

Redefining Relationship in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters

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Abstract: *The birth and beginning of civilization as seen by every society had lived by certain human values and norms. Especially Indian society is bounded with traditional culture. If we specify in particular south Indian society is made up of family culture. The girl or the boy in the family needs to preserve the dignity of the family whether they like it or not. This boundary makes the people to consider the value of the relationship. At one time or another one will understand the importance of their beloved ones and it bonds the separated ones. This scenario is well defined by Manju Kapur, the reputed Indian novelist who lives in New Delhi, where she is a teacher of English at Miranda House College, Delhi University. In her first novel Difficult Daughters which received international appreciation and won the Commonwealth Prize for First Novels. This paper aims to compare the two woman characters where the readers need to know more about the protagonist Virmati from the voice of Ida who disliked her in the beginning.*

Key words: *family, marriage, reliability, relationship, self*

I. Introduction

Difficult Daughter is the maiden novel of Manju Kapur. Ida, daughter of protagonist of this novel Virmati hates her mother or doesn't know about her till her death. Only at the time of loss of her mother she knows many things about her mother through her uncle Kailash Nath, her friend, her aunt and from so many and she starts loving her mother then onwards. When the thing is very near to us, one doesn't understand the value of it. But when one loses it, then there is a longing for it. This is human psychology. She thinks that her mother is also an ordinary woman who began her life as usual and ends her life in a customary way. But when she came to know about her struggle throughout her life, she is magnetically drawn towards her mother. Thus, Ida started yearning for her mother's love after her mother's death. She was thoroughly influenced by her story.

Virmathi, the protagonist in her early days (i.e) at the age of ten, acted like a boss. When her uncle explained about Virmathi, he says that she was only their sister, but she acted very bossy. She is so keen to study. She studied more than any other girl in the family. At the age of ten, she had the maturity to look after her eleven brothers and sisters. She doesn't try to draw closer to her brothers and sisters, but the children's clean and oiled looks drew admiring comments from those who meet them. When she complains about her work to her mother, she makes her dumb by saying, "You are the eldest. If you don't see things, who will?"

When she was in Dalhousie, Kasturi, Virmati's mother scolded her for her idleness (not helping her mother in sewing and knitting). At last when she came from the Hills, her routine works started (looking after the children). During that time usual partition took place in the house. Elder daughter-in-law Lajwanti insisted her father – in law through her husband to move away and live separately from the house. At first Lala Diwan Chand, the head of the family got angry with that matter. As the time goes on he understands the situation and he also in need of providing a hygienic and healthy circumstance for his younger daughter – in-law. In order to do that he accepts to shift the house that is going to be extended to additional three rooms. Lajwanti disagrees with her father – in-law in that matter also. But he strongly denies that and orders that there should be no more partition in that home. Lajwanti is somewhat happy about that because her initial endeavor (giving rest to her husband and design her separate space) is successful. Surajprakash, younger son of Lala Diwan Chand writes to Somnath, a son of Chandra prakash in Lahore to take a more active hand in take care of the building works. Since he is running the family business, looking after the construction, and trying to meet Lajwanti's expectations, he begins to feel that some of the responsibility should go to the eldest male of the generation.

Somnath being a son of Lajwanti and Chander Prakash also disappoints her mother by not giving interest in marriage like her sister Shakunthala. Due to his preparation for the Indian civil services, he rejects his family jewelry business. Once Somnath shifts to Amristar, Lajwanti finds that his way of constructing the house is tremendously different from her brother-in-law's. She is wondering at the structure and the things used in the house. At one stage she dumbfounds and asks her son that whether they are building a Taj Mahal. Her son cools her by saying that there is no harm in decorating the house. Lajwanti prays to God that the construction would be over soon. Besides she feels happy at one point that if her son spends so much time and effort on house, it meant that he would settle down in it and marry. At last everything is completed and the family finances severely strained.

