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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**A CRITICAL STUDY ON MANJU KAPUR'S *DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS***

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**Abstract**

Manju Kapoor has got the highest position in the field of Indian writing and English literature. She has basically made major contributions to Indian fiction. Manju Kapoor has achieved her fame through her novels- *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, *The Immigrant and Custody*. In her novels, she has raised various issues like philosophical and emotional aspects of women like importance of education, parent-child relationships, family life, struggle life of women etc. Her novels not only show the struggling situation of women, but also reflect every aspect of the society. Manju Kapoor's novels not only aim to dismantle the patriarchal notions that govern women's lives, but also provide a new insight into the deeper man-woman relationship. Thus, Kapoor has supported the ideology of feminist theory by presenting women's social issues like divorce, adoption, venereal diseases, love rejected by society, homosexual relationships and deep and complex relationships between men and women. This paper presents the themes of the novels *Difficult Daughters*. The novel addresses problems like feminine flexibility and education. Different types of women protagonists from various generations can be found in this book. She delves into the minds of Indian women living in blended households under the control of men.

**Keywords:** Marriage, education, male dominance, identity struggle

**Introduction**

Manju Kapur is a well-known essayist who is well-known for her feminism. It would seem that the women in her novels are the ideal embodiment of contemporary women who have long suffered in

silence due to inhibitions but are now striving to break free. In her books, she depicts mothers and daughters in a typical social setting where marriage is considered as the ultimate goal and a fate from which young women cannot escape. The female heroines of Manju Kapur's works are the embodiments of that

society of women who long to be liberated from flat-friendly customs and practices but are rarely permitted. Her female heroines are usually given instructions. Their education helps them become more autonomous, which has an impact on their social and familial environment.

Her writings realistically and intelligently address the character difficulties considered by the educated Indian woman. These books depict a struggle against boundaries, societal constraints, and artificial rules in a traditional society. Her female protagonists stand in for the patriarchal culture's pressures and oppressions, which view marriage as a compromise. Her books tell the story of the struggle for opportunity and the search for a personality on several levels. She seeks to draw important new conclusions from the modified model of cultural experiences, in which intimate jobs, double weights, equal open doors, and societal constraints are viewed from an existential perspective. The main characters in her books are always trying to find a balance. Their struggles to exist and free themselves from the constraints of tradition and other biases have given them places of strength despite the double norms that surround them.

### **Background of the Novel**

Manju Kapoor's books focus on feminism and how it affects the female protagonists. The bond between mother and daughters who come from various generations is the main theme of her debut book, *Difficult Daughters*. It tells the tale of a woman who finds herself torn between the sentimental circumstances of her family and her desire for freedom, education, and love. The female characters have various viewpoints on their fascinating culture and conventions. Virmati, the main character, is forced to accept the marriage by her mother Kasthuri because it is the custom. Virmati rejects this and instead seeks knowledge. Ida, the book's narrator, is Virmati's child. The novelist separates the woman from three generations using her voice. Virmati is used by Manju Kapur as a weapon. Her ten other siblings look to Virmati as a second mother. Her behavior with brother-sister relationships is highly strict, severe, and quick. Perhaps she carries a lot of responsibility on her

shoulders and doesn't ever enjoy life as she pleases, unlike the other kids. After her mother's passing, Ida, her daughter, learns about this aspect of her mother.

“You know, our mother was always sick, and Virmati, as eldest, had to run the house and look after us. We depended on her, but she was free with her tongue and her hands. One tight slap she would give for nothing. She would lash out if we didn't listen. We used to run from her when she came. She was only sister, but she acted very bossy. We were scared of her. She never rested or played with us; she always had some work. She was so keen to study, *bap re*. First FA, then BA, then BT on top of that. Even after her marriage, she went for an MA to Government College, Lahore”. (DD, 5)

Kasturi, Virmati's mother, has never had the time to show her daughter Virmati the love and care she so desperately wants. She is constantly busy when pregnant. In this book, the mother Kasturi is unaware of her daughter's desire for love; if she cannot find it at home, she expresses her sentiments to others. This is the key reason why Virmati fell in love with a man who was already married. Because a girl's marriage is her ultimate goal, Virmati's opposition to arranged marriages hurts the entire family. In order to preserve the family's standing in society, Virmati is imprisoned in the godown while preparations are made for Indumati to wed Inderjit.

Although Kasturi is an educated woman, her identity is entirely dependent on her spouse. Kasturi wants her daughters to go to school so they will be prepared for any situation in society, not so they may rebel against the traditional beliefs. Even though Kasturi is educated, she criticizes all educational systems after her daughter refuses an arranged marriage. She and her husband Suraj Prakash only think that girls should receive a basic education so that they can take care of their homes and children.

Poor Virmati, who lives in a patriarchal environment, is unaware of her future after marriage. Although Harish cares about her, the family never does. Virmati hopes that the new family ties will provide her comfort after all the years of sorrow and

effort for her family. But things are turned around. Harish's first wife forbids her from interacting freely with the household and even from going into the kitchen. She doesn't reserve herself a place in the family. Even Kasthuri holds her accountable for all the issues. Kapur rashly states,

“Ever since the visit home, Virmati had felt blank and dazed. She didn't know how to tell the professor what had happened, she could barely understand it herself. Were all ties between herself and her family broken?”.

When Virmati examines how society views women and men who take second wives, she is devastated. When Virmati's connection to her family is severed, she is not permitted to attend her father's funeral service, while her husband is welcomed everywhere. She acknowledges her error and believes that, despite all efforts for freedom and equality, patriarchal influence has not yet been completely eradicated in Indian society.

The themes of Manju Kapur's works are self-sufficient, with a primary concentration on female protagonists. Ida, the novel's narrator and Virmati's sole child, depicts the contemporary world after independence. She travels with the readers throughout the story. In contrast to her grandmother and mother, she has a different perspective toward tradition and modernity as well as a firm, clear-minded approach to her situation. She aspires to live a life free of restrictions and to meet life's challenges with passion and self-assurance. Numerous female characters with various stances on their fresh issues have been

developed by Manju Kapur. Ida sees the challenges as the building blocks for individuality, in contrast to Kasthuri and Virmati who see their issues as the result of patriarchal society. Thus, the author of this acclaimed book has examined and followed the journeys of numerous such young ladies. They accurately depict the nuanced nature of the female psyche.

## **Conclusion**

Tradition vs modernity, as well as marriage versus education, are topics that Kapur expresses eloquently in her book *Difficult Daughters*. The voices of the characters Shakuntala, Swarnalata, Ida, and Virmati are used by Manju Kapur to depict modernism. By using the voices of Ganga, Kasturi, and Lajwanti, she conveys tradition. Manju Kapur demonstrates through this book that women in a society dominated by men experience both physical and mental suffering. Manju Kapur portrays all of her female characters as individuals battling various issues. Through this work, Manju Kapur educates the public about the importance of women's education.

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