

Love, Duty, and Independence: A Study of Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*

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ABSTRACT

This abstract examines Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters*, focusing on the protagonist Virmati's quest for independence and identity within traditional Indian society. The research questions addressed include Virmati's struggle against societal norms and her pursuit of personal fulfilment through education and love, amidst familial and societal pressures. The analysis highlights how Kapur's narrative challenges traditional gender roles and portrays the complexities of Virmati's clandestine relationship with Professor Harish Chandra as pivotal to her self-discovery. Through Virmati's journey, the study explores broader themes of empowerment and individuality, illustrating how her resilience and choices redefine notions of happiness and purpose. Ultimately, Kapur's portrayal of Virmati underscores universal themes of women's agency and societal expectations, resonating with contemporary discourses on gender and identity in literature.

Keywords: *Manju Kapur, Partition, marital bliss, Europe, Virmati*

Introduction

Women are represented by Manju Kapur. She has selected the 'less voyage street' among women journalists who are undoubtedly understood. She's forged her "own path." Manju Kapur undoubtedly draws attention and fulfils societal commitments. Manju Kapur shares an age group with prominent Indian women writers such as Bharati Mukharji, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Nair, Shobhe De, Arundhati Roy, and many more, for whom women are not only valuable contributors but also adept at shattering a variety of social norms. There is a subtle shift towards modernity in a society where young women are expected to create and bear children, enjoy marital bliss, and take care of their homes. Up until now, these new women were seen as outsiders because they confront and attest to their independence. Nevertheless, the female writers are freely sharing their viewpoints on several subjects that were previously

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thought to be taboo to explore. In her writings, Manju Kapur explores women's desires for independence and solitary personalities within traditional societies. They are expected to live with the knowledge and mindset of males. Manju Kapur's 1998 debut book focused on the lives of working-class women and the division and growth of India. In 1999, the story took up the regional essayists' prize. It is highly praised everywhere and has generated a lot of attention in India. With remarkable skill, Kapur discusses the potential for independence, and the book, when placed against the backdrop of the section, addresses issues like as women's education and opportunities. In her exploration of the thoughts of Indian women living in joint households under male authority, Kapur delves into the complex India of pilgrimages and post-provincial events, with a particular focus on women's issues and their segmentation.

by Manju Kapur is a story about love, grief, and haggling. *Virmati* is a well-trained lady who fights for affection, personality, and training. It also contains the Partition anecdote. This novel revolves with India's economic progress as well as Kapur's mother's sensible tale. With the help of the imaginary Partition foundation and the non-existent hero *Virmati*, Kapur tells her mother's story. *Virmati* is none other however she is Manju Kapur's own Mother. *Virmati* includes in an illicit association with Professor who is her neighbour moreover. (Bălănescu) The relationship develops concurrently with India's opportunity crisis, and *Virmati* ultimately moves closer to becoming the professor's second wife. The tale is set in and around Amritsar and Lahore. The plot, which takes place in the middle of a countryside, is around *Virmati*, an English teacher who is married but has an illicit relationship. She becomes pregnant, but she must remove the foetus. After they are married, the instructor becomes a second teacher, and she moves in with her first husband and kids. This moving tale tells the tale of a young woman who must give up her chance to be worshipped. She is aware that life is more abundant than it might appear to be. Against religious and social constraints, she chooses to become a second wife to a married man with a kid after falling deeply in love with him. She conflicts with the family just for adoration. (Recasting Women: Essays in Indian colonial history) The story follows *Virmati*'s gradual transformation from a simple, polite young woman to a mature woman via hardship and humiliation. She experienced a variety of interactions there. Her quest for acceptance, opportunity, and self-awareness has left her uneasy and has led her to do shocking things all her life.

Manju Kapur has addressed the issue of struggles with self-personality and recognition in the interim socio-social personality through the character of *Virmati*. It tells the story of three

different age ladies named Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida who live in a same family. The delegate of old age is Kasturi. Ida and Virmati continue to be the fresh, rising ladies. The most recognisable character in the book is Virmati. Manju Kapur's heroes fight for basic rights such as survival and identity. They also fight for education.

Manju Kapur depicts the emergence of a new woman in *A Difficult Daughters*, one who is never again the "pure spouse whose enduring can just make her progressively ethical, the sustaining mother who denies claim self, the avenging Kali or a titillating strumpet." (Mahajan) The heroine Virmati lives in a strict community in Amritsar, a young Punjabi woman. She is Suraj Prakash and Kustari's daughter. She has the responsibility of looking after the other 10 family members because she is the eldest child. She approaches every family unit work with tender compassion. She says:

"Imagine my plight' my father used to say, performer still, first making my mother was not in earshot. 'Imagine my plight'. And he would roll his eyes. Mock alarm and distress crossing his face. Your mother engaged to someone else." (Kapur)

She gets exhausted every now and then. She starts to take notice of her mother's endless pregnancies. Manju Kapur draws attention to the predicament of young women in Indian households. The marriage is seen as more important than the instruction. Talks about her marriage, much as other typical working-class Indian families do. The guidance of Virmati has received little attention. She told them there was more to life than just basic education. She first heard talk of marriage when she was thirteen. She is too crazy to be taught. She needs to achieve something in her life that isn't expected of her. Virmati was sowed the seeds of yearning to find her true place in society by her cousin Shakuntala's visit. She says, Pehnji, I have to look like you. Virmati's union with Inderjeet, a designer, was sealed. They believed he was suitable for her and that she would eventually reach marriageable age. Her mother angrily chastises her for trying to rebel and demands cooperation. She also advises her to consider her family, particularly her sisters and grandma. Virmati was working with a family unit. On every occasion, there were calls for disturbances. Virmati ultimately flopped in F.A. (Amazing artwork). She felt let down by her own letdown. As a mother, Kasturi needs her daughter to marry rather than receive education. She also chastised her, telling her to forget it and focus on what's best for herself, her family, or her education if her studies are making her angry. Manju Kapur's books manages the life of working-class Indian women caught in the middle of family and male commanded society. (Narayana)

Virmati started thinking about getting married after realising she had no cause to flee. In any case, his father's passing has postponed their marriage date. It provides her with a chance and an expansion of her education. The time Prof. Harish Chandra arrives at Arya Sabha College becomes a turning point in Virmati's life. He was an outsider who returned and became an English teacher, bringing with him some important and admirable attributes for his country. He also brought literature and craftsmanship from Europe. Despite this, he moved in as a paid guest to Lajwanti, Virmati's aunt, who lived on Lepel Gryphon Road. Harish Chandra, the professor, got married and had a kid. His partner lacks literacy. She hasn't lived up to his expectations of a learned spouse. She received his greatest song performed for her at the main event, and he received her heartfelt gaze in return. He has a profound effect on her and, like her grandpa, she regards him as respectable for his regard for women's education.

Virmati started attending classes regularly. Virmati usually sits in the front row among the four other girls in the professor's class, and that is where he first noticed her at the school, standing out against a background of young students who were understudies. This occasionally continues, and Virmati's heart and mind are touched by the teacher's passion. Both parties have sowed the seeds of attachment. She was aware of the teacher's extraordinary attention for her, but she believes that there are obstacles in their way. The passing of time created a great confusion within her. He lives in a shadowy, insufficient realm until his mind, emotions, and spirit may be united in a way that is increasingly eternal, while the educator on the other side was frantically trying to adequately communicate each sentiment to her. However, on the other hand, Virmati also feels intensely devoted about Harish. She realises that Harish would be the ideal companion because of the little amount of him on her body. Virmati understands that their relationship is labelled as 'illegal' due to social barriers and personal difficulties. Right now, her