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MOTHER DAUGHTER CONFLICTS IN “DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS”

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ABSTRACT

Difficult Daughters is the Commonwealth Writers Prize Winner novel of Manju Kapur. It is the story of three daughters of different generations. The grandmother Kasturi represents first generation, her daughter Virmati belongs to second generation and Ida the daughter of Virmati represents third generation. The novelist has woven the story of three generations who represent Indian Womanhood beautifully. Kasturi's generation was confined to child-bearing and household work. Virmati's generation started taking interest in joining political movement for the freedom of India. Virmati becomes a difficult daughter in the family. She grows rebelling against her mother Kasturi. Ida too grows up rebelling her mother Virmati. Thus it is the story of three different generations.

Key Words:-Difficult, Represent, Woven, Womanhood, Rebelling

Difficult Daughters is one of the female centric novels of Manju Kapur written in 1998. The story of the novel starts with the statement of Ida the daughter of Virmati, "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother." It is the story of three daughters of different generations. The grandmother Kasturi represents first generation, her daughter Virmati belongs to second generation and Ida the daughter of Virmati represents third generation. The novelist has woven the story of three generations who represent Indian Womanhood beautifully. Kasturi's generation was confined to child-bearing and household work. Virmati's generation started taking interest in joining political movement for the freedom of India. Virmati becomes a difficult daughter in the family. She grows rebelling against her mother Kasturi. Ida too grows up rebelling her mother Virmati. Thus it is the story of three different generations. It is a beautiful love story of Virmati and Married professor of English, Harish who wants her as his wife. Virmati is the heroine of the novel. She lives in a joint family of Amritsar. Professor Harish lives in their house on rent. Virmati attracts towards her knowledge, living standard and charming personality. Harish motivates her for studies. Virmati's family wants her to get married and settle down but Virmati against the will of family settles in Lahore. She is there to pursue study but her desire for professor creates trouble. Both Harish and Virmati love each-other but socially they are in illicit relationship. She also gets pregnant because of physical relationship with Harish. Her room mate Swarna Lata advises to meet a doctor and finally aborts. Now Virmati joins a National Women college in Nahan. Harish again appears in the scene. Virmati could not avoid her this time also. They are again in physical and emotional bonding. Virmati's strong urge to marry forces Harish to marry her in haste. After getting married, they come to Amritsar where she encounters Ganga professor's second wife. Ganga & her

children see her with hatred. Her son remarks, "Who is this gandi lady?Ganga doesn't allow her to enter into kitchen and interfere into household works. She doesn't allow her to do the work of professor. Marriage is also not a solution for Virmati. She wants to get knowledge and independent life. She becomes the second wife of Harish. She is not happy. Even getting married with Harish, she feels aloof and alienated from her parents, society and the family of her husband. She shuffles between Amritsar, Lahore, Delhi and Nahan but doesn't find her roots. She fights against traditions for self identity. She is mere a thing of physical gratification for professor. Ganga the professor's wife is illiterate. He wants to educate her but fails. That's why he develops illicit relationship with Virmati an educated and beautiful woman. Now professor enjoys life. Ganga does her all work like a housemaid and Virmati satisfies her academic urge. Virmati realizes that a married man can't give happiness to any women. She finds herself into tangle where her life is disturbed. She feels uncomfortable in the presence of Ganga at home. When her husband pursues her to come home from Lahore she says that I am ready to go with you on holidays but I will not come home. Ganga is very devoted and dutiful wife who always serves her husband. She keeps fast twice a week for her husband for his long and prosperous life. She doesn't wear blue colour as her husband dislikes it. She daily presses her husband's leg. She performs the duty of a traditional Indian wife. Harish fails to do justice with both of his wives. Ganga is abandoned by Harish. She bears her husband's apathetic attitude. Virmati is also not happy as she is not allowed to her husband's work by Ganga. Virmati adopts Ganga's two kids Giridhar and Chotti with her daughter Ida. Giridhar marries also against the wish of her parents. Chotti also joins IAS to accommodate her mother and grandmother & get her father's attention but refuses to get married. Virmati takes care of her daughter Ida very much but she doesn't take much interest in study. Ida wants to live her own life as her mother. Ida says, "I grew up struggling to be the model daughter. Pressure, pressure to perform day and night." It is the irony of cruel fate that Virmati also passes under the same situation as her mother Kasturi wanted to rear her according to patriarchal mind set up. Ida is tired of becoming an ideal daughter. She wants to her own life. But Virmati now wants to impose the same values of patriarchy as once she faced. She wants her daughter Ida to learn 'adjust', 'compromise', 'and adapt' the values she has neglected herself. Virmati wants to play the role of a patriarchal, conditioning, social, cultural and typical Indian mother once Kasturi has played.

