



## The Theme of Marriage in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters

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**Abstract:** Manju Kapur is a post- colonial writer who intuitively perceives the position of women in a patriarchal society and deals with the problems of women. Kapur's Difficult Daughters is the story of a young woman Virmati who falls in love with a married man, hitherto a condemned passion in her narrow social circle. It is not only about the difficult daughters but also as much about the difficult mothers of the changing times. The novelist deals with the leading themes of the times where the description of love, sex and marriage is very bold and rather unconventional. The narrator, Ida, is a difficult daughter and she explores the life of her mother in the novel. Kapur uses three generations of daughters, who exhibit three sets of notions. Her feminist sensibility has been suppressed to a great extent by patriarchy. Manju Kapur takes the readers through a brisk and strangely captivating account of three generations. It explores the complex terrain of Indian family and reveals many issues that are deep rooted within the family. Nisha's marriage and later her motherhood assert the fact that a woman's intellectual emancipation does not negate her biological stature of nurturing relationships. Kapur is not argumentatively vocal in pleading the fate of the contemporary woman rather she sympathetically paints a woman's struggle to find an identity. Striking a balance between a natural co- existence on one hand and unfettered freedom and space on the other, Kapur's eloquent narration of women's issues is both Indian and universal.

**Keywords:** Manju Kapur, Difficult Daughters, Home, Identity Crisis

## Introduction

Manju Kapur is an Indian Novelist, born in Amritsar in 1948, graduated from the Miranda House University College for women and went on M.A at Dalhousie University Halifax Novel. In 1999 Manju Kapur's first novel, 'Difficult Daughters', received the commonwealth writers Prize for the best first book in the Eurasian region. Her fourth novel "The Immigrant" was shortlisted for DSC prize for south Asian literature in 2011 [1]. In her novels, we meet the women of the modern era, her problems and her desire to become independent. She shows a new vision of Indian woman in her fiction. Kapur's women characters can be

categorized into three kinds Conventional Orthodox women, the Emancipated women and the category to which most of her protagonists like Virmati and Nina fall into. The various characters like Kasturi, Shakuntala, Swarnaladha, and Mrs. Batra react to various challenges and Predicaments and probe into the self and discover their Strength. Kapur opines that women's fiction is often called domestic or family-centered and this label is not critical but condescending [2]. Literature by women, about families, always has larger considerations. Kapur also gives an important feature to the mother-daughter relationship which drew in a lot of

tension. Her first novel (Difficult Daughters) marks this theme in itself.

### **Manju Kapur's Novels:**

Manju Kapur's thematic perceptions are seen in her novels. Difficult Daughters (1998), A Married Woman (2002), Home (2006), The Immigrant (2009), and Custody (2011) throw light on the various shades of Indian social life and culture. Her novels have a typical Indian outlook, and she does not write to please the western readers. She selects the Indian background, characters and themes [3]. She loves to present the Indian way of life which respects moral values. Traditions, conventions, cultural values play an important role in shaping human life.

### **The theme of marriage in Difficult Daughters:**

Difficult Daughters is set against the historical background of India's partition. It is the story of a young woman Virmati who falls in love with a married man, hitherto a condemned passion in her narrow social circle. She is torn between family duties, the desire for education and illicit love. It is a story of sorrow, love and compromise. Difficult Daughters narrates the story of women, especially the dilemma of daughters caught in the traditional-versus-modern conflict. It is the story of a daughter's journey towards self-realization through her mother's attainment of self-identity. It is not only about the difficult daughters as the title suggests but also as much about the difficult mothers of the changing times. As the novel belongs to the post-modern period, the emphasis shifts from the East-West encounter to the more complicated theme of the conflict between tradition and modernity. The novelist deals with the leading themes of the times where the description of love, sex and marriage is very bold and rather unconventional. She has depicted that marriage as a social institution has lost its sanctity and relevance. Lack of faith in traditional customs resulting in declining moral values becomes one of the main themes discussed in the novel. Kapur is one of the new age women writers who have challenged the traditional family values in her writings, especially

from a woman's perspective. Vimmy Sinha in an article writes about Kapur,

She is yet another woman writer from India on whom the image of the suffering, but stoic women, who are eventually breaking traditional boundaries, has had a significant impact . . . She's written about the female revolt against deep rooted social values. (12)

