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**PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN MANJU KAPUR'S**  
**DIFFICULT DAUGHTER**

A major preoccupation in recent Indian women's writing has been a delineation of inner life and subtle interpersonal relationships. In a culture where individualism and protest have often remained alien ideas, and marital bliss and the woman's role at home is a central focus, it is interesting to see the emergence of not just an essential Indian sensibility but an expression of cultural displacement. Manju kapur has joined the growing number of women writers from India on whom the image of the suffering but stoic woman eventually breaking traditional boundaries has had a significant impact. Manju Kapur is essentially acknowledged by critics as a novelist who speaks about women and for women in the complex web of patriarchal Hindu society. Thus, feminist issues, firmly included in her novel, have received a considerable amount of critical attention in recent years.

Manju Kapur is a writer committed to human relationship that is found to be scattered throughout her fictional world, and Difficult Daughters is no exception. Here is a world where relationship dominate and determine, in their difference and complexity. Very much attached to her mother, Kapur seems to be enthralled with the mother figure. They have to be viewed in relation to all other possible relationships; can reveal the hitherto latent dimensions and complexities which are intricately integrated in mother- daughter

bonds. Therefore, the objective of this attempt is to explore the love and daughters in Manju Kapur's present novel.

The novel reveals the attitude of three generations of women- Kasturi (Virmati's mother), Virmati and Ida (Virmati's daughter). In other words, it captures the complex relationship between mother and daughters over a period of three generations. Mother is supposed to be the root and daughter the fruit of this relationship. If fruit does not receive proper nourishment from the root, its growth and development can be marred. Ida, in her journey to the mother's past, encounters different phases and stages in her relationship with her mother.

Ida, a divorcee and childless lady, with a heart after her mother's death, confesses: "Without her, I am lost. I look for connect" (DD4). Ida remains a difficult daughter for her mother throughout her childhood and after. The fundamental disagreement in Ida's life is what she declares in the very first sentence of the novel, "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (DD1), and what she accepts in the epilogue, "I grew up struggling to be the model daughter" (279). What makes Ida a difficult daughter is her negation of the ideal daughter, which has supreme value in her mother's estimation. Moreover, being husbandless, childless and parentless, "Ida has no brave causes left" for her to live. To add to this, her mother's painful memories keep haunting her. Therefore, she makes an insightful attempt to recapture the history of her mother's life; so that she can have a better understanding of her relationship with her mother and of herself.

When the daughter takes to writing about her mother, this is actually her attempt to search out her own roots, identity and strength. Hitherto, Ida has a partial view of her mother's life. She wants to know the daughterhood of her mother, and thus tends to identify herself with her. In the light of the above statement, it can be concluded that "identity" for a female is both identification

with the mother and a distinct self. This contradiction is the result of the fact that mother are not all that doting, sacrificing ones, but is also instruments through which the patriarchal society exercises its values. Thus, the dominating circumstances shape the mother- daughter tends to identify herself with the mother.

Virmati, in *Difficult Daughter*, is the eldest daughter out of eleven children born to Kasturi in a respectable 'Arya Smaji' business family at Amritsar. Kasturi enjoys her fecundity and every year gives birth to a child. At an early stage of her childhood, Virmati is taken for granted by her mother to rear and care for her younger siblings. Hence, she has to play the role of second mother for her brother and sisters. Consequently, her own childhood remains of maternal care. "At times Virmati yearned for affection, for some sign that she was special"(DD6). But at every point Virmati is made to feel responsible for the family and her mother's offspring. If she ever attempts to protest, her mother spits, "You are the eldest. If you don't see to things, which will?"(DD7). Most of the time her mother remains either sick or pregnant, and the entire household is left for Virmati to manage. The daily domestic chores consume much time of the day and this affects Virmati's studies. Despite her consistent efforts, she could not perform well in studies. But Kasturi can never understand the restlessness of her daughter. For her to get married and settle down is the sole career that a girl must aspire for. She once comments, "Why was her daughter so restless all the time? In that spelt disaster"(DD12)

Virmati's Cousin and Lajwanti(Shakuntala's mother) which has a very strong bearing on Varmati and her relationship with her mother. Shakuntala is a well- educated and socially aware girl who teaches in Lahore. She is unmarried and lives independently at her own terms. "Normally few dared to mention Shakuntala's unmarried state; each remark was such an insult to the mother"(DD15). This is because the mother considers the daughter as her double.

Therefore, when her daughter is criticized, she takes it to be a criticism of herself and her values which she has once implanted in her daughter.

