
The Dynamics of Marriage in Manju Kapoor's *Difficult Daughters*

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Abstract: Because the collective psychological mind set regarded women as inferior to males, and as a result of the desire to control and govern women's lives in every sector, the patriarchal structure of society has been detrimental to women. This structure that underpins modern Indian society has not changed. Society, still has men as their superiors as a result, the women are continued to be oppressed and undervalued. They are compelled to make concessions and tolerating injustice in silence. Therefore, in present-day India, there is still gender inequality. This paper attempts to evaluate many female characters who experience marginalisation in the work of Manju Kapoor's *Difficult Daughters*. Especially, it seeks to examine the complexity of man-woman relationships, particularly in the setting of marriage. The marriages of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash's, Professor Harish and Ganga's marriage and Professor Harish and Viramati's have been discussed.

Keywords: marriage, patriarchy, responsibilities, independence, education, family

Introduction

One of the well-known modern Indian women writers who writes in English is Manju Kapur. Her main characters are bound in the positions that society has given them, but they manage to find self-identity and individuality within the constraints of their marriage. The conversation about marriage, which is the most important subject in the life of the female heroine. A woman wants to have a strong desire to strive for independence and autonomy after marriage. Despite being financially

independent, she lacks the freedom to make decisions, much less ones that aren't. In marriage and families, patriarchy is evident in subtle ways, such as the expectation that the daughter-in-law will assist with home duties first. The husband and the in-laws have the last say on whether the daughter-in-law should work or not, and if so, what profession she should choose.

The protagonist of *Difficult Daughters* is a woman 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. Manju Kapur uses Virmati as a literary tool and uses her to emphasise the marginalisation experienced by women who care most about maintaining their individuality and dignity.

Virmati was Kasturi's oldest child. As a result, she plays a motherly rather than a kid or sisterly role in the family. Her mom needed Virmati to continuously take care of her siblings and she found her mother's habit annoying. She at many occasions have gone against her mother's will. Also, she is strong girl having high aspirations. Once she is thirteen and her mother is recovering in Dalhousie, she learns about her cousin Shakuntala's autonomous lifestyle and therefore is inspired to lead a new life for her. However, she falls for a married man and had a relationship with him. Eventually, after suffering ups and downs in their relationship they get married only for Viramati to realise the failure of her marriage. Despite the fact that women make up approximately half of the human population, women have generally been compelled to take up a secondary position in society to men since patriarchal times. Additionally, this secondary standing is not imposed by inherently "feminine" character traits but rather by powerful environmental factors of social and educational tradition under the patriarchal system. (Simone De Beauvoir 9)

Kasturi and Suraj Prakash's marital life

The mother of Virmati is Kasturi. She is regularly told that she is meant to work diligently and impress her in-laws. It had been apparent that marriage was her future ever since she was in school. "During Kasturi's formal schooling it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny." (Kapur 62) She finished her schooling at home after she graduated. Her mother made an effort to secure her happiness in the future by ensuring that her daughter's credentials were flawless. She intended to win over her in-laws. Finally, when she got married at quite a young age, she had to shoulder the burden of multiple pregnancies and domestic responsibilities. With her father-in-law, mother-in-law, daughters, and sons all requiring her care, she hardly ever had time for herself was ignorant of her pleasure. Her husband is dutiful towards the family and he is the provider still he does not have a good understanding of his wife complications, responsibilities and deteriorating health. She is portrayed in the book as a mother whose destiny it is to have as many children as she can. The mother closed her eyes, focusing on the will of God resting beside her, and gave in the exhaustion brought on by seventeen years of constant childbirth to wash over her. (Kapur 9)

