

## **Virmati's Quest For Love: Difficult Daughters**

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**ABSTRACT:** Manju Kapur -Contemporary writer, *Jane Austen of India* was born in Amritsar, 1948. She completed her UG from the Miranda House University for Women in Delhi and her MA from Dalhousie University in Canada and her M Phil from Delhi University in Delhi. She passionately turned herself as professor at Miranda House University and Delhi University. Her spouse is Guna Nidhi Dalmia. This Delhi-resident couple have three daughters *Amba, Maya, Katyayani* and also a son *Agastya*. Historically, Amritsar was a place known for rebellion; Manju kapur had grown under these rebellion background which makes her to focus root cause of societal issues. She mostly did her creations on intimate areas of people's lives: Love, Sex, Work, Money and above all Indian Family. Manju Kapur in her works mostly gives Protagonist role to Female and her life revolving around Family issues. *"the family is the where I see the impact of what is happening in Indian Society. In my earlier novels, it was women who negotiated this relationship. Here, it is everybody- the children, the father, the wives. If you live free, you pay the emotional price"* (says Kapur).

Manju Kapur was brought up with both Indian and Western conviction for example she gives Western elucidation to cure Indian tribulations. Her Mother-tongue was Hindi but excelled in English language; she also admits that *"Writing in English is still a charged issue! My goodness! I am a total post-colonial. I studied in English. I read in English . My Hindi is quite bad"*. Some of her works were *Difficult Daughters, A married woman, The Immigrant, Custody, Shaping the world: women writers on themselves, Brothers*. This paper is about her first novel *Difficult Daughters* published in the year 1998. In the consecutive year 1999, this novel won Common Wealth Writers Prize.

This story is about Virmati, protagonist of this story who was born as Elder daughter in rich and joins family with ten siblings and also she was graduating as she was growing. Suddenly falls in trap in name of love with a man; who was already married . This turns her life into face tragedy throughout her life. Until her last breath she was seeking for true love but she only prized with pain. This story is set around the period of freedom struggle and partition of India and Pakistan. Novel opens up through Ida, Virmati's daughter

searching about her mother's life journey after her mother's cremation." *A woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings*" (Sanyal, 2010).

**KEY WORDS:** Women education, Male Chauvinism, Identity.

**INTRODUCTION:** "If you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)" Manju Kapur, a realistic story-teller, took her avatar of a novelist through her first novel "Difficult Daughters" published in the year 1998 and with huge impact won the Commonwealth Prize. The characteristics of features which make Manju Kapur stand alone unique among writers are all her protagonists are female who are educated from different economic conditions; they find out their purpose of life, which gives the taste of feminism. Mary Wollstonecraft says, "Women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue" (vindication of the rights of women-chapter 2). It seems that Manju Kapur's novels are strictly woven around the need of education of women.

Analyzing the novel, we can see that the metaphor of the struggle of India and the struggle of Virmati are similar. The background of this story is set during the time of the Indian Independence struggle and partition between India and Pakistan. During those periods, Chauvinism was spread in rural and urban areas. Men locked their women in their homes and struggled for their Motherland's freedom. This novel brings many women with different ideologies. Focusing on the narrator, Ida is the daughter of Virmati who is educated because she got divorced. The novel starts with Ida's disappointment by saying "One thing, I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (1) which shows the relationship between Ida and Virmati had struggles in finding bond. After the death of Virmati, Ida goes in quest to know more about her mother to her birthplace. "At times, Virmati yearned for affection, for some sign that she was special. However, when she put her head next to the younger baby, feeding in the mother's arms, Kasturi would get irritated and push her away." "Have you seen their food-Milk-clothes-studies" (Kapur, 6)

She comes to know that her mother Virmati was born in an Arya Samaj family of Lala Diwan Singh. She also collects information about Kailash Nath and Gobi Nath - her maternal uncles and her Parvati masi, finally ends up with gathering information about her parents. Virmati was the elder daughter to Suraj Prakash and Kasturi and also the elder sister for ten siblings. As an elder one, she was always suffering a gap between her mother and only she could be the caretaker for her siblings; sometimes she was rude with them. During pursuing her FA, she faced failure which made her stay at home, her mother decided to shift all her household chores to her for shaping the future. Due to continuous pregnancies, Kasturi's health started to become worse

and for taking rest with Virmati she went to Dalhousie ,along withthem Virmati's aunt and her cousin Shakuntala came(another inspiring character). Virmati started to admire her in all aspects her education, her dressing, her mannerism, her ideology regarding marriage and felt for girls marriage is just hindrance and barrier to get them enlighten . Already Virmati was engaged to canal engineer Inderjeet due to his father's death, marriage was getting delayed. In this duration gap she again decided continue her education. By that time, as a tenant in Harish Chandra, who educated and Oxford returned Professor comes with his wife Ganga who was illiterate,he didn't show much love on his wife because of certain reasons lacking between them.Virmati's the act of showing interest towards education made Harish to fall in love with her even lack of Mother's love and educational qualities attracted Virmati towards Harish. Both started scandalous relationship , this was caught by Virmati's family and made her house arrest ; during this period Harish could only show his love through letters not by action and moved away .After some months, Virmati decided to pursue BET at Lahore where she made none is there to show love on her .