In Difficult Daughters, Virmati appears as difficult daughter. She doesn't want to be a rubber doll. She raises her voice against the patriarchal system. Her mother Kasturi wants to rear her up like a typical Indian mother that has been opposed by Virmati. However Virmati is not only the difficult daughter in the novel. Ida her daughter also has been pictured as a difficult daughter. She doesn't want to be like her mother. She doesn't want to be involve in the world of domesticity, marriage and child bearing. She is childless, divorcee and leads a isolated life. Ida says, "I'll live my life, my story". Virmati has never found her life easy. Being the eldest among eleven children, she has to take care of them. She has never been given attention. She even complains to her mother but nobody cares. It Pinches her. When she says to her mother that She is unable to carry on her studies properly. Her mother says that she should leave her study if it interferes in her familial responsibilities. You are forgetting what comes first. Kasturi doesn't like the rebel voice of her daughter.

Virmati truly represents Indian woman. The novelist depicts a woman's psyche through Virmati. It is a story of sufferings, agony & victimization of Indian women. Manju Kapur projects her suffering and confusion through Virmati. In the novel, women like Kasturi, Virmati and Ida raise their voice against male dominancy by showing discontentment with their marital life but it is feeble in nature. The concept of morality is different for man and woman. When Virmati denies to marry Professor Harish, he says that in India there is tradition of co-wives. If you don't marry me you will change nothing. Though Virmati is also unable to come out of traditional mind set. She is emotionally tied with Harish. She is of the opinion that she is his for life whether he marries her or not. It shows that today also we are entrapped in old traditions. A woman can't have more than one husband but man can more than one wife.

The novelist has successfully depicted Virmati's painful life. She has only one daughter, Ida. She wants to rear her according to her own traditional and patriarchal mind set up as once she opposed. That's why she alienates not only from his mother but also from his daughter. She doesn't want her daughter to entrap into

the world she entrapped. It makes her unnecessarily strict with her daughter. Ida never finds herself comfortable with her mother.

Ida says,

I grew up struggling to be a model daughter. Pressure, pressure to perform day and night. My father wants me to look pretty. They want my better performance in school & interest in music and classical literature, discuss it with all. Now the question arises why do the women like Kasturi and Virmati create problems for themselves by alienating daughters from them. It happens because of patriarchal mind set up. Indian women teach their daughters how to nurture, care and do house hold job. They are taught how to behave at In-Laws home, how to become good wives and mothers. They are brought up according to patriarchal set up. Ida's marriage has also not been successful. She marries a man who is academician but walks out of relationship. Ida also undergoes abortion like her mother. Abortion and Pregnancy are female experiences they have to go through. Ida doesn't tell anything to her mother as she feels happy that in choice of husband at least she pleased her mother. Thus in the story of 'Difficult Daughters', there is one more daughter Ida who is narrator also.

'Difficult Daughters' is a novel about a woman entrapped into family and duty and the desire for education and love. The novelist has been successful in depicting the story of three generations of women and their problems before pre independence period and post independence period. Virmati and Ida who make their own choice in life the result emerges in suffering and sorrow. They are rejected even their own mothers. Virmati is rejected by her mother Kasturi and Ida is rejected by her mother Virmati. Both are of independent nature. They revolt against patriarchal set up and becomes *Difficult Daughters* for family.

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