

**WINGS OF EDUCATION AGAINST MACHETE OF
CULTURE IN INDIAN PANORAMA: MANJU KAPUR
DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS**

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Abstract

Manju kapur is well known Indian writer, who is best known for portraying women's inner conflicts in this rigid women subjugating society, through her works of fiction. Difficult daughter was her first novel which depicted the hurdles of life of women inflicted by the society. The very first line of the novel presents the mental trauma, a woman is going through. "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother". First published in 1998, Difficult Daughters went on to win the 1999 'Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book in the Europe and South Asia region. It is hard to believe that Difficult Daughters is Manju Kapur's debut novel. It is an impressive story of a young woman's search for independence in a time when the path of a woman's future was anyone's decision but her own. Set around the time of partition, Difficult Daughters is the story of Virmati seen through the eyes of her daughter Ida, from whom her mother's past had always been kept a secret. Virmati is a young Punjabi girl belonging to an austere family of Amritsar. Virmati finds herself torn between her love for the professor, her unyielding desire for independence through knowledge and her obligations to her family, and culture. Her life is soon in turmoil as she's thrust about by the opinions and desires of those around her.

Keywords - Culture, Knowledge, Inner conflict, Partition.

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D*ifficult Daughters* stresses on the woman's need for self-fulfillment sovereignty, self-realization, self-determination individuality and self-actualization. Located primarily in India of the 1940's, the novel *Difficult Daughters* speaks of the idea of independence – independence aspired to and obtained by a nation and independence yearned by a woman.

Difficult Daughters is a story of Virmati a young liberal woman who had to suffer a lot throughout her life just to get the basic rights of a woman. Virmati is the eldest daughter of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash. Virmati has ten siblings. One after another her mother gives birth to children and thus the whole burden of household increases over Virmati, being the eldest daughter. Virmati is a difficult daughter for her mother, Kasturi. Virmati has five sister but only Virmati creates problems for Kasturi, and becomes difficult to handle. Because she is the oldest daughter, she has a lot of responsibilities of house hold works and the children. Due to that she does not do well in her studies and fails, But at the same time, The effect of the Independence struggle is very prominent on society as well as on Virmati. She is fascinated towards the modern thinking of sakuntala and wants to study more but kasturi thinks on an entirely different line. Kasturi has their own conventional rigid thought that not permitted virmati's higher education. Kasturi closely got acquainted with culture and made a belief that due to her studies she is becoming bad-tempered day after day. Kasturi wishes that Virmati had to choose a traditional life like her or other woman in patriarchal society. She doesn't want any influences of Sakuntla in her own daughter that is why

She remarks – “Hai re, beti! What is need to so a job? A woman's shaan is in her home. Now you have studied and worked enough Shaadi. After you get married, Viru can follow.” (DD16)

So, the difference in their thinking and priorities cause a conflict in their relationship. Mother thinks it is their duty to condition their daughter according to the norms of the patriarchal society. For the sake of family's name, Virmati is forced to sacrifice her study, her freedom. She is taught to be an ideal daughter. Kasturi wants her daughter Virmati to be like her but Virmati never feels any oneness with her mother. Virmati always want to seek an attention toward her mother but the mother hasn't time for her. She never shows any emotional love for her daughter.

“... When she put her head next to the youngest baby, feeding in the mother's arms, Kasturi would get irritated and push her away. ‘Have you seen to their food – milk – clothes – studies?’ . ‘I am just going’, protest Virmati finally. ‘Why can't Indumati also take responsibility? Why does it always have to be me?’ ‘You know they don't listen to her’, snapped Kasturi. ‘You are the eldest. If you don't see to things, Who will?’ (DD6-7)

Virmati's domestic state make a favorable circumstance for her illicit love with a professor, a man who is already married. Virmati's parents decide to marry her to an engineer Inderjeet. Here again Virmati's studies are about to come to an end, that too because of the family culture as in Indian environment most girl's major decisions are taken only by the family itself. But due to a death in his family, the marriage is postponed for two years. Virmati again gets a chance to study for two more years and during this period Virmati passes her FA exam and finally she collects the courage to deny for marriage. On the other hand Professor got chance to gave a step ahead for her love. Finally she declares that she does not like the boy and wants to study further. So marriage is settled with Indumati, the second daughter. Here the thing which can strike on one's mind is that, till this page there is no individuality of vimati though she is elder daughter and whole day working for comfort of her mother and her sibling but no one care for her. Virmati's day start for her family and end with same but there is no space for herself. Whether or not a girl has the right to make her own choices in life is an issue dragged this way and this issue is prevailed, for a long time in our country. In India girls have right to choose their momentary things like cloths, footwear, bags ,watches, food etc. but why they haven't right to choose a lifelong partner for her. Why girls have always looked toward their family and husband for every decision .There is after all a difference between possessing and protecting. The book deals with the idea of education for a girl for her sake, not just to enable her to land a suitable match.

