

## Virmati: an Epitome of Struggling Woman in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters

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### Abstract

Many postmodern women novelist have thrown a light on the realistic picture of new woman. Through their writings they have tried to make aware the facts of the life of the new woman. One can get idea about social place of woman, her plight, and her difficulties to make her own position in patriarchal society, her quest for self identity, her struggle, displacement, and frustration etc. through the work of post-modern women novelist. The women novelist like Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherji, and many more have depicted the realistic picture of modern woman and also tried to show that when a 'woman' awakens, she fights for her own identity without bothering social norms and ethics.

Manju Kapur is one of those novelists who belong to such tradition of women novelist who have aptly described the real woman of the post-independent era. In all her published five novels, she has handled woman issues very skillfully. She has aptly described the internal and external world of a woman and her crisis in the process of 'being' and 'becoming'. Manju Kapur's protagonists struggles, fights not only against social norms but also psychological dilemma. The present paper entitled, 'The portrayal Of Post-Modern Woman in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters' is the modest attempt to have a look on frustration and alienation of modern woman in her quest of self identity. It will try to focus on the journey of the woman from submission to revolt.

**KEYWORDS:** patriarchy, postmodern, depressed, struggle, endeavors.

### INTRODUCTION:

*The Difficult Daughters* is Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters is a saga of three generations of women, in the regressive patriarchal set-up, Kasturi, her daughter Virmati and Virmati's daughters Ida, with the focus on struggle and suffering of Virmati, the protagonist. It is the story of struggle of a daughter seen through the eyes of a daughter who tried to reconstruct her mother's memories of past. The narrator Ida, the daughter of Virmati, is a childless divorcee and hates her mother for being an ordinary woman. *Difficult Daughters* is unfolded from the Ida's prospective. After her mother's death Ida tries to search her mother's personality through her uncle Kailashnath, her mother's friend Swarnalata, and her aunt and from many other people and when she realizes extraordinariness of her mother, she starts to love her more than before. Ida explores her mother's struggle in the construction of mothers past. In the words of Dora Sales Salvador:

*In Difficult Daughters we do not listen to Virmati's voice. She could not speak out, being certainly situated at the juncture of two oppressions: colonialism and patriarchy. What we have is her daughter's reconstruction and representation there is, then, a qualitative leap between the life-histories of (narrated) mother and (narrating) daughter (Salvador 356).2*

The novel traces the difficult journey of Virmati in her achievement and her endeavors against odd to acquire the self syndrome in the journey of life. She suffers a lot when she tried to break the age old shackles of customs and morals to live on her own way. Manju Kapur has explored the yearning for self-identity in the male dominated society.

Virmati is portrayed as the difficult daughter to her mother and family. Because of her deeds she put forth herself as a rebellious child in the typical traditional family. Manju Kapur has brilliantly sketch the portrait of Virmati's endeavors against so called social odds in self quest. Virmati is the eldest child with her ten siblings in a large joint family. She has five sisters and five brothers. For her siblings, Virmati is second mother. Due to mother's constant pregnancies and sometimes sickness Virmati has to play the role of the mother to her siblings. She is under pressure of domestic duties and could not get affection and love from her mother. Virmati is portrayed as the rebellious, revolutionary fighter for her rights and capable of taking own decisions in the critical situation. She does not want to become just a rubber doll in the society. She is portrayed as an independent individual persona who wants to achieve something in her life. Her struggle to create her own identity is appreciable. Though she achieves whatever she wants from life, in the process of finding own space she struggles and suffers a lot. The process of her liberation from the age old customs and tradition has depicted very beautifully by the author. The external and internal dilemma of Virmati has got prime importance on the canvas of social structure. Virmati's struggle reflects the place and position of the women in the male dominated society. It is seems that struggle is destined to the women whether they are educated or not. Virmati's mother Kasturi could not have control on the child birth even though she is educated. She has eleven children and because of continuous birth she became ill too, but she couldn't stop it earlier. But Virmati never asserts herself to the social customs. She prefers to swim against the stream and for that she is ready to pay whatever cost. But her decision of further education brings disastrous results for her. She falls in love with an oxford return professor Harish Chandra, who is already married and has kids; and her disastrous journey beings. She has done too much odd thing that she has fall in love with the professor who is already married and has kids besides her engagement with the canal engineer is a severe of crime according to the rigid and orthodox tradition. But Virmati doesn't bother about it. She got affection and love from the professor for which she longs several years from her family. The feeling that she is someone special forced her to forget the society. It is the natural fact that if you desires for something from longtime and suddenly you got it you become unable to avoid it and unable to think about the impending risks behind it. The same happen with Virmati. She forgot the society, her family position, her fixed marriage and impending future of her sibling due to shame in the society. She forgot everything about the world because of the affection and attention given to her by the by the professor.

The married life with professor gives nothing but pain and suffering to Virmati. Whatever dream she had seen about her married life become just dreams only. She got only hatred as a gift from married life; she became depressed and isolated in the family. In Indian society being a second wife becomes a cursed for that lady. No one respect her allows her to do any ritual. She gets treatment like an offender. She becomes marginalized piece in the family and submissiveness becomes her destiny. Virmati also

suffers from exactly the same situation. Her existence in the family becomes an imposed thing and no one cares for her feeling. Virmati thinks it's all the punishment for her misdeeds she has done to her family. In frustration she also tells her husband that she had one big crime by marrying him. She repents on her decision. Her feeling of regret is expressed in the following sentence when she says Harish:

*I should never marry to you. And it is too late now. I have never seen it so clearly it's not fair* (D.D. 212).<sup>1</sup>

Virmati never gets her own place in the house. She becomes the victim of male dominated society. Though she succeeds in her aspirations, sufferings became part and parcel of her life.

In this way Manju Kapur has portrayed Virmati as the suffering women in the search of self identity. In the journey of self identity she gets suffered a lot due to humiliation and biased attitude of the society.

### References:

1. Kapur Manju, *Difficult Daughters*. London: Faber and Faber, 1998.
2. Salvador, Dora. *The Memory of Desire in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters: In Past and Future Tense* (ed.), *Memory, Imagination and Desire*. Heidelberg: University tatsever C. Winter, 2004, 121-30.