



Feminism In Manju Kaur's *Difficult Daughters*

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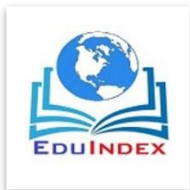
ABSTRACT

Women's are suffered the brunt of patriarchal control. Right from birth, a woman is thrust with social images, rewards and punishments that are carefully designed to ensure that she does not develop and quality associated with the order half of humanity. Although *Difficult Daughters* is not overtly a feminist text but nevertheless brings forth the issues of gender discrimination and the struggle of the suffering Indian women under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society. The struggle to maintain their dignity and ultimately retrieve the autonomy of their selfhood. The narrator fabric of *Difficult Daughters* set around the time of partition is story of women whose battle for independence engulfs her leaving a contour of partition and pain on her outwardly calm face. Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* makes an absorbing reading and pushes the reading and pushes the reader to break through the silence of suffering Virmati, who is seen struggling with her desires for education and illicit love in the face of hardship that threaten to destroy her inner self. The aim of this paper is to make a study of the novel where a woman bound in tradition seeks to satiate her unsuppressed desires and is ultimately devoured by pain and isolation.

Key words: Feminism, Hardships, Woman, Independence and Desires

The search for control over one's destiny surely the key theme of "Difficult" refers to the independence aspired to and obtained by a nation, but also to the independence yearned after by a woman and members of that same nation. Virmati the heroine seeks human relations that will allow her to herself and to exercise the degree of control over her life which as an educated woman, she knows she deserve. Born in Amritsar in the Punjab in 1940, the daughter of a father of progressive ideas and a traditionalist mother, she aspires to a free life than that offered her by those around her. This aspiration is condemned to failure, thanks to the incomprehension she receives from both her own family and that of the man she marries but also thanks to her own mistakes, for no one obliged her to marry who became her husband and she was free not to make the choice she did.

Ida, the narrator seems distanced from her mother Virmati in time and space and yet Virmati remains a vibrating presence all through Ida's life. Although not physically present Virmati hovers close to Ida's surface of consciousness and is often a cause of inner



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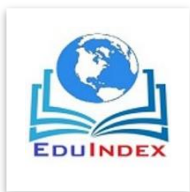
turbulence. The void in Ida's life at her mother's funeral becomes more pronounced and unbearable. Apparently Virmati's presence has failed to provide Ida with a sense of fulfillment and security during her life and thus Ida made every effort to stay clear of the image that she had of her mother.

Nevertheless the unconscious affiliation with the absent mother propels her to excavate the other unknown view of her mother and she sets out on her journey. Her restlessness had her to a relentless quest which in initially a mental search; "to be totally innocent would be to be utterly unknown, particularly to one's self"(8) the concept of a "good" and "bad" mother is a worldwide phenomenon and acquires an added significance in the Indian strengthens her. In Ida's case, she reminisces that she "could not remember a time it had been right between us"(2). Which naturally left her rebelling land struggling along with an in built in firm just as a cripple without crutches. Ida may not have been consciously aware of this deficiency for the simple reason that the image she carried of Virmati was of a woman who was "silent brisk and bad tempered"(2).

Ida determined to unveil her mother's past, experiences the "excitement of discovery" which finally culminates in establishing a strong bond between the narrator and the mother with " each word a brick in a mansion" (259). Having accomplished this task, she seeks to be liberated and leads earnestly to her dead mother. The anxiety thereby bringing an end to the traumatic transition period. She had been looking for all her life came in the form of the book. The melancholy and despair caused by the knowledge appear to be dispelled having sunk into her mother's ask without Virmathi's hindering presence. Ida, groping for the self lost in an attempt to be a model daughter under pressure from her parents tried to end up.

Ida determined to unravel the truth about her mother goes to Amritsar, a place associated with her mother and feels quite lost without her. Virmathi the eldest of eleven children, did not work. Despite the encumbrance of the house land activities and her brothers and sisters she found time to study. In the process of endowing responsibilities she acquired the feeling that she was "indispensable"(6) child birth and yet tolerant. The unmarried Shakuntala her first cousin appear to be Virmati's ideal and Virmati's soon realized that answers to her happiness lay outside the house: "to education, freedom and the bright lights of Lahore college." (15) the family disputes led to arrangement of separate establishments by Lala Diwan Chand And Professor Harish Chandra At Arya Sabha college came to the death of the canal engineer's father and thus Virmati's marriage entered the college the seventh girl among four hundred boys. Her open myopic stare at the professor misinterpreted but the "dead was done" (43) prior to the realization.

The cultural conditioning had initially prohibited from getting involved with the professor. She was already engaged. At the same time her in built response to a person's need from a very tender age broken down her: " eldest and a girl she was finally turned to

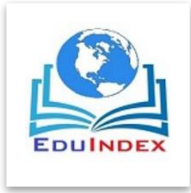


neediness it called her blood and bones”(50). The professor continued to pressurize her to do away with her finance and Virmati torn between duty and love along with a strong desire for education continued to be agonized. the dryness of the canal engineer’s letter, in comparison to be warmth of the professor’s letter gave her strength to seek permission to study further for she claimed that she was not really ready for “initiation into womanhood intimacy procreation”(60). Her mother wondered as to how her sensible dutiful daughter had changed so much in just a generation.

