

A Feministic Perspective of New Woman in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughter*

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Abstract: Feminism is an intellectual and social movement. It mainly focuses on women's struggle for identity and existence. It beholds women's rights on the one hand and self-empowerment on the other. Their miserable condition was stimulated some women writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee and so on to expose the male ideology by tracing the construction of masculinity and femininity. Later on many writers' concentrates on these problems one among the woman writer is Manju Kapur who was born in 1948 in Amritsar. Her five critically celebrated novels to her credit are *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant* and *Custody*, she has emerged as significant and eminent novelist on the contemporary literary scene. Kapur mainly speaks for the middle-class woman's quest for freedom and how they overcame with all those obstacles to attain their own position in this modern era. In her first novel *Difficult Daughters* Virmati, Shakuntala, Ida, Shagun and Ishita all are middle class educated urban Indian women fraught to establish themselves with their own independent identities.

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In *Difficult Daughters*, the story is partially based on the love story of Kapur's own mother, Virmati. Manju Kapur was so moved by the love story of her parents set in partition times. She has tried to reintroduce it bit by bit before it evaporates from her memory. It describes about two types of women. First are traditional types of women who firmly stick to the age old values and traditions and others are modern in their own perspective. Manju Kapur starts her novel with Ida, who is searching for her mother past. Ida, an educated woman, divorced and childless, apparently leads a freer life than her mother. She comes to know about her mother through her relatives. Virmati is a strong character in the novel, nevertheless society dictates the choices. Virmati tries to break the tradition of silence. There is real pathos in Virmati's words when she tells her daughter:

"I want my body donated. My eyes, my heart, my kidneys any organ that can be of use. That way someone, will value me after I have gone," (*Difficult Daughters*, p.1).

The novel deals with how she is torn between her family duties, the desire for education and elicits love. Virmati is the protagonist of the novel. She is born into a strict and high minded household in Amritsar. She is the eldest child in her Family. She becomes the second mother of her ten other siblings. She devotes herself fully in taking care of her younger siblings. She is a liberal minded girl who works very hard for her family and she never finds time for her own. The love and care which she expected from her family and especially her mother, is never allotted to her. Because of her family problems she could not concentrate on her studies.

Virmathi is not allowed to follow her study properly. Her mother taught her that there are many things to do in life than education. Virmati's model is her cousin Shakuntala. She is doing M.Sc. in Chemistry. The first seed of getting education and freedom comes to Virmati's mind after meeting her at her home. Shakuntala shares activities she does - experiments in laboratory, participation in seminar, read each other's work etc. Virmati clangs her when she leaves for Lahore and says:

Maybe I will also one day come to Lahore, Pehnji,' she wept. 'I wish I too could do things. But I am not clever.' (*Difficult Daughters*, 18)

In this point Manju Kapur focuses that feminist movement starts with an inspiration by other woman activities. Though it hides, at one particular time it comes out to live their independent life. Manju Kapur depicts a 'new woman' in Virmati, who wants to assert her right to study and get married. According to Manju Kapur, freedom is most essential in women life. Virmati is the embodiment of freedom. After her failure in FA her mother presses her to get married but she wants to have her own space, her own identity, and wants to taste the sweetness of the freedom like her cousin Shakuntala. Virmati wants to give practice to her English, while Kasturi feels it is insignificant for a girl child to give importance for her education. Virmati doesn't get success in convincing her mother and get herself engaged with a canal engineer Inderjeet.

She meets an oxford return Professor, Harish Chandar. He is a lecturer in English. She likes her personality. Harish is a married man and lives in Virmati's house as tenant. For Virmati, professor's love was more valuable for her than Inderjeet. She compares Inderjeet with Harish. Then she rejects Inderjeet and suggests her mother to let Indumati marry him. Virmati feels suffocated when she learns about Ganga's pregnancy. Then she feels to continue her studies and moved to Lahore.

She decides to close her chapter with Harish and burn his letters. She starts a meaningful life in Lahore. Harish comes to meet her .He succeeds in convincing his love for Virmati. Harish married her and in his family Ganga and Harish's mother compels her to lead a suffocating life under the four walls. She becomes pregnant and gets miscarriage. The happiest and most attractive period in Virmati's life is beyond doubt. Virmati's life is a constant struggle from one front to another. Then she gave a birth to a girl child. Virmati wants her to name 'Bharati' but as Harish rejects it, Ida name is given to her. She didn't gets a chance to keep a name to her daughter this is a situation of a woman reveals in those period. She lives her life with dullness and loneliness which makes her feel sad about herself.

Manju Kapur's novels are continuously looking for freedom from social and moral constraints and cast a look on women's individuality. In this way, the images of women are reflected in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. Her women want their own sky to fly high. They want to achieve their goal at any cost. Throughout the novel Ida's declaration echoes that she does not want to be like her mother. The image of women that we find in Manju Kapur's novel is of unique kinds. Her women explore the feministic issues raised in their own style allotted to them. Woman's voice against injustice and inequality tends to unravel the fact that feminism is outcome of the society.

Works cited

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