Kasturi is educated in sewing, and other domestic chores. Her mother never allows her to take her own decisions. A mother thus, conditioned and trained in traditional ways of patriarchal society, transfers these values and standards to her daughter. Moreover, how Kasturi can afford to grant Virmati her share of freedom when she herself could not get any. Virmati is in Dalhousie taking care of her mother, “she could hear her mother telling her not to waste her time (Over studies), there were more thing to do”(DD20). Unfortunately, Virmati fails in her exams due to everyday household duties and responsibilities that she has to carry, much against her will. Tears roll down her cheeks when her mother passes discouraging comments on her. She tries to defend herself but Kasturi retorts, “Leave your studies if it is going to make you so bad-tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first”(DD21). Virmati compares her situation with that of her cousin, Shakuntala, and cross questions her mother. Kasturi feels irritated to think how can her meek daughter be so rebellions? She chides Virmati, “At your age I was already expecting you, not fighting with my mother”(DD22). Kasturi can never understand why Virmati is so passionate about education. Sometimes, she wonders how education can replace marriage and home. For her education means learning the basics techniques of housekeeping. She questions Virmati,

What kind of learning was this that deprived her reason? She too knew the value of education; it had got her husband, and had filled her hours with the pleasure of reading.(DD60).

Virmati feels as a neglected and an unwanted child in her mother’s home. “The language of feeling had never flowed between them, and this threat was meant to express all her thwarted yearning”. (DD12)This very lack and dearth

of love created in her by her mother renders Virmati vulnerable to the implorations of Harish, the professor. In his company, for the first time in life, Virmati finds wanted. Harish makes her feel important enough to be loved and cared for. He gives his book to Virmati's mother. He works on her dream to be independent through education, whereas her mother does not even allow her to dream. So, it's natural on the part of Virmati that she turns her attention from her mother to the professor.

Virmati finds herself torn between the prestige of her family and the love of the professor. Harish promises her education, hope and a bright future; whereas her family represents restriction, prohibition and her wedding. Every word they said had so "little relation to her inner life that she felt fraudulent even listening to them, passively, immorally silent"(DD70). Meanwhile, Virmati's marriage is fixed with Indrajith, a canal engineer. She feels trapped and does not find any solution. When, no way out is left for her she tries to commit suicide, but is saved. This attempt of Virmati relegates her family, especially of her mother. Kasturi feels herself betrayed by her daughter. 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(DD82). Kasturi considers herself tainted by the ungrateful act of her daughter.

This further creates tensions in their relationship. Virmati painfully tells this to the professor in her letter, "My mother keeps saying that all my education has achieved is the destruction of family"(DD99). Virmati becomes more adamant, determined and rigid in her decision not to marry. Finally, her family plans to send her to Lahore. Virmati, such an isolated self, is left more vulnerable to the outside world represented by the professor. It gives him an opportunity to take the advantage of Virmati's situation; and he begins to pay frequent visits to her in Lahore. At the initial stage, Virmati keeps herself aloof

from his debilitating influence, contemplating on her parents statement about him, “A man who is already married and a traitor to his wife can never give happiness to any women.He is a worldly person caught in his own desires. Nothing solid”(DD93). But later, she succumbs to his tempting ventures. She has to undergo an abortion. It is, then that she realizes the vacuum existing in their relationship.In her relationship withSwarna Lata, her roommate in Lahore,Varmati again relives her relationship with her mother. Just like Virmati,Swarna too feels alienated from hermother. She tells Virmati, “It’s only because of my father that I am here. My mother wanted me to marry. She said I had done my B A and that was enough. Where was all this study going to end?”(DD117). Swarna’s resolution to do something valuable without merely getting married helps Virmati to justify her decision to study further against her mother’s constant complaints.Virmati’s own life becomes difficult for her to live in any meaningful way.Now she belongs neither to her parental home nor to her in- law,lingering somewhere in the deep recesses of her mind.Virmati receives a marginalized place in her own family.To add more to her miseries, she receives the news of her father’s death caused by the partition riots. This is true in the case of Ida,the narrator, who attempts to reconstruct the history of her mother and thus seeks to discover identity for herself. Ida does not want to be like her mother because she cannot identify herself with her.An isolated being as she is Ida however, has only her mother to look for her identity. Iad wistfully compares her own experience with the experiences of her mother in order to recreate her identity.

Since childhood, Ida has remained a difficult daughter for her mother, as Virmati was for Kasturi. Moreover, in trying not to be like her mother, and to portray herself as the sheer opposite of her mother, Ida confirms her legacy. She herself says, “She couldn’t have, because when I grew up was very careful to tailor my needs to what I know I could get. That is my female inheritance. That

is what she tried to give me. Adjust, compromise, adapt”(DD256). After reconstructing her mother, likes herself. Ida can relate herself to the image of her mother that she has captured through her memory and imagination. She can feel the pain that her mother had to undergo while aborting a child. “I knew mother, what it was like to have an abortion. Virmati was victorious in breaking the age old shackles of a country which was tradition bound but at the cost of much mental, torture and the tag of being the other.

Manju Kapur’s novels focus mainly on female characters. Here the present paper treated as on the most important issue of women’s struggle and tries to examine and explore the sensitivity of human hearts. The portrayal of women in the novel is as silent sufferers and upholders of the tradition and traditional values of family and society has undergone tremendous changes.

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