Lahore was city of Modernity , Virmati got a new friend , Swarnalatha who was unapologetic modern, actively takes part in freedom struggle.Harish finds out Virmati and again the started their relationship with further a step ahead, they involved in physical relationship and Virmati becomes pregnant. This made her mindset from education again to proper love where she was put into miserable situations.At one phase,Harish married Virmati and goes to his home, it was combat to both Virmati and Harish family; she was rejected by her family and she was accepted passively in Harish home. Again Virmati gets pregnant which again put her into trouble . During day, Ganga will help Harish for his needs and during night Harish comes to Virmati for his need. *"In the evening the wedding ceremony proceeded smoothly.The poet's parents did the Kanya -daan, the seven pheras were taken,the couple pronounced man and wife.As Virmati rubbed her eyes, watering from smoke, she knew,rather than felt,that the burden of the past five years had lifted"*(kapur 186). Because of unhappy married life , she started to feel uncertainty and lost faith in love,and felt that she's paying for her mistake by going against family."*This man of seemingly sublime and sober nature, in verity turns out to be a sycophant who spoils the life of Virmati to satisfy his thirst for keeping a woman in his awe."*(234)Concerning her wellness, Harish sends her to pursue MA philosophy in Lahore .

Again Virmati gets a environment to enlighten herself and concentrate on self-love"*She wilts under the implicable and hostile gaze of Ganga, her husband's first wife,with whom she has to live.She loses all sense of identity:the continuation of her education(she studies for a higher degree in philosophy ,but without enthusiasm)feeds no more dreams of independence.In the end her individual history disappears and becomes*

*all but relevant,swallowed up in the greater and more resonant collective tragedy of Partition”(5) . After settling in Lahore,Virmati started to gain and give Love towards Nation because period nearing Independence. She actively participated in social works, meetings.Harish comes again to Virmati where they started their life “In the evening ,Virmati would sometimes fill the tank with a little water,climb down the steps,and liedown.Her mind was drained of all emotion.Her limb were heavy with torpor.Harish would sometimes join her. Often they made love. There was no one to see them, no one to mind anything they did. Virmati had never had so much space around her. May be this was really what she had fought for all along spaces to be .She conceived”(kapur 253) . At this phase, Ida was born; Virmati strives to give education dreaming that it will prevent from miseries like Virmati had gone through her life journey. When Ida was getting married ,Virmati felt her Quest is found that “being a complete mother” but it didn’t last-long because after few years Ida got divorced . Again Virmati broke inside and bond between Ida andVirmati got shaken due to force to bear child but Ida refused. After realizing her mother’s struggles, Ida felt ashamed and started to earn mother’s love in the air(through memories).*

**ANALYZING SPECIAL BONDS:** *“when you become a mother, you are no longer the center of your own universe.You relinquish that position to your children.”* In this story we can find umbilical cord relationship wins over readers emotions.When Kasturi was young, she was educated until age twelve, her mother stopped her from pursuing education and prepared her household chores.After few years when Kasturi becomes mom, she made her daughter to study but whenVirmati failed in her FA exam even Kasturi imitated her mother; throughout the story we can find Kasturi always solicitous about Virmati’s wellness.Even in case of Virmati, she tug hard all her life for Ida’s wellness. We can also find out perfect motherhood in Harish mother in order to accept Virmati and took care when she was pregnant.Despite Ganga was illiterate and victim , she struggled for her children's education and their growth.

**CONCLUSION:** The journey of Ida started with *“The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother”(kapur1)*after discovering the love from her mother,Ida states *“This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, eachword a brick in mansion I made with my head and my heart.Now live in it, Mama and leave me be. Don’t haunt me anymore.”(kapur 259).* Ahead to conclusion, we can observe that Virmati failed in her quest, through Shakuntala , she planned and focused only herself ; reached her quest for life. Swarnalata, she convinced her parents ,later husband by vindicating her purpose of dreams and achieved it. Ganga, though she was blind follower of husband and ancient traditions, she persisted the same without any oscillation .In happening of Kasturi, though she had aspiration to study her apprehension of marriage

made her to turn atypical women. There are two kinds of women from this story: firstly domestic -minded (Kasturi, Lajwanti, Ganga, Harish mother) Secondly contemporary representatives (Shakuntala, Swarnalata, Ida) but Virmati suits to both. This causes failure of her dreams and couldn't quench her quest. In this novel we can thoroughly see, females bare all pain for wellness of others. We can say that "*the novel evokes some concern over the problems of women in a male -dominated society where laws are made by men in its social matrix and a husband stands as a 'sheltering tree' under which a woman proves her strength through her suffering*" (Ashok Kumar, *Novels of Manju kapur: A Feministic Study*.p.76).

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