Kasturi is the unfortunate bearer of these uncontrolled pregnancies when she married. Her husband Suraj Prakash is not considerate towards her deteriorating health and he gives her no choice when it comes to bearing children. "Kasturi symbolises the typical Indian housewife who works as a reproductive machine, who is never given the space to decide things for herself." (Khuraijam et.al, 2018) Against her will, she gives birth to six daughters and five sons; there were eleven total. Virmati, Hemavati, Vidyavati, Indumati, Gunvati, and Parvati are the girls. The sons are Kailashnath, Krishanath, Gopinath, Prakasnath, and Hiranath. The symptoms of early morning and evening nausea, bile entering her throat whilst feeding, clumps of hair falling out, and dizziness when she abruptly got up had already started for the eleventh time. Her pregnancy symptoms resembled those of a woman

who is anaemic, undernourished, and restless. For a while her husband let her spend a few months in Dalhousie, a hill station to recover from childbirth and away from family duties.

Viramati continually begs God to terminate this child and hopes never to conceive again. "Her sandhya started and ended with this prayer that somehow she should dump the child she was carrying and never conceive again," (Kapur 7). She is seldom alone with her other children during her pregnancy, and because of her demanding schedule, she feels fatigued all the time. "Kasturi could not recall a day when she wasn't tired, when her feet and legs didn't ache," (Kapur 7). Kasturi was not allowed to get the rest she needed when she gave birth to her eleventh child. With her marriage in turmoil, Kashturi's life is therefore completely chaotic.

Professor Harish and Ganga's marriage

The Professor's wife Ganga, a scarcely educated woman who was chosen for him as a child, is Virmati's romantic opponent. She makes an effort to win over her husband, who hardly notices her and who rightly doesn't like the invader. Her husband She strives to be a nice wife as she's been taught, but she unfortunately is unaware that she will never be able to completely satisfy him. Her husband takes her devotion and loyalties for him for granted. On the other hand he is unfaithful towards their marriage and duties as a husband. Moreover, all her attempts to make the marriage work are shattered by Harish who has wronged her throughout their marriage. He sees her as inferior and not worthy of being his wife as she is not well educated. "It has also been five years since he had seen his wife, but his wife had been in no position to enforce her claims. She couldn't write and besides she hardly knew him." (Kapur 36)

Later her husband remarries and now she has to compete with the new wife for her rights, family and her husband. She is heartbroken when she gets to know about her husband's second marriage. "The tears Ganga was determined not to show anybody, started pouring down her face."

(Kapur 211) The Professor marries Virmati because he does not feel confident around Ganga and she was unable to win his love and admiration. Even though Ganga has full rights, her wretched soul longs for her spouse. While Ganga is tricked into leaving Harish's home by Virmati, her devotion to him is unaffected by the separation. Even though she is not with him, she still wears her bindi, sindoor, and mangalsutra every day. A man who doesn't give a hoot about the repercussions is cruel to both women in order to get his way.

Professor Harish and Viramati's marriage

In comparison to her mother Kasturi, Virmati's circumstances is not much better. Like her mother, Virmati's parents rush her marriage. They will have nothing from me but a commitment to marry. Because women at that time were conditioned to only think about marriage, marriage also becomes a burden in her life. Her mother always worries about her wedding and cannot comprehend the conflict in her daughter's mind. Her mother is unable to realize that Virmati has always been a very sincere child who respects herself. She looks after her siblings when their mother takes a break from caring for them after giving birth, serving as their true mother. Only Virmati takes care of them.

She conflicts between the physiological and the ethical; the mind and the love, as the professor re-enters her life. She finally coerces him into getting married. She does not find the notion of being the second wife outrageous. She goes back to Amritsar after being married. However, Virmati's marriage to the professor in Amritsar ends as being a complete failure. She wilts in the face of Ganga, her husband's first wife, who she is forced to share her life with. Ganga never permits Virmati to perform any tasks linked to the professor or enter her kitchen. She also doesn't have a good relationship with the kids from her husband's family. Ganga's son remarks 'who is this gandhi lady? Send her away.' (Kapur 192) Her sister-in-law is similarly uneasy around her and avoids conversation with her. The professor does not care about her difficulties of happiness.

Despite being officially married, Viramati cannot lead a fulfilling life. Her step children never express admiration towards her. Her mother is likewise upset with her, and her father and grandfather die without forgiving her. Her life is quiet, reclusive, and isolated after marriage. As a result of her decision, she is forced to choose between her family's needs and her secret affection for the professor. After marriage, Virmati is reduced to being the Professor's wife and permanently loses her spark. She understands that the professor is just a lascivious male, despite his taste in literature and intellectual curiosity. Due to his incompatibility with his illiterate wife, Ganga, and his failure to educate her, Professor got married a second time. He felt the need to be with Virmati, an educated woman, and they were married. Later, his wife Ganga serves him as a maid servant and takes care of all the household duties and also, now that he is married to Virmati, and Virmati satisfies his desire for intellectual pursuits. A man who is already married cannot possibly bring happiness to any woman, Virmati realizes." The realization dawns there after that the seducer too is a captor." (Ragnath) "Marriage is, of course, a social institution to have children but it is inhuman to go after having them at the cost of a woman who is treated as a breeding machine and whose thoughts, emotions, opinion and physical condition it totally disregarded. (Trivedi 446) After getting married, she is entangled in a new reality where her free spirit is restrained and she is forced to compromise and adapt.

Virmati's marriage to the professor drove her to become an outsider both in the professor's household and in her own. Even though Virmati was free to make her own decisions, she ruined her life by deciding to become the professor's second wife. Because of her inexperience and lack of information, she took a bad turn, ruining the life of her daughter. Finally, we discover that the professor does neither party justice, notably the helpless Ganga, whom he ultimately deserts. Ganga experiences the pain of emotional desertion in silence as a result of his disregard for her dedication. She endures her husband's callous behaviour, which has deprived her of her marital privileges. She is powerless to rebel against Virmati because her husband is with her, but out of pain and fury, she refuses to let

Virmati inside the kitchen or wash his clothes. He is also unable to treat Virmati fairly. He is unconcerned with their happiness. “‘My wives now know what to expect from each other’, continued Harish.” (Kapur 261) On the account of his education can Harish relate to Virmati, but he cannot relate to his children. Along with her daughter Ida, she adopts Harish's first two children, Giridhar and Chhoti. “She loves the members of her family as well as the Professor’s but she loses both as she fails to compromise with the two worlds” (Nayak) Giridhar marries despite his parents' desires. To impress her father, Chhoti performs well at school but is unwilling to get married. She enlists in IAS to care for her grandma and mother. When Virmati becomes Ida's mother, she wants the best for the child. But once more, the younger generation chooses to defy their parents' desires. Ida doesn't do her homework properly since she just wants to live for herself, much like Virmati the younger did. Ida sums up her resentment in one line, “I grew up struggling to be the model daughter. Pressure, pressure to perform day and night (Kapur, 258)

In the work, *Difficult Daughters* women are depicted as being on the social margin. This book has a wide aspect and doesn't focus on the ladies in a specific Punjabi family or state. The unjust laws of the patriarchal world harm Kasturi, Virmati, and Ganga. The primary themes of this work stem from Kasturi's status as a procreation tool Ganga only born to serve her in-laws and Virmati's position as a dispossessed person. One gets the idea while reading the book that a woman's life is similar to the life of a country going through many trials and tribulations. Thus, *Difficult Daughters* depicts the conflict experienced by women in their marriages where they attempt to establish their self-identity by overcoming her cultural identity, only to be effort that leaves them stone-hearted and dissolute. The main characters in Kapur are married in the hopes that it will give them respect, security, and position in society; sadly, they are let down and become disillusioned as a result. However, Kapur prepares her heroines to face reality at the conclusion of each chapter. Despite the trauma they have experienced and the difficulties of their marriage, her women do not

commit suicide or seek divorce. They acquire the ability to coexist peacefully in society while not abandoning either modern desires for independence or family ties.

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