

PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA IN THE CHARACTERS OF MANJU KAPUR'S DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS

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Abstract

Difficult Daughters by Manju Kapur depicts the condition of women in the contemporary India. It tells the plight of women and how women are being subjected in the family as well as in the society. The novel describes the primary character Kasturi as a baby-bearing woman who is compared to fruit-bearing tree. She becomes the subject in the family and being controlled by her family and her husband. This novel deals with three women of three generation. Kasturi, the first generation who has no idea about modernity and modern thinking. Virmati, daughter of Kasturi, has the idea of being individual, one who seeks equal rights. Ida, Virmati's daughter, and Kasturi's granddaughter, has individual freedom both financially and emotionally. This paper deals with the psychological trauma of all the three characters undergoes.

Key Words:

Trauma, Emotional attachment, Patriarchy, feminism, freedom.

Trauma studies are an interdisciplinary field that examines the psychological, social, and cultural effects of trauma on individuals and communities. It involves the exploration of the impact of adverse and distressing experiences on individuals, communities, and societies. Trauma studies draw from various disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, literature, and history, to understand the nature of trauma, its effects on mental health and well-being, and the ways in which individuals and communities cope, recover, and find flexibility.

Trauma is a response of severely stressful or troubling event. It makes the persons to lose or disconnected with oneself. It is an emotional response to the event such as accident, rape, or any natural disaster. According to Freud, Trauma is 'not a physical injury but a mental injury to the individual.' He further says in *Studies in Hysteria*, it is not the original event that creates the trauma but, the remembrance of the event can create a trauma on individual.

Psychological trauma is the unrepresentability of sufferings. It causes the damage to person's mind. It can happen to a person because of, overwhelming event of stress caused by one or more events. It leads to long, serious, and negative consequences.

Manju Kapur, a great Indian Novelist and was Professor at Delhi University. She was born in 1948 in Amritsar. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* was published in the year 1998 and won the Commonwealth Prize for First Novels in 1999. Her other novels *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008) and *Custody* (2011) are highly successful among the readers and critics. Manju Kapur deals with various themes such as feminism, gender discrimination, diaspora and so on. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* is mainly focused on feminism, but the characters undergo the mental or psychological trauma which has been clearly portrayed in the novel.

Difficult Daughters deals with togetherness of three different generations of women. In an interview with rediff.com -an Indian news magazine, she says that this novel took five years to complete; three years for fieldwork both in Amritsar and Lahore and two years for writing and getting published. This novel mainly emphasizes on feminism and partition of India and Pakistan but gives more deepness to the story.

The narrative opens with a daughter realizing that she didn't fully understand her mother and experiencing a range of complicated feelings while at her mother's burial. She makes the decision to find more about her mother's life, including how she met her husband and got married. She traveled across Pakistan and India in order to obtain the information and to look for some relatives and family who lived there. She learns the tales of her grandmothers and mother via her investigation. The novel

focuses on three generations of women, all of whom struggled to obtain an education while being extremely different in terms of age and time.

The novel talks about the women who are living in the Men's world. For example, Kasturi, the woman of first generation, her life has been presented as miserable one. She has represented as fruit-bearing tree, as like a tree which is expected to bear a fruit seasonally, she has pressured to bear a child yearly. She becomes a toy in the hands of her husband and her family.

When Virmati was Sixteen, her mother Kasturi has her eleventh baby in her womb. Her sister-in-law comments, 'Breeding like Cats and Dogs', 'Harvest time again' (DD P. 7). After the years of sufferings and pain, she has the courage to raise her voice during her pregnancy. She wants to abort the baby with the help of local hakim and his medicine. But the result was disappointed yet she has undergone the labor pain. It was after this,

"A Western-educated allopath declared that the repeated cycles of giving birth depleted her body and no medicine could help Kasturi go through another pregnancy. The hakim declared that he cannot answer for Kasturi's life if she has any more children. (DD P.9)"

After this delivery, her physical and mental health is totally crushed. She spends all her time with heavy bleeding, exhaustion, and unsteadiness. Her body needs some strength and bracing air of the mountains to refresh her mind and body.

