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THE MARGINALIZATION OF WOMAN: A CRITIQUE OF MANJU KAPUR'S  
*DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS*

S. NIVETHA<sup>1</sup>, Dr.K.RAVICHANDRAN<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph. D, Research Scholar Department of English, Thiruvalluvar University, Serkkadu, Vellore – 632 115.

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of English, Thiruvalluvar University, Serkkadu, Vellore – 632 115.



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ABSTRACT

This paper probes deep into the Marginalization of woman as meticulously portrayed by the acclaimed novelist Manju Kapur, entitled *Difficult Daughters*. Manju Kapur does express not only the male ordained society but also analyse the psychology of women through her characters. *Difficult Daughters* discusses the position of a woman within the family and their right to change. The concept of Marginalization is discussed in the novels of Manju Kapur. Virmati is the protagonist of the novel 'Difficult Daughter'. In this novel, she got married and be acquiescent to their husband was given a second appear. Society has marginalized people in a position of lesser importance or power.

Women are marginalized by society and their family members in the name of tradition, culture, and economy. This novel talks about the sufferings of woman, their search for identity and their desire for independence. *Difficult Daughter* reflects the reality of an Indian woman who fights against suppression and oppression of the patriarchy. This paper speaks about the problem of marginalization faced by the character Virmati and her struggle. Women are marginalized in the name of culture, tradition, and religion. This paper highlight the importance of woman as a person rebelling against the marginalization. The woman eventually breaking traditional boundaries through their protest against injustice and raising questions against the already existing belief, customs, rituals, and superstitions.

**Keywords:** Superstition, Suppression, Patriarchy, Identity, Tradition, Culture.

Introduction

Manju Kapur speaks of the concept of independence with great narrative eloquence in her first book, *Difficult Daughters*, published in 1981 and set primarily in 1940s India. *A Married Woman* (2003) is Manju Kapur's second book, and it's every bit as strong as the first and, if anything, more controversial thematically.

She had the choice to refuse. She had the choice of not making the decision she did. Virmati, like so many other women in the subcontinent, is pressured to enter an arranged marriage. She defies her destiny, much to

her family's dismay, especially her mother. She is able to leave her home and study in Lahore, claiming her right to an education.

Despite this, she develops feelings for Professor, who first appears in her life as her parents' tenant is an Amritsar teacher. She married the man who loves her and returns to Amritsar to live with her married man. He on the other hand, refuses to throw out the implications for Virmati, his first wife, are severe.

The condition of Virmati can be considered representative up to a point, but it is not absolute. Kapur highlights the efforts of numerous women at the time who, following a string of misfortunes, which included a spell as a school principal in a small town, who were a visible force in the peaceful opposition to the British while demanding equal citizenship, equal access to education, and life opportunities that went beyond tradition. She marries the man she loves (or thinks she loves) in a small Himalayan town and returns to Amritsar to live with him. He, on the other hand, refuses to leave his first wife, and Virmati suffers as a result: her family shuns her and her husband despises her. Ida, Virmati's only daughter, tells her story in the present day.

Virmati's case is interesting up to a point can be considered representative, but it is not absolute. *Difficult Daughters* tells the story of not only Virmati, but also other "difficult daughters" who succeeded in their struggle for independence than she did. In the story's core, we meet a woman who encounters less representative but also symbolic figures on the story's margins, including a woman who fights but falls by the wayside. Other women, as seen in the table below, whose relative success points to the future. She refuge as the headmistress of a girl's school, is without a doubt her happiest and most appealing period of life.

Sirmaur was a real place in Himachal Pradesh, which is now a federal state. She has the most control over her life there: There are some rules she must observe (and breaking them proves her failure), but she can teach in a structured environment, and her success earns her well-deserved praise. Right, in modern Indian literature, the widowed or single lady teacher or headmistress is a stock character (as in Anita Desai's spinster lecturer Bimala in plain light of day or Amitav Ghosh's grandmother in *The Shadow-Lines*), but Virmati's destiny at this stage of her life is to carry out her duties solely on her own. She has no immediate relatives or associates in Her fate has brought her to this micro-state.

She achieves a degree of female sovereignty that is almost unparalleled. She is self-sufficient home for the first and only time, the well-known 'room of one's own' by Virginia Woolf and yet she falls in love. She believes she requires the company of a man, and she makes the mistake of returning to a relationship that has caused her pain previously. Virmati's employers lose confidence in her as a result of the fatal Professor's repeated covert visits, and she is forced to abandon her school, house, and work.

Jobs in a small, isolated a well-ordered state worthy of bringing her social and emotional relief. She did, however, have another choice at her disposal. She recognizes an opportunity, but she is unable to seize it for the time being. Shantiniketan, the destination she concocted with her employers to avoid a public scandal, was another choice for her. Shantiniketan a crucial location in the seat of Viswa-Bharati, Tagore's foundation where women were accepted the position in Bengal where, thanks to Rabindranath Tagore's Under the auspices of the great poet's political philosophy as matta, the finest workplaces, education, and enlightenment flourished. If Virmati had followed the route she never took, She should have made new friends, kept her freedom, and at the very least looked for new opportunities. She will have to change trains in Delhi, unfortunately, and the long wait leads her into a trap she contacts a friend of the fateful Professor in the capital. The slight glimmer of restored independence, of spiritual awakening, fades away.

In Amritsar, Virmati's marriage to the Professor ends up becoming a tragic figure. She wilts in front She would share a house with Ganga, her husband's first wife. She loses all sense of self: her education no longer feeds her dreams of freedom. In the end, her past is swallowed up in the larger and more resonant universal catastrophe of Partition, and she becomes almost irrelevant. Despite this, Virmati has met other women who, like her, have aspired to a different life and have accomplished more than she has. Shakuntaala, her cousin, and Swarna Lata, her roommate in Lahore, are the two sisters. Both represent the emancipated woman activist, a female character who appears frequently in Indian literature.