The incessant talk of her marriage in the house and the knowing full well that she could not depend upon the professor to sort out any domestic situation. She decided to go to tarlike to her Bade Baoji, Lala Diwan Chand and drown herself in the canal. The brave thoughts of renunciation over, she mutely faced her mother’s anger but her silence though was locked in the go down and her younger sister married to intermit, ultimately one does know down towards one fate or karma and so did Virmati in her newly acquired situation. Paro, her five year old sister, is the sustaining force for Virmati in the family. Although the enforce stillness helps her to built her self control yet she burns with anger and humiliation for little relevance given to her life.

To elevate the society above the practical and the convention was impossible for the realization has yet to drawn that what is society made up of, but individuals. Education for Kasturi was just a means of destruction of the family .The indecisive state of living finds and alternative in continuing her studies in Lahore after learning that the professor’s wife is pregnant. His justification appear futile and weak and in this moment of weakness it seemed. The autonomy and freedom the place provided helped her to overcome the pain and the illusion of love. The sisterly bond established between the unmarried cousin Shakuntala and Virmati, placed in a more or less same situation afforded solace despite the concept of the traditional family: “a woman without her own home and family is a woman without mornings” (102).

The professor’s persistence and his friends Syed Husain’s help and encouragement finally enabled the Professor to get Virmati around. Virmati too justified herself that there was no point in polishing denying it on basis of an outmoded morality. Nonetheless the trouble had action been created by “ letter others her that she ought to be doing something like Swarnalata, her roommate whom she admired so much rather than being involved in a useless love and bout full marriage. It was a self revelation that she could not express but cherish nonetheless. Pining for a life beyond, she acknowledges her limitation that these larger spaces were not for her. Torn between her passion and what she would really want to do: guilt of all those wrongs comes to her mind with the blunt observation that the ecstatic begging of illicit relationship had no future plan of marriage. Despair was all that was hers



and the thought it would be far better to be like Swarna “involved in other people and waiting for no man” (138).

She decided that finally her studies would be her passport to independence but fate had it otherwise: she was pregnant. In unraveling Virmati's with knowledge. Ida identification is fortifying. It was also probably one of the reason that had been the root cause of the termination of Ida's marriage: “in denying that incident little thing in my belly, he sowed the seeds of our breakup.” (144) Virmati was able to revive the courage that she possessed in doing away her unwanted pregnancy by herself in absence of Harish. Swarnalata was the study pillar in that hour of need. She achieved independence by paying a heavy price along with the realization that now she could endure any pain for none could be greater than the one her body underwent through knives and abortion. The body was scarred by the professor to deprive her of another choice even in her life.

Ida took up principal-ship at Nahan. But the professor was not to allow her peace. His visit there cost her job. She decides to go Shantiniketan. Every mile strengthened her. She perceived that there was a life of dedication and service ahead of her and in that she would forge her identity. Fate had it otherwise. Now it was Harish to face the dilemma and agony of being torn between his family duty and illicit craving for Virmati. No escape, so he married her, breaking the last thin tie with her own family this separation is ordained from birth. In face of all hostility at move with a determination on the path her destiny had carved out for her. She wonders whether this isolation would continue till the end of her life. Virmati, in trying to establish the domain of her kingdom beside her husband felt strangely isolation from women. Since her marriage she had learned to look space in a new way to define it and mark it to think of what was hers and what ways that would have been unthinkable in the fluid areas of her maternal home.

The initiate passivity that she developed after marriage drove her once again to Lahore to do post graduate in philosophy. probably once again education was a means to revitalize her. Virmati's so journey is in three stages; the first when she deserts her family, religious and political authorities who appear as captors. The freedom and unlimited possibilities drive her to the Powerful figure of her seducer. She thus awakens in a world of experience to achieve wholeness and autonomy. The realization dawns there after that the seducer too is captor. She then makes the final journey back home to be united with the family and discovers that it's the mother with whom she wishes to be rejoined. This rescue figure helps her to free herself, from the myth of female inferiority and in identifying a valuable female tradition. The rejection too enables self – determination. She thus appears to be in tune with herself her desire and careful not to succumb that valuable self to any external pressure.



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Manju kapur challenges the social gender rules and explores her protagonist fight for self-determination, self, identity. Although Virmatic does well in breaking all man-made limitations there are certain priorities so extremely embedded within her that she struggles to shake through the shackles she groups up from an immature girl to a women matured through experience and by sufferings. During her whole life she travels through the realms of several experiences. In addition to higher education and a much talked about illegal love affair search for liberty, search for the consciousness of the self and the search doesn't stop.

Every daughter is difficult daughter to her mother and every mother is a difficult mother to her daughter because ideas are dissimilar from one to another. However, many people don't agree that it is fact. When the daughter is addescent, mother affectionately receives her though her daughter does any mistakes. Till she gets adult age, there is no difficulty, but the feelings and vices are unexpectedly transformed from both sides when she comes fifteen years old. The daughter wants to see the contemporary takes & to be contemporary girl in approach & dressing. All mothers are always conservations. Sometimes they are not conservative but they would admit their daughter's ideas.

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