Kasturi's , Education means developing the mind for the benefit of the family and nothing more than that. But Shakuntala, like new woman, shares her view with Virmati: "These people don't really understand Viru . . . women are still supposed to marry and nothing else". (DD17)

In the patriarchal Indian Society marriage is a means of liberation from being socially predestined and it relieves a woman from the sense of insecurity and uncertainty. To the older generation marriage is no reason to rebel, it was accepted as a part of life's pleasure and was a phase of initiating certain Dharma's associated with social and religious institutions. Marriage is presented here as a form of moral duty. There is feeling of love is totally absent here. Love is not desired basis for marriage. That is why Virmati's mother, Kasturi and Ganga (Prof. Harish Chandra's first wife) seeks pleasure in domestic up doings. They on no account think to go further than their household and endeavor for make an appropriate place of their husband heart. Because on that time love is not part of our culture its find a place only in our auspicious book and divine character.

Difficult Daughters, set against the bloody backdrop of partition in the cities of Amritsar and Lahore, remains a powerful portrait of a society where shame is more important than grief; the novel spans three generations of women and unveils their sense of disillusionment. The three generation of women (Kasturi, Virmati and Ida) symbolize the three stages of Indian independence. Kasturi, the mother represents the pre independence and is shown as a victim of the offensive control of patriarchy. *Difficult Daughters* is the story of a freedom struggle. While India fights for freedom from the British Raj, Virmati fights for the freedom to live life on her terms. The second generation has Virmati, Shakuntala and Swarna Lata. They represent the social scenario round about the Independence time. They are the rebels who fight and rebel against the age-old traditions. Shakuntala's thinking goes "beyond a husband and children" and she never marries and tells that all her. Now literature place a very important role in virmati's life, because professor literate status only attracted him, infect after marriage she realize that there is no similarity between professor and his wife. Again and again ones find that it is only education who help virmati to escape her oscillated life before and after life. It is not only the case with Shakuntala but with the whole generation, which is going through transformation. The European ideals motivate them to be independent in their thinking. Because of this elevated thinking she decided to study further. Virmati also follows her cousin, Shakuntala and studies further and refuse to marry but later marry the Professor.

Marriage is not the only thing in life, Viru. The war-the Satyagraha movement- because of these things, women are coming out of their homes. Taking jobs, going to jail. Wake up from your stale dream. (DD 151)

Through Virmati, Kapur points to a kind of feminist emancipation that lies in not limiting women to their traditional roles but in expanding and awakening them to several other possibilities and to their own consciousness:

Most families look upon the marriage of a daughter as a sacred duty-or sacred burden. We are lucky we're living in times when women can do something else. Even in Europe women gain more respect during wartime. (DD 152)

No doubt Swarn Lata belongs to the modern times, but Virmati is highly impressed by her individualistic thinking, she cannot conceive of “a life for herself without marriage, which was strange and not quite right” (DD 152). Shakuntala sows the seeds of freedom in Virmati. She symbolizes modernity as not following the conventional norms which limits daughter to an early marriage and then home and family. She encourages her for independence and for equal rights for women, thus epitomizing the post colonial emancipated ‘New Woman’. New woman breaks the customs of the tradition bound society. Though one didn’t find that Virmati directly participating in freedom revolution in anywhere but she still struggle from throughout her life to her family for her education, for her identity after marriage as she is after all professor’s second wife, and at last her own daughter eye. Since the establishment of the society, woman is divided in terms of social security, political awareness, and economic liberation. Both Shakuntala and Virmati come out of this ideological framework of being typical Indian woman. Like so many other Indian girls, she wants to decide what to study and where, whom to marry and when. The end it appears that she might have achieved all that but it ceases to be important. For in the throes of the struggle, she loses a part of herself. She is torn in two halves, one of which is on the side she is fighting against. All this when India attains freedom. But at the cost of Partition. At the cost of losing half its soul. Stressing that women need to see education and a career as a choice not a last resort.

From the first to the last page, the book is a fragrance to be inhaled in, a taste to be savored and an emotion to be felt. Compassion threads the events that form this book. It is so naturally written, that along the way one forgets it is not a real character in fact a work of fiction. It feels more like a lifetime unraveling in front of our eyes, with real people in it. Experiencing

happiness, sorrow, pleasure and pain. Manju Kapur is one of the most appreciated contemporary Indian English woman novelists. She insists that the world she portrays analytically in her novels stems from the intellectual experience of her academic life. Her basic approach is to liberate women from the oppressive measures of patriarchy. The protagonists in her novel therefore, endure physical, emotional and psychological sufferings, but finally are able to attain their long cherished freedom to a great extent. Her female protagonists are mostly educated, aspiring individuals caged within the confines of a conservative society. Their education leads them to independent thinking and makes them intolerant to family and society. The novel "Difficult Daughter" thus gives a clear picture that a woman's education is crucial benchmark in educating a society that is clearly reflected in the culture of that time.

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