



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

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

JYOTI WADHWA

Research scholar

Department of English

Baba Mastnath University

Asthal Bohar, Rohtak (Haryana)

ABSTRACT: *This paper criticizes the authoritarian rules prevalent in India since pre-independence. The purpose of this paper is to probe the condition of women as highlighted in the contemporary Indian novel 'Difficult Daughters' by Manju Kapur. This work of literature stresses on the plight of women and how they are objectified and considered worthless. The writer vividly describes how the first character in the novel is metaphorically compared with a fruit-bearing tree, the similarity between the two being, just as a tree is expected to bear fruits seasonally, Kasturi was expected to bear babies yearly. Her life was merely her own, she was a puppet controlled by her husband and his family. The three protagonists in the novel tell the readers about miseries faced by women in three different generations. Kasturi is not modern in thinking hence she does not want her daughter to be modern in her thinking. The core idea of feminism is that women should have equal rights, power, and opportunity but patriarchy and its subsets deprive them of their basic rights. Here the writer has successfully portrayed the conflict of traditional modernity in her characters, she chooses the urban Indian middle class and represents the majority of the population.*

Keywords: *feminism, authoritarian, patriarchy.*

INTRODUCTION

Manju Kapur is one of the most eminent and famous contemporary writers of Indian English Literature. She has five critically acclaimed novels and many other literary laurels to her credit to date. She through her work not only portrays the vulnerable condition of women in Indian society but also presents how they are being kept ignorant about education absoluteness. Manju Kapur deals with various themes such as feminism, social, Diaspora and Economic forces, Gender discrimination, and Lesbianism. Her first novel 'Difficult Daughters' was published in 1998 and honored the prestigious commonwealth Award for the best first novel, Eurasia region. Her second novel, 'A Married Woman' was published in 2002 and shortlisted for the Hutch-Crossword Prize and the DSC prize of south Asia literature in 2010. Her fifth novel 'Custody' published in 2011 has been telecasted on Balaji Telefilm.

Manju Kapur brings together three generations of women in what today are two countries, India and Pakistan. In an interview with rediff.com -an Indian news magazine; she tells that the novel took five years to complete; three years for fieldwork in Amritsar and Lahore and two years in writing the article and getting it published. This novel vividly describes India around the time of partition but more importantly gives more depth to a story that sounds very familiar.

The novel starts with a daughter at her mother's funeral, filled with conflicting emotions and the realization that she didn't know her mother. What comes next is her journey across India and Pakistan in search of some kind of closure which she tries to seek by talking to family and friends, and gathering information. The story of her search intermingles with that of her mother's story and that of her grandmother. The grandmother had access to some education but she was sent away from her family, which became the guiding path her daughter had to follow. The novel emphasizes on three generations of women that are very different yet so similar, their life and their struggle for education.

It is about educating daughters, making them independent to think for themselves, and letting them question the basic values and hypocrisy of society. The story moves between the demands of modernity and traditions. It is set on straight, high-minded demands of modernity and set traditions. It revolves around middle-class Punjabi family in the outset of the 1930s and 40s during partition. In this novel, Manju Kapur touches social themes like marriage, girl education, dowry, religion, superstitious beliefs, etc. She also describes different socio-political issues in the country. Her description is on both men and women in the family. Virmati is a young woman born in Amritsar. She has seen the deadening childbearing existence of her frail mother. She wants to live a life on her terms and conditions. She idealizes her cousin Shakuntala from Lahore, who was born in a high-class open-minded family and had the privilege of education that led her to be poised and sophisticated.

Despite the shortenings, Virmati goes on and falls in love with her neighbor who is an England returned professor and is already married. The professor, rather than pushing her away, marries her and keeps her in his home with his first wife. Virmati finds out that the battle for her self-independence along with the country has created irreversible partitions and suffering in her life.

Kasturi

In the 'The Difficult Daughters' the author talks about the plight of women living in the 'MEN'S World' It starts with the miserable life of 'Kasturi' whom the writer vividly describes as a fruit-bearing tree. The similarity between the two being, just as a tree is expected to bear fruits seasonally, Kasturi was expected and forced to bear babies yearly. Her life was merely her own, she was a puppet to her husband and his family.

Plight of Kasturi

It was her eleventh pregnancy, that she, after years of suffering and pain, decided to raise her voice. She wanted to abort the baby, her best shot being, the local hakim/ Vaid, and his herbal medicines. The result wasn't fruitful and she yet again had to go through the trauma of labor. It was only after this, that

"the vaid along with the 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. (Kapur P-9)"

As the story unfolds further, the readers are introduced to the character of 'VIRMATI' who is firstborn to Kasturi. Unlike her mother, Virmati being born during the struggle for independence had a different outlook towards life and aspired to live more independently, but that wasn't what her family had in mind for her. When Virmati showed her interest in studying they shunned her down. She was expected to raise her siblings and help her mother around the house at all times as it was difficult for Kasturi to raise and look after eleven children all by herself, so she looked up to her eldest born to give her a hand in helping her do so.