The novels of Manju Kapur deals with marriage in society in 'Difficult Daughters'. There was an endless argument between "Education versus Marriage". But nobody listens to Virmati. In both novels, they struggle to acquire higher education and self-dependence is gone through it. Then Virmati falls in love with Professor Harish, who is already married and has two children. She had shamed her family, refused marriage and she never meant to marry. But in Indian tradition marriage is important and a part of their life. Like that in "The Immigrant" Nina's mother has tried to find prospective suitors to marry her. Nina's mother wants her to settle somewhere in abroad saying, "If you are married an NRI or some foreign services, you could live abroad nicely"

The theme of marriage is central to these novels. Though they deal with childhood, youth, old age, education, marriage is central. The focus is on the man-woman relationship ie-Virmati-professor Harish, and Nina-Ananda. The story, Difficult Daughter has a love marriage, but "The Immigrant" is an arranged marriage. This reflects the major reality for Indian society. Apart from that love and arranged marriage, Kapur also shows the extra "Marital affairs" and "Premarital affairs". She shows the live-on relationship between Virmati and the professor for a long time before marriage. There have really no issues about which she would not touch in her stories. Kapur Openly discusses the reasons and consequences of deviant social behavior. In case of Virmati, she shows how her need for love was met through sex. The professor's under love is fulfilled in sudden meetings and love proves to be the most painful thing for her.

Kapur depicts pre-marital relationships of these women protagonists. This relationship also shows the change in social behavior. Nina even had

an extra marital relation with Anton. But Kapur has also shown how people enter into it and does not aim to pass any moral judgment. Kapur also shows the problem of sexual dysfunction in Ananda. He was born into a Brahmin family with set notions of morality. When he came to Canada, in his effort to assimilate had broken down many taboos. He involved relations with white women as well. But his first relation proved to be a failure. It was his sense of morality and the newness that affected him and he suffered from the premature ejaculation. Kapur uses this as a reason to break the marriage, because it was not looked at as a problem that needed to be solved but a humiliating issue.

Both novel portray characters that are realistic on Psychological and physical planes. This novel focuses in both plight of contemporary and liberation from patrilineal social system. Her "The Immigrant" novel shows Nina's immigration struggles in the airport incident. Nina is confused with her new immigrant status and life as a lonely bride without any family or friends in an unfamiliar setup. Life, in complete contrast to Indian ways, began with a sense of freedom, freedom and freedom. "No servants, landlord, Landlady, neighbor or mother was there to see". (113)

Initially, the solitude is pleasing but soon it turns to loneliness with no one stalk to, no one to share with the common everyday pleasures. Home sickness sets in, and she fills with the loneliness. She yearns for a child but is unable to conceive. No persuasion can make her husband to accompany her to a doctor's clinic. At that time Nina portrays a kind of the search for self-isolation. She cries, "I Miss home- I miss a job-I miss doing things. I feel like a shadow" (237)

Finally she decided to drive herself to books which she usually borrows from a library. It takes up a job and then goes for a two years course in Library Science. Home bird Nina faces multiple problems in the new environment.

## Conclusion

In (Difficult Daughters) after their marriage, Professor Harish takes her to his home. Virmati's parents cut off all relation with her. She lives here

like a queen because no household works are in her share. Once Virmati gets pregnant and the baby's miscarriage, Harish wants her to do M.A in philosophy in Lahore. She takes admission but without enthusiasm. Alienation problem can be easily traced in Virmati. When the past of her suicide commitment to feel alienated and isolated from their near and dear ones. Kapur thoroughly is dictated by the patriarchs of Hindu Mythology of Epical Ramayana and indicative of her own classical epic style with which she is deeply and profound. It is an irony that self-reliant, self-controlled, self-dependent women suffer a sense of alienation. So whatever generation be it women emancipation is always at the cost of isolation. There is hardly any doubt in the fact that Kapur's women from Virmati to Nina strive hard to chalk out their own destiny through their independent course of action, Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters has control over one's destiny as the theme.

## References

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