No one should overlook the contributions of many women to the struggle for independence and the Gandhian revolution as we have seen above; a notable literary testament to them is Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura*, published in 1938, in which he tells the tale through the eyes of a narrative voice of a female Daisy, the single activist in R.K. Narayan's *The Painter of Signs*, or Malati Trivedi, the radical activist in Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*. Shakuntala has a number of intertextual connotations: The young girl who, after being abandoned by her husband, the king, eventually obtains acknowledgment of her rights and proper care in Kalidasa's great classical Sanskrit drama *The Recognition of Shakuntala* - comes to mind for the Indian reader. Virmati's cousin, Shakuntala is Virmati's extended family's exemplar of the modern or 'liberated' woman from the beginning. Even after marriage, she continues to study, lecture, and engage in the political Gandhian movement, maintaining her autonomy and freedom of action and thinking.

As a result, Shakuntala draws Virmati's attention: 'Virmati listened, drawn to Shakuntala, to someone with obligations that extended beyond a husband and children(17)'. We travel, keep ourselves entertained in the evenings, keep track of each other's work, read journals, and attend seminars, she explains to her cousin of her liberated lifestyle with a group of friends with whom she shares her liberated lifestyle. We drive, have fun in the evenings, keep up with each other's jobs, read magazines, and go to seminars. One of them is currently pursuing higher education in another country. Virmati encounters a woman who lives a similar lifestyle later in Swarna Lata; her character, an articulate feminist, takes her to a Punjab Women's Student Conference meeting, where she shines as a role model.

In 'A Married Woman,' the figure of the woman who goes abroad to further her education reappears a public speaker: "Heavy applause broke out as Swarna finished speaking"(145). Swarna continues to be involved in politics after her marriage, telling Virmati the following: "We have plenty of married women working with us. I'm married, aren't I?"(252). Shakuntala and Swarna's careers may be matched, but there is one caveat: on the one and only time that the two clash, Shakuntala would win They don't get along, which is a mild plot irony that highlights Kapur's ability to resist both reductionism and sentimentalism. Finally, as Virmati admits, the course of political activism does not appeal to her "I am not like these women. They are using their minds, organizing, participating in conferences, being politically active, while my time is spent being in love"(142). Swarna takes the path that leads to the Professor, but not for her own good: Swarna does not follow this course, and she eventually feels compelled to break ties with him: "And Swarna dropped out of her life"(252).

In either case, Virmati's unhappy life is framed by those two other, far more stable lives, as if in a triptych: Shakuntala's and Swarna Lata's, both emblematic of the learned, politicised, and emancipated woman. To put it another way, The Virmati's internal annihilation by her own family and husband should not be deemed fatal.

Quantitatively and statistically, although what happens to Virmati is undoubtedly the most representative destiny for an Indian woman, Kapur's novel shows that there are other possibilities, as well as emphasising that decisions are not black-and-white. In the one hand, the weight of gender-determined culture, and on the other, the need for freedom and self-affirmation, does not seem to be a simplistic dichotomy of life choices in this novel. Things are never black and white. Between the two options, there are a plethora of dynamic emotional shades of grey. Anita Desai's *Fasting, Feasting*, a novel by an Indian woman novelist, was published in 1999, shortly after *Difficult Daughters* and can be used as a point of comparison.

If Uma, The Indian female heroine of the novel is unable to escape the mundane mediocrity of her life as an unmarried daughter - and if her cousin Anamika's fate is repeated, -Uma's sister Aruna, on the other hand, appears as a representative of a particular kind of Indian woman, who should have gone to Oxford but instead became a victim of the bride-burning epidemic- a woman who can rise above the mediocre. It can be inferred that, however tragically typical Virmati's experiences are, Some routes lead to less common destinations, where demands are lifted and acknowledged, resulting in optimistic outcomes.

*Difficult Daughters* isn't strictly a third-person story. The majority of the plot of Virmati is told in the third person, but it is presented by the characters' first-person narration. In *A Married Woman*, the course of militancy recurs, this time in the form of meetings and speeches, where it fuses, though briefly and in a context that can hardly be defined as socially orthodox, with the choice of 'being in love.' The 'events of Ayodhya' and Hindu-

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Muslim conflict are among the themes in Kapur's second book, that features a female intimacy storey set against the backdrop of the 'Ayodhya incidents' and Hindu-Muslim violence. Ida, Virmati's daughter, is on the lookout for information about her mother's past. Ida, an accomplished woman who is divorced and childless, seems to live a more carefree life than her mother on the outside, but she shares some of the same anxieties as her mother on the inside: 'No matter how I might rationalize otherwise, I feel my existence as a single woman reverberate desolately'(3).

### Conclusion

Even though the basic creative act of 'writing down' her family history, Ida, the narrator whose voice Kapur hears, has surpassed her mother's achievements and even more than her grandmother, the book's pages make it plain that she has accomplished more than her mother. 'We don't listen to Virmati's speech in *Difficult Daughters*,' Dora Sales says (this time from an English essay on the novel). She couldn't speak up because she was caught between two oppressions: colonialism and patriarchy. What we have is a reconstruction and reflection of her daughter'. In India's half-century of independence, women have made significant progress; however, much work remains to be done if true female independence is to be achieved. The fight for sovereignty is still ongoing, and in her second novel, Manju Kapur returns to the narration of women's problems from this viewpoint Five years later, *A Married Woman* was written, this time from a distinctly contemporary perspective, using an approach that, like *Difficult Daughters*, seems to be both Indian and universal at the same time.

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