Virmati

This novel marks the theme of the relation between a mother and her daughter, where the mother is mostly conventional but the daughter chooses to live differently, looking for love, fulfillment, and freedom. Virmati always fulfilled what was expected of her but she starved for some sign of affection from her mother which she did not get as her mother was worn out to give off herself emotionally. Virmati loved her parents, family, education, and the professor. She wanted to have her own space and her own identity. She was always fascinated by her cousin Shakuntala who was completely different from her. She did not believe in the concept of marriage.

She told Virmati,

"but women are still supposed to marry and do nothing else"

"Times are changing and women are marrying out of the house, so why not you?"

Virmati does not want a life like that of her mother, thus she does not give up her struggle to get an education merely because she is expected to help her mother around the house. She wanted to satisfy her desire for higher education and so she decided to go to Lahore even if she had to fight with her mother who was adherent to deprive her of education. Despite the hardships faced by her she went and completed her schooling and got enrolled for a bachelor's degree. In college, Virmati crossed paths with professor Harish whom she went on and fell in love with. Despite being married and having children, the professor began an affair with the girl. Later when Virmati got to know about the professor's marriage, she left him and went away to pursue her career. She got a job as a Principal at a school. It was then the Professor came looking for her. He stayed with her for a few days when people began talking and criticizing her way of living. It was only habitual for people at that time to not accept a married man living with an unmarried girl out of wedlock.

Virmati had to leave her job because of social pressure. She then decided to marry Harish and they had a daughter named Ida. It was then, the realization about the previous marriage and his children hit the professor, he left Virmati and his newborn to work on his marriage and raise his children. Virmati was now left stranded with a baby girl whom she had to raise alone.

The ramification of Virmati's Married Life

There is an endless argument about education and marriage, between which Virmati's words were lost.

"But for my mother, marriage is the only choice in life. I so wish I could help her feel better about me" (Kapur, p-17).

She struggled to acquire higher education and become independent; she faced all odds that came her way. Her only sin was to deeply fall in love with a married man who already had two children. She was labelled to have muddled her family name. Despite taking ill from society, Virmati held on to Harish who turned out to be a great manipulator, who was never satisfied with his first wife and claimed that their mental level didn't match. Harish took Virmati to his home but his parents were against the alliance and did not wish to put their reputation in jeopardy. Even Virmati's parents cut off all relations with her. Virmati became his bride but she could not attain the happiness of one. Her only wish was to wear red bangles, the ones women of her family wore when they married, alas it couldn't be fulfilled. The only thing she received from this marriage was turmoil, detachment, and stress.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

It's casually said that the times have changed and women are their own masters but have the times really changed? Are women really the masters of their own virtue?

We live in the 21st century, "The Modern Era", where the man stands shoulder to shoulder with a woman, it's the time of equal rights and equal pay. But often we come across news regarding a woman being beaten up by her husband or molested at her work place. Why is a young girl in India taught to be wary of men where on the other hand young boys aren't taught to be sensitive and more humane. The fault lies in our roots. A woman of adult age shouldn't have to ask for anybody's permission to step out or simply do as she desires. The fault lies in our education. The truth is that even though the times have changed, the plight of women standstill at where they were a few decades ago. They still face restrictions on several fronts, be it equal opportunity, equal rights or even equality in general. Had equality among women and men prevailed since the start of times there wouldn't have to be a need for reservations. The condition of women from the rural background is far worse than can be put in words, but even if we talk about the condition of women in an urban backdrop, it's no fairy tale. She is expected to do the household chores, raise children and appeal people of the house. There lies a wide parity between how a boy is raised from the start as to how a girl is treated. Even in educated households that come from good money, a girl is married off before she achieves her graduation. Her voice is shunned more often than

it's heard. Who taught men to believe that they are the superior class and that they can dominate and assume the world runs on their rhythm? It is high time that women get what is theirs, and not just metaphorically but in reality. It has been too long that they are protesting and fighting for what has been theirs since the start; equality, opportunity and respect.

CONCLUSION

This novel is a forceful expression of Indian Feminism and presents it as the most suitable feminist reputation for women's existence in traditional Indian Society. It highlights the problem of rights suffered by Indian women whose major concern is maintaining their individuality and dignity. The story of Virmati has revived through the eyes of her daughter, Ida. Virmati is a traditional woman and she was inspired by Swami Dayanand's concept of Women's education, even when her family members forced her to get married, she being her bold self was aware of the rights for her education and economic independence, and thus didn't give in to the parental as well as societal pressure. Through Virmati, the author shows the suffering of modern women and the problem faced by them.

The novel depicts the growing impact of social reformers and their fruitful efforts in society. During Kasturi's education, it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny.

The experience of different characters gives us a glimpse of the situation and the atmosphere persuades during the time. Through different characters, the author speaks of all the tensions and problems of the people during the time of the 1940s especially those faced by the weaker section.

WORKS CITED

Kapur, Manju. Difficult Daughters [1998]. London, Faber and Faber, 1999 Print.

Jaidev. "Problematizing Feminism" Gender and Literature. Ed. Iqbal Kaur, New Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1992. Print.

Sharma, Dr. Ram Rise of New Woman Novels of Manju Kapur. Manglam Publications Delhi – 110053

Singh, Bijender. "A Feminist Study of Manju Kapur's 'Difficult Daughters' the Criterion: An International Journal in English, Vol. IV. Issue V (Oct. 2013)

