

ISSN: 2395-4132

THE EXPRESSION

An International Multi-Disciplinary e-Journal

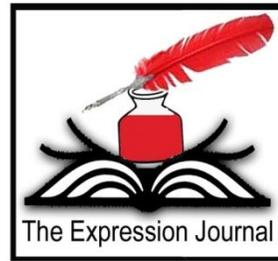
Bi-Monthly Referred & Indexed Open Access e-Journal



Vol. 1 Issue 1 Feb. 2014

Editor-in-Chief: Bijender Singh

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www.expressionjournal.com



FEMININE PERSPECTIVES IN MANJU KAPUR'S *DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS*

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Introduction:

Women who were colonized by men are asserting themselves. They are fighting against the oppression politically, socially, economically and culturally. The concern of equality between man and woman is the need of hour. In India, women have been subjected to humiliation and suppression by religious and political thinkers. She has to face agnipariksha every day. (*Feminist Concept*, 1)

Feminism in Indian English Novel is drastic change in the scenario that is unfolded before us. Many new writers have started questioning the gender division among the people. Indian women writers like Toru Dutt, the Kamala Das, Sarojini Naidu, Suniti Namjoshi, Arunthathi Roy, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantra Sahgal, Vimala Raina etc., are composing their thoughts in English. These female Indian writers expose the amazing many sided of theme, style, characters and plot are providing successfully. Each writer in their own way is fully aware to the tempo of change in the society in a distinct personal voice. The feminist theories demonstrate the dislike of patriarchal hierchization and basic rights for women.

A central lesson of conflict theory is that power yields privilege, like a magnet, power draws society's best resources to the elite. Because men tenaciously held onto their privileges and used social institutions to maintain their position, basic rights for women came only through prolonged and bitter struggle. Feminism, the view that biology is not destiny and that stratification by gender is wrong and should be resisted, met with strong opposition – both by men who had privilege to lose and by women who accepted their status as morally correct. (*Essentials of Sociology*, 254)

Struggling against family conventions and male – dominance, women take different paths to revitalize themselves in the society. Although they possess fundamental rights today, but also patiently indulge sufferings of rules and rituals which is always accompanied by cultural supports especially nominate for women. The women writers have been lifted their voice against social and cultural principles.

Women are an integral part of human civilization. No society or country can ever progress without an active participation of women in its general development. Although the place of women in society has different from culture to culture and from age to age, yet on fact common to almost all societies is that woman has never been considered the equal of man. Her status largely depends on the simple biological fact that she is the bearer of children whose care is her responsibility. Thus, her sphere is usually restricted to the familial roles. (*Feminist Concept*, 25)

Manju Kapur belongs to the line of flourishing modern Indian Women Writers who have embodied the progress of Indian fiction. She is a post – colonial writer whose four novels have multiple details in perpetually sharp and fresh. She is a different writer who presents the perplexities of women's role and their movement. She is stunned the literary world by winning the common wealth Award for her first novel "Difficult Daughters" and also for the first book in the Eurasian region. This novel shows her autobiographical elements and it has opened the doors of the world for her. In the Journal World Literature Today, Uma Parameshwaran describes about Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* "as painstakingly written work that spans the genre of both fiction and history" (392)

Having sound sense and practical depiction of three stages of women (grandmother, mother and daughter) starting from Kasturi, Virmiti and Ida. The heroine Virmiti who belongs to second generation tries hard to come out of the circle that is drawn by her family. She wants to prove her excellence and search a new identity. Ida is the narrator who shares her grandmother and mother's life in many ways throughout this novel. Her frankness as a narrator adds a lot to the charm of the novel. It is story of a freedom struggle. That is Virmiti's fight for the independence. The novel begins with a daughter at her mother's funeral interweave with fear, love, hate and anger. She says:

"The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother. Now she was gone and I started at the fire that rose from her shriveled body, dry – eyed, leaden, half dead myself, while my relatives clustered around the pyre and wept". (DD, 1)

Kasturi is grandmother to Ida. She gets some education but it is discontinued because of her marriage. She has eleven children. Virmati (Ida's mother) is the eldest daughter. The story teller is the daughter of Virmati. She has more responsibilities and carries the whole family burden on her. She grows up with the condition that she is not going to job but to get married. The hopes to get higher education become scattered because of her mother's desire to arrange marriage with a Canal Engineer Inderjeet. But Virmati wants freedom and she does not like to live a woman of humiliation. She prefers that Inderjeet is suitable match to her sister. She states:

My fate is cast, and I am free now. I feel far more peaceful in the godown than I did in the days before I went to the river. Then, the confusion in my mind was terrible. I couldn't

think, and all I heard around me was talk of my marriage. If I was to be a rubber doll for others to move as they willed, then I didn't want to live. I thought of what you taught us about Sydney Carton, and how noble and fine he seemed at the moment of his death. His last words echoed in my ears all that day. So you of all people should understand my actions!