Inside her wonderful house Lajwanti feels lost. She feels abandoned when she usually accustomed with the noise of the children in the house. Now she considers that her status had gone. To avert her loneliness Somnath decides to invite a tenant. That person is a Professor, from Oxford University returned before two years back. He comes to India reluctantly because of his mother's insistent demands. As he is her only son she likes to be with her son in her last years. In her new house at Lepel Griffin Road Virmati tries to pass her final FA exams. At last study is given full recognition in that house. In this period fate starts its work. She studies in Arya Shaba College, Amritsar and in the same college the Professor also joins. His wife is an uneducated person but a typical Indian housewife who does her duties to her husband regularly

Being an adolescent age girl, Virmati is easily trapped by the Professor. He appreciates her for her interest in studies. Interest in learning and teaching process unites them. The Professor really cared for woman's education just like her grandfather. He tries so many times to educate his wife but all that efforts are in vain. Ganga, the Professor's wife weak only in studies but when it is the case of cooking she couldn't beat by none. In that matter she creates a good friendship with Virmati. In College Virmati is one of the seven girls out of four hundred students. She sits always in the front row. One day she doesn't have the place in the front row. She immediately without any hesitation sits on the floor in front of his desk and looking at him with her large eyes. Then only he finds out that she is affected by myopia and takes her to the doctor. Such kind of care entices her towards the Professor.

These are all the details collected from her uncle Kailashnath. After this she said, "I am guilty. The rawness I feel after my mother's death doesn't allow me to do anything that is not, in some way, connected with her." She wishes that bricks could speak. She visits her father and mother's college and feels their presence. During her college days she is fixed to Inderjeet and her marriage date is also arranged. Hearing this Professor says that the thought of her fiancé is like poison to him. He urges her to say their love story to Inderjeet but she doesn't have the chance to meet him alone. She compares the letter written by Inderjeet and Professor. Inderjeet writes the letter like a formal letter and Professor mesmerizes her through his ornamental words. She says to her mother that she don't want to marry at once. She needs time like her sister Shakuntala. Kasturi consoles her, "you are the eldest and your duty is greater. Your grandfather and father both have confidence in you. They thought school and college would strengthen you, not change you." Whenever Virmati opposes her marriage her mother says these kinds of words to cool her daughter. It crosses its limit one day. Virmati strongly denies to marry Inderjeet and she asks her sister to marry Inderjeet. Kasturi couldn't bear this words and she hits Virmati for her words. She strongly cautions her daughter to ready for her marriage. She says to herself that in her time, going to school had been a privilege, not to be abused by going against one's parents. How had girls changed so much in just a generation?" She recalls her past life.

Kasturi is escaped from the child marriage by her uncle. She became the first girl in her family to postpone the arrival of the wedding guests by a tentative assault on learning. She learned reading, writing, balancing household accounts and sewing. She graduated at the age of twelve, to stay at home until she married. After she graduated, her education continued in the home. Her mother tried to ensure her future happiness by the impeccable nature of her daughter's qualifications. She trained her all kinds of household responsibilities. On that time when Lala Diwan Chand approaches her family for his son, her mother strongly denied that her daughter was not for display. His father pacified her mother and the marriage was arranged.

After a struggle Professor and Virmati's meeting happens in his friend's house. He sows the seed that she should not marry to another person. It is clear to her that she could not depend upon the Professor to sort out any domestic situation. She has to find the remedy for this. She decided to end her life. She writes a letter to the Professor about her decision. She is saved by the servants of her grandfather. After that incident she is jailed by her mother in the godown and the marriage is arranged to Indumathi, her sister. Virmathi continues her communication through Paro, her younger sister by exchanging the letters. They relate their problems and usual happenings in that. After shifting from Lepel Griffin Road he passes the letter through his student Kanhiya Lal. She says that her mother always saying that all her education has achieved is the destruction of her family. Suddenly she stops writing a letter to Harish. He insisted her to write more and wishes to be called as darling by her. But she refused to do so. After a much compulsion she relates the truth that she has known the truth of his wife's pregnancy. She agrees that after all she is his wife. Even though Harish made a mistake he tries to suppress it by saying soothing words to Virmati. He cleverly blames her that she is so innocent and inexperienced in that matter. He justifies himself that he is not responsible for that act and he adds that an act is performed mechanically, not willingly. He uses the clever love trick that he would live only after he hears from her. She reciprocates him that she is not yet matured to understand the action and assured him not to disturb her anymore. She decides to study her BT exam in Lahore. Her family also agrees with her decision. Kasturi accompanies her to Lahore. She always reminds Virmati the responsibility of the girl child, "A woman without her own home and family is a woman without moorings." She curses herself that God has put Virmati on earth

to punish her. Kasturi burns all the letters written by the Professor. Virmati is still considered as a black sheep of the family. Her mother suspects her and asks the hostel warden to look after her daughter more cautiously.