Then the story reveals the character of Virmati, the first-born child to Kasturi. She is not like her mother; she wants to be independent and struggles for freedom which does not happen in her family. Virmati has an interest to study more that made Kasturi stunned. Kasturi expects Virmati to raise her children, takes care of them and helps her in motherhood and household works because she could not able to do all the things as she has given a birth to eleventh child. She wants to have her own space and her own identity. She always expected a motherly love and needs some sign of bond with her mother but she does not get it from her mother. She always spellbound by her cousin Shakuntala who is totally opposite to her. She did not have any belief in marriage. "but women are still supposed to marry and do nothing else" (DD P.17).

After seeing Shakuntala, her cousin, Virmati has an urge for higher studies. She has learnt many new things from her as study, life style, progressive idea, and fight against restrictions. The novelist cites, "Shakuntala's visit plants the seeds of aspiration in Virmati." (DD P. 19). She wants to lead a life like her cousin and lead an independent life. She takes care of her mother's children. In this regard, she cannot able to study and she failed in her FA', but she has an interest to study. Her traditional mother never listens to her, according to her, the basic qualifications is too high for a girl. Kasturi insists Virmati to get married into a good family. On the other hand, Virmati wants to taste the liberty as her cousin. A long debate between marriage and study thus, 'Now it is you who are eating my head. What good are Shaku's degrees when she is not settled. Will they look after her when she is old?' demanded Kasturi irritably. 'At your age I was already expecting you, not fighting with my mother.' (DD P. 21-22)

Virmati is not interested in living her mother's life. She perseveres in her quest for knowledge in this way. Despite the opposition of her mother and her entire family, she made the decision to travel to Lahore in order to fulfill her desire for further education. After completing her education, she enrolls in a bachelor's program. Virmati fell in love with a professor named Harish while attending college. Harish had an affair with her despite being married and having kids. Knowing the reality, she moves on from him to focus on her work.

She is expected to do everything because she is the firstborn child, but no one seems to notice that she also has desires. Neither her mother nor her family show her any affection. She therefore yearns for outside love and attention. She feels glad when Harish shows her affection during that period, but it also doesn't last very long.

Both Virmati and Harish are looking for an intelligent partner, and Harish's first wife Ganga's inattention to her studies and ignorance caused Harish to travel to Virmati and take her non as a second wife. As Virmati has created a web for her married boyfriend, Kasturi gives her advice. Kasturi is creating a thread from the web. Virmati finds herself torn between romantic and familial love.

Although her family is making all of the decisions for her, nobody is aware of how much she loves the Professor.

She gets a job as a Principal in a school then again, the Professor enters. He stays with her for some days which gives the content for neighbors to gossip about them. Out of Social Pressure, she has left her job then decided to marry him though he is already married. Virmati never taught any bad lesson or bad things to the children. Because of her personal life commitments, the society made her to resign the job. The society thought that, she will be a wrong inspiration for the children as a married man living with an unmarried girl out of wedlock. It's her own personal life, but people at that time never think about it. People around her start criticizing her way of living.

Ida is the daughter of Virmati and Professor. Through the novel, the readers can understand that the relationship between mother (Virmati) and daughter (Ida) is not affectionate. Ida never enjoys or remembers a happy moment with her mother. Ida used to protest her mother. There is always an opposition between the opinions of the daughter and mother. Ida is free and clear in her thoughts and activities. Ida's journey is self-sufficiency and chose the method that her mother could not have. I stare at this early photograph of an unknown woman and let despair and sorrow run their course. I could not remember a time it had been right between us, and the guilt that her life had kept in check now overwhelmed me (DD P. 2).

Kasturi follows old traditions and patriarchal society; she also compels her daughter Virmati to follow the same family tradition. But Virmati breaks all the customs and tradition of the family, when she becomes a mother of her daughter Ida, she did the same thing what Kasturi done to her. Ida fights for her identity and self-confidence; she rejects all the norms and traditions followed by the male chauvinism society.

The novel highlights the struggles faced by Indian Women whose major anxiety is to maintain the uniqueness and self-esteem. The novel reflects the developing impact of social crusaders and their efforts to the society. The character of Virmati presents the plight of a modern women and the problems faced by them.

The biological factors shaped the status of women both mentally and emotionally. Women accepted their dependence to men especially getting food. This fact symbolizes that, giving food is supreme thing one can do for others. Men think that, they have power on women and felt superior. This is how male dominated society came into existence in the world and considers women as a weaker sex. The various characters from *Difficult Daughters*, tell the problems and rigidities of the people during 1940s, especially by the weaker sex. In order to avoid the mental trauma faced by women, men have to give equal status to them and treat them equally without treating them as slave or servant.

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