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## REFLECTION OF DISSENT IN DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS OF MANJU KAPUR

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### Abstract:

It is proposed to illustrate the reflection of outrage and indignation in the novel *Difficult Daughters* written by Manju Kapur a renowned novelist of India. Showing outrage and indignation is one of the important features of Manju Kapur, particularly, it has been found in the writings of the writers who belong to the modern world. They believe to express their disagreement with an old fashioned ideology of culture and tendency of the people. Controlling norms of human behaviour are often criticized in the modern age. So, Manju Kapur is one of them who strongly deals with this in her novels. As a step of subverting an authority of patriarchal power, she gives more importance to the women characters than male. She wipes out the inferior and weak image of the women characters by projecting them as superior and powerful. Hence, in the *Difficult Daughters*, Manju Kapur expresses her dissent by portraying the strong and able image of the women characters. These women are able to reject the decisions laid down on them by the traditional Indian society influenced by patriarchal ideology highly. Fundamental rights like freedom of expression and right of selection have been denied to a woman for many years in society by the male-oriented Indian culture. The title of the novel itself is very suggestive and significant which signifies that life had been remained very difficult for the daughters of Indian for many years. Hence, dissent is a way of objecting to or rejecting someone's decision and power.

**Keywords:** Manju Kapur, *New Woman* of Manju Kapur, *Difficult Daughters* and Dissent.

### Introduction:

Manju Kapur is a well-known Indian novelist. She was born in 1948 in Amritsar, Punjab. She completed her Post-graduation from Dalhousie University, in Halifax, Canada. However, she started her career in India. She got married to Gun Nidhi Dalmia, they have three children. She began writing novels in her forties as the first novel of Manju Kapur, *Difficult Daughters* appeared in 1998 and won the Commonwealth Prize for it. She wrote *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant*, and *Custody* and so on in the later period. All these novels of Manju Kapur depict her desire for freedom, independence, subverting patriarchal influence and proclaiming woman's existence in the family as well as society.

The *Difficult Daughters* is a famous novel by Manju Kapur. Though it was felicitated by an eminent Prize of Literature, at the time of publishing, the number of times the publishers suggested corrections in the novel. The entire novel turns around the self-realization, self-respect and self-existence of women in a male-dominated

society. Manju Kapur spent most of the time of her life in metro political cities. Hence, her awareness of an individual's freedom for basic needs and choices gets reflected in the present work. Even, when she composed this novel, as far as India is concerned, the open market policy was declared by the government in India. So, it resulted to get the liberty of choice for every individual at the corporate level. But, in society, the right of choice was denied to woman due to the influence of male decision on Indian Society. So, the authority and influence of the male in domestic decisions have been challenged by Manju Kapur in her very first novel *Difficult Daughters*. Women's secondary status has been removed and established women as a prominent and essential part of life. Inner feelings of women characters are given more importance than their nominal role in the family and society. In the present novel, Manju Kapur gives stress on women's happiness rather than spending their entire life according to the willingness of men. To remove the unequal relationship of men and women, the novelist takes lead to project female characters as a protagonist of the story as well as to present them as to be a fighter.

The story of the novel *Difficult Daughters* is based on the life of Virmati, her daughter Ida and her mother Kasturi. She belongs to the typical middle-class family where father, mother, brother and sister used to live. She falls in love with a professor of English who is already married but tired by his illiterate wife. So, the illegitimate relationship of Virmati with Professor is not being accepted by society. Eventually, they get married. But, the problems of Virmati's life do not stop. The novel is set in the background of partition time in Amritsar and Lahore. Virmati is born in the typical middle-class Punjabi family where daughters should get married to a boy chosen by her family at a particular age. However, Virmati gets a valve of education to escape herself from the role of marrying and caring for others from generation to generation.

Virmati prefers to take advanced education rather than remaining confined within the four walls of married life even after getting married to Professor Harish. She dreams of extraordinary life for herself and her daughter Ida. Therefore, she gives importance to education. She thinks that education is the only way of getting independence from the clutches of patriarchy. Manju Kapur's characters Kasturi, Virmati and Ida represent the pre-independence phase, independence phase and post-independence phase respectively. Virmati's dissent against the patriarchy and complete freedom Ida from the patriarchy is the central focus of the novel *Difficult Daughter*. So, Virmati walks in the footsteps left by her cousin Shakuntala against the traditional norms for women laid by patriarchy. To whom, Virmati considers her modern woman of contemporary society. She determines to follow the same path though she gets failed in this mission. So, she continues the freedom movement runs against the patriarchal dominance in the man-woman relationship. It is a woman's fight for women's freedom for education, self-respect, social status and most importantly her struggle for self-survival. Manju Kapur quests for natural space for the woman in the day to day life. She likes to be free from the socio-cultural burdens kept on her shoulders for many generations. Virmati is the protagonist of the novel, she is the mouthpiece of the writer. She subverts the injustices are done with women in the form of marriage from childhood up to death. Novelist criticizes the orthodox and stereotypically idealized identity of women in the Indian society particularly in the middle-class society the view was highly dominated.

The dissent of Virmati and Ida articulates both the existence of the dominant power structure and the female desire to renounce and resist this structure by receiving advanced education for them. Ida symbolizes a post-independence woman who never likes to accept the old dead concept of the secondary status of a woman in the modern society of India. Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* challenges the patriarchal customs which was based on refusing equality and freedom to women in regular life. So, the novelist through the present novel depicts the same issue very skillfully and in a lucid manner. The epilogue of the novel delineates Ida's rebel in the form of divorce, like her mother, against the patriarchal influence when her husband forces her to abort the child. Though the novel is composed on the backdrop of partition time when women were being treated as slaves of the man, Manju Kapur portrays her two female characters, Virmati and Ida, very confident and smart against the old customs as Virmati does not live as her mother lived and the same is done by Ida in the novel. Manju Kapur follows the norms of evolution while projecting the characters of Kasturi, Shakuntala, Virmati, and Ida. Here one generation goes one step ahead of than earlier one. The inner turmoil of the female characters is very effectively described in the novel *Difficult Daughters*. Manju Kapur proves that nothing is difficult for the daughters of India when there is a fight for fundamental rights and they accept the legal path to achieve it.

**Conclusion:**

Being an Indian woman, Manju Kapur through the characters of Kasturi, Shakuntala, Virmati and Ida depicts the realistic experiences of Indian women in her novel *Difficult Daughters*. Her characters, after realising that life is more than getting marry and delivering kids, attempt to break the strong bars of the patriarchal society of India. Even though these female characters deny the patriarchal control in their life, they are not found anywhere in the novel to refuse their natural rights of becoming a mother. In this way, Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* portrays the dissent of women is against men and not against Nature.

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