Harish doesn't let his heart and tries to win Virmati's love again. He succeeds in his continuous efforts. He even makes a physical love with her. After few months of this illegal love Virmati finds that she is pregnant. When she tries to say this to Harish he condemns her for this action. He says that he is not ready to waste her education. Saying all this advice is to avoid the talk of marriage. When Ida hears this from her mother's friend Swarnalata, she goes to her own life happenings. Her husband also doesn't want a child from her and he compels her for the abortion. Virmati goes to her house and waits for the Professor. Her mother and aunt disclose the matter about the Professor that he is not available in the town as he is gone for his baby's mundane. She even tries to see him through Kanhiya Lal. But that try gives no fruit. At last she goes to Lahore and aborts her child with the help of Swarna. Completing her course she shifts to Nahan for the school teacher job. There also Harish pursues her and makes love with her. Due to this illicit love Virmati again move to other place Calcutta to continue her studies. On the way to shantinetan, Harish's friend the poet stops her and asks her to stay in his home to meet Harish. Reluctantly she stays in his home and on the final day when she ready to start Harish arrives there. His friend urges him to marry Virmati before she leaves to Calcutta. At last their marriage is happened. They decided to go to Amritsar. While travelling in the train Virmati is reminded about her mother in the same situation. Harish dreads to face his family at the same time Virmati is sure that neither her father nor her grandfather agrees to her marriage. But she is pleased to finally detect a recognizable pattern in her life. Things are different as she thinks. His mother scolds him for his unpredictable action. She also consoles her elder daughter – in-law as every action is in the hands of God. Harish introduces Virmati to his mother as an educated wife. When she asks him whether she helps his mother in kitchen, he replies, 'You are a thinking girl. Let those others handle the house work.' All the duties are done by Ganga herself and Virmatidoesn't have anything to do. She tries to win her sister-in law and his son. But nobody is ready to make a friendship with her. She goes to her house to see her family members. There also she gets abusing words.

Ida tries her level best to collect the details of her mother. She finds it is too hard to gather the memories of her mother. In a curfew Virmati's father is affected and he is dead. Virmathi goes to her father's funereal again she humiliated by the harsh words of her mother. The next day she hears the death of her grandfather too. She couldn't bear the burden. She is consoled by Harish. Soon her womb is filled up by the fetus. She comes under the control of his mother. Unfortunately she gets the punishment of miscarriage. To distract her from the sad things Harish decides to send her to Lahore for her higher studies. Hearing this Ganga feels relieved.

She again goes to Lahore to pursue her M.A psychology. There she meets her friend Swarna and joins in the freedom struggle which Harish denies. Harish compels her to come back to Lahore often. She finds it relieved while she is away from Harish and his family. Side by side India's freedom struggle has going on. Harish is travelling all the way to Lahore often. His mother says that she goes with her daughter to Kanpur as the cost of living there is cheaper. But Harish denies that idea to be alone with his wife Ganga. He urges Virmati to return. Virmati once comes to Lahore in her summer holidays. She is longing for her days in Lahore. she says that she has to stay at Lahore one more Year to complete her studies. Harish determines to teach a lesson to her wife. Harish makes her relationship stronger with Ganga while he is away from Virmati. Besides he loves Virmati. Harish becomes the Principal of AS College. During the agitation time so many things have happened. Kailashnath has closed his jewellery business; Somnath is dead one of the curfews. It is decided that Virmati's mother-in-law and the people in that house move to Kanpur first.

Virmati at last comes back to Lahore to continue her life as a house wife. When she comes to her Moti cottage she shifts everything belonging to Ganga to the dressing room. Doing this she feels light-headed, as though she has conquered and win. She makes love with Harish. She gives birth to girl child Ida which means a blank slate, a new beginning. She gives all the belongings of Ganga's and her children's dress to the people who is in need. India has got its freedom. After independence Harish is offered a principalship in one of the new colleges of Delhi University. And they moves to Delhi and Giridhar and Guddiya also joins with them. Giridhar decides to go in to business, Guddia doesn't want to get married, Idamakes her marriage life a disastrous one. Her mother feels sad of her daughter's life that what she would do after her mother.

II. Conclusion

Ida says to herself that she is nothing, husbandless and childless. Without the hindrance of her presence she can sink in to her past and tries to make it to her own. Thus, the book ends with a sigh of Ida, 'This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave may be any more.' This clearly shows her pure love towards her mother. She redefines her relationship with her mother while she is not alive.

Works cited

- [1] Kapur Manju, *Difficult Daughters*, Faber and Faber, 1998.