While continuing her education, she decides in her aunt's home. Her protest against the convention is strong and she is mostly inspired by her cousin Sakuntala. She comes out of the fetters of family but she enters into the new prison. As a young Punjabi girl of Amristar, she is an entirely a typical woman who shares her liberated lifestyle to her friends. She keeps on studying when her aunt takes in a lodger, a London Professor with his wife. She falls in love with him. Her family defies the love between the married Professor and Virmati. She slowly earns the enmity of her family. The voice is husky everything to the professor Harish about her family's resistance.

I break my engagement because of you, blacken my family's name, am locked up inside my house, get sent to Lahore because no one knows what to do with me. Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace..... and why? Because I am an idiot (DD, 137)

Within a few years of marriage, she is not as happy as she is expected. As a second wife, she faces so many difficulties which revolve around her. Ganga, her husband's first wife makes Virmati's life sterile. Virmati loses all sense of identity, she has no independence. She has a lack of confidence and voluntarily gives a way to her husband's lustful love and allows him to exploit her with his lovable verbatims. She is involved in the basic conflict between nature and culture that struggles to realize her true identity. The peace of mind comes when she visits Swarna Latha, her room met in Lahore. Swarna Latha who is an ultra - committed activist takes Virmati for Punjab women's student conference. Swarna Latha expressing herself:

I suppose there are some things one cannot comprehend. When the troubles started, we wouldn't leave. My husband kept saying, you go because of the baby. Well, I thought, the baby will be safe with my mother in Delhi. So I left her there and came back. She said I was a fool, but I didn't care. If everybody got scared and started to leave, that meant the tactics of bloodshed and terror worked. (DD, 249)

For a woman to step in or out, she has two oppressions: colonialism and patriarchy. Her renewed confrontation with society especially with its authority figures is imbued with her single spiritual experience. The marriage between Harish and Virmati is shown as being a matter of duty rather than love is free will. She is a very dissatisfied wife both spiritually and sexually.

Young women should be virginal ignorant of sexuality. Marriage was their future vocation. Until they married, it was acceptable for them to do menial, charitable, or clerical work, always grooming them to be marketable brides. Once married they should submit to their husbands, procreate, and serve as pale, self - sacrificing 'angles in the house', a model of femininity. (*Feminist Concept*, 35)

It is only by experiencing she can come to understand herself and human nature better. She searches for clues to her identity by observing the women around her. Everytime she encounters Sakuntala and Swarna Latha, both emblematic of the educated politicized and emancipated women, Virmati represents the difficult daughter of the modern Indian women of the forties.

Ida, Virmati's daughter and also a divorcee to undertakes her mother's history. She breaks up her marriage and frees herself from conventional social structures. She belongs to the post independence generation. She is so strong in the views. She couldn't accept her marriage be on the conditions. She wants freedom and so she doesn't accept her mother. Virmati stand point her inability to compassion for her mother because of Ida's new state of consciousness. She rejects her mother's decision to abort the foetus. She doesn't like her husband Prabhakar because he had forced her to go for an abortion. She feels more guilt and personal responsibility for the dead foetus which she beats, illustrating her incapacity to sustain life in the marriage. She stresses:

Of course I made a disastrous marriage. My mother spent the period after my divorce coating the air I breathed with sadness and disapproval. 'What will happen to you after I am gone?' was her favourite lament. I was nothing, husbandless, childless. I felt myself hovering like a pencil notation on the margins of society.... I was engulfed by melancholy, depression, and despair. I would lie in bed for hours, unable to sleep, pitying myself for all I didn't have, blaming my mother, myself. Now her shadow no longer threatens me. Without the hindrance of her presence, I can sink into her past and make it mine. (DD, 258)

As a conclusion, this novel weaves a connection between mother and daughter. Manju Kapur presents a vivid portrayal of the women's life. It is largely autobiographical in perspective. It deals with the idea of education for a girl is to enhance her life pretty well. And also she has an ability to overcome the problems from familiar and society Education gives her a feel of protection. The narrator focuses on various feministic issues like marriage, abortion, divorce, female education, potentiality and financial independence.

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