



SELF AND IDENTITY IN MANJU KAPUR'S: DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS

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ABSTRACT

Literature all round the world completes the task of effective communication drawing the raw material from life seen, and then it is preserved with words and reaches the readers catering to the need of the people to know culture, tradition and to create awareness.

The lines quoted below very well relates the introduction by George Lukcas, a great Marxist aesthetician says, "Literature should not only represent social reality but also present the social structure with an insight into its very organization with a prophetic sense of future and direct its development."

Woman of India, have enjoyed a prominent status, from the past, as history records them as nobel queens and as warriors. They have been dominating the divinity, power, beauty, wisdom, erudition and leadership from time to time. They have displayed varied roles in dharma, society, politics, humanities and other fields as musicians, dancers, artist etc. In the normal life they have proved themselves as mothers, teachers, wives, daughters, sisters in the domestic periphery. Our great scriptures like the Ramayana, Mahabharata etc. are undying evidence of these. Historical books records the contribution of Rani Laxmi Bai, Rani Durgawati, Rani Avanti Bai and many others to prove their warriorship on battle fields and as authorities.

With the changing rulers and time women have been often conquered in their various roles,





evil customs such as prevention of widow remarriage, obsession of having male progeny, immolation of wife with her husband's-pyre, child-marriage, dowry, enforced prostitution, arranged-marriages, prohibition on women's education and many others. Thus, the women were subjected to take a leading role in fulfilling of several domestic ritual observances in the name of tradition.

Since the publication of Bankin Chandra Chatterjee's "Rajmohan's wife" in 1864, a significant number of authors have portrayed Indian women as long-suffering wives and mothers silenced by patriarchy. This was also reflected in almost all the works of novelist-like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rammohan Roy, Govind Desani, R.K. Narayan.

Technical and scientific advancement have led to cultural mix-ups, creating tension between tradition and change. The changing trends have made the women to distinguish themselves as scholars, politicians, sports persons, musicians etc. They claim their share in every field where the male alone was dominating so far. The fearless women of our modern, India have become bold enough to corner the male domination and to attain prominent presence in society through continuous struggle to achieve empowerment and gain self-identity.

Since independence, there has been an astonishing flowering of Indian women writing in English. The authors are mostly western educated, middle-class women who express in writing their discontent with the plight of upper and middle-class women usually Indians and usually traditional, trapped in repressive institutions such as child marriage, dowry, arranged marriages, suffering and patriarchal rules imposed upon widowhood, all which are usually regarded as being antithetical to modernity. The works of Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Ruth Pravar Jhabvala, Kamala Das, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Shashi Despande, Gita Mehta, Bharti Mukherjee, Gita Hariharan have attempted to embark on a journey of self-awakening of women.

Manju Kapur is once such novelist whose works reflect the anticipation of a new women with an awareness of self idnetity. In her novel 'Difficult Daughter's' she projects the image of the





women in Indian society. We read about the female protagonists who have bound themselves in the shackles of so called tradition and male dominion in its garb as well as those who rush towards freedom in all forms in the name of liberalization. Her debut novel is a fascinating story spanning the three generations. It centers on a woman born at the turn of the twentieth century into a Punjabi family. The most important character 'Virmati' is the eldest daughter in the family she is conditioned that a women's 'Shaan' is her home and not in doing a job, and so she is engaged to a land engineer, 'Inderjeet'. On the contrary, Virmati secretly aspires about leading an independent life and not to follow the monotonous life of domesticity. Virmati realizes that it is useless to look for answers inside the home as the language of feeling had never flown between Virmati and 'Kasturi' her mother.

*"She, had to look outside to education,
to freedom and the bright lights of Lahore college
Even if she had to fight her mother who was
so sure that her education was practically over" (17)*

She is impressed by her cousin aunty 'Shakuntala' and she moves to Lahore to stay with her for further studies. She clears her F.A. exam and joins A.S. College. She aspires self-reliance through education. Through education Virmati becomes capable to stand trials of life alone.

The other important character in the novel of the third generation is 'Ida', Virmati's daughter she could not develop an understanding with her mother during her life time and after Virmati's demise, Ida sets out on a journey into her mother's past by piecing together the memory in search of a woman, she could know and understand, meeting and visiting the relatives and places Ida was always disappointed and hated the way her mother, Virmati had been surrendering herself and losing her identity. Ida believed to bear her individual identity. She divorces her husband, she boldly states, "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother."





Ida reflects her rational and free will in the incident where her husband compels her to undergo abortion. Instead of complying as other women would have done, she breaks up with her husband.

Thus Manju Kapur's 'Difficult Daughter's' is a feminist discourse not because she is a woman writing about women but because she has understood a woman both as a woman and as a person pressurized by all kinds of visible and invisible contexts. She presents feminism at its most same keeping in mind the Indian context.

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