the novel, Manju Kapur wants to show how Virmati and Ida both grow up to be challenging daughters without their parents realizing it. Virmati does all of the household chores and has never yelled at someone in her home. Though she acts like a stereotypical daughter, she yearns for independence, just like her cousin Shakuntala, who embraces the 'Wine of Freedom.' After Virmati enters the clichéd territory of marriage, she has lost all her esteem qualities.

Manju Kapur also describes the selfishness and greediness of the female characters in this novel, as Virmati's tai ji Lajwanti sees Kasturi's childbirth as disgusting breeding when her father-in-law (Lala Diwan Chand) exclaimed delightfully, 'Raunaq in the house at last,' and ignored her two children, Somnath and Shakuntala. Somnath, like her sister Shakunthala, disappointed his mother by not showing interest in marriage.

Lajwanti was becoming increasingly quarrelsome about moving away and living separately from the house, but Lala Diwan Chand seemed adamantly opposed to any kind of family separation. Finally, seeing the condition of his family, he was worn out by Lajwanti, his elder daughter-in-law. He honours Ezekiel and believes 'home is where we have to gather grace'. His elder son Chander Prakash was stubborn and selfish under the influence of his wife Lajwanti, whereas his younger son Suraj Prakash was polite, generous, and obedient to his father.

Virmati must battle with both her mother's influence and the patriarchal social powers embodied by her mother. Kasturi, Virmati's mother, rejects her education, prompting Virmati to make the bold decision to continue her studies. It causes a squabble between the mother and daughter relationship. Kasturi was born into an indigenous family and was raised with traditional values and ancient customs. She wants her daughter Virmati to learn and do the same things she has in her family, and she expects the same from her children's generation. Her traditional wife's attitude led her to have ten female and male children, but she failed to fulfil her motherly duties to her children. For that reason, Virmati's emphasis on schooling, which is opposed to her mother's, is her chief move toward rebellion. But after marriage, the Professor's first wife and his grown children perceived her as an unwelcome and needless intruder. His children despised her because she had shared their mother's affection as their father's second wife.

Harish explains that he cannot share intellectual discussions with his illiterate wife, which drives him to form a bond with his student, Virmati. He develops a sense of depression because he has little in common with his wife. This sense of isolation, he claims, draws him closer to Virmati. Virmati is torn between her feelings for the professor, her responsibilities to her family, and her unwavering desire for independence. She reflects on her courtship with a professor who is already married and believes that a man who betrays his wife can never give a woman happiness. Her marriage to a married man had been socially rejected, and she had become an object of ridicule and suffering in the house as a result. She had violated the existing family relationship by being selfish. However, at last, she has expressed a final emotional desire to her daughter Ida to donate all her organs after her death, and she needn't bring any mourners to her burial place.

In the context of Virmati and Harish, the success of a marriage depends on the effective working together of both husband and wife, and trust is a primary requirement for any

relationship. A woman can accept anything but not the disbelief and ignorance of her husband. Sometimes women themselves are obstacles on their way to freedom. Manju Kapur's novels explore the difficulties of reconciling the devotion to family expected of middle-class Indian women with their aspirations and desires for life outside.

The topic of a marital relationship is a basic thought in this novel. Marriage is at the centre of all of them, even though they deal with childhood, youth, old age, and education. The focus is on the difficult relationship between man-woman, i.e., Virmati-Professor Harish, and mother-daughter, i.e., Kasturi-Virmati-Ida. Quite apart from love and arranged marriages, Kapur also depicts extramarital affairs, premarital affairs, and a long-term live-in relationship between the professor and Virmati before marriage. Kapur addresses the causes and effects of deviant social behaviour openly and honestly. In the case of Virmati, her need for love was fulfilled through a physical relationship. The professor's unrequited love is fulfilled in unforeseen meetings, and love proves to be the most difficult thing she has ever seen.

The depiction of Shakuntala and Virmati, who make their own life choices, has feminist overtones from the start. As a result, women who attempted to reclaim their identity were labelled 'difficult daughters.' 'Girls were only intended for marriage' is the core theme of this novel. The first casualty is their relationship with their mother. Their stories are passed down through the generations. The generation gap has grown too large to be bridged due to the passage of time. Unlike in most mother-daughter relationships, even the shared experience of childbirth didn't bring them closer. Partition and its implications which are extensively detailed in the book, may have led to differences in relationships. Only when Virmati dies does the ghost go out, and Ida is free to live her own life, no longer troubled by her mother's presence. The novel illustrates how a mother's presence can be disturbing to a daughter in various situations. How can maternal love and admiration be replaced by hatred and animosity, and how can a mother, who has historically been a symbol of sacrifice and kindness, become a symbol of selfishness and anger toward her children?

Virmati discovers the prospect of liberation by overcoming her inhibitions and engaging in the Indian freedom movement to sample the modernity that persuades her. Rather, she decides to fight her relationship issues, such as those with her family, her morals, and her desire to marry the man she adores. Even though she is free to live her solitary life, she is never able to reconcile herself fully. As the story unfolds, Virmati discovers another Virmati in her daughter, Ida, who refuses to follow in her footsteps and hence becomes a difficult daughter for Virmati, much like herself, inheriting the trait of becoming a difficult daughter from her mother Kasturi.

Conclusion:

India has a long history of traditions and tales. The stories are not only entertaining, but they also provide insight into the society of the time. The novel traces the mother-daughter relationship through three generations to provide a critique. The writer has delivered us an extraordinary image of the development of the Indian woman's psyche over time, beginning from the pre-independence phase through both the independence era and the post-independence period, through the sensitive representation of their challenges.

Thus, the story reflects Virmati's misunderstanding of the exact significance of education and empowerment. The aim of empowerment is not to break human relationships but to strengthen them.

The writer, in contrast, recognizes the gravity of the Indian woman's predicament and the generational struggles that lie behind it, but she believes that a positive outcome is possible. The theory of the modern woman is no longer true. She's standing up and posing unsettling, unusual, and unsettling questions. She's delving into the myths of motherhood as well as the myths of innocence and modesty. The shift in her social status can be achieved by changing her mindset and making her more literate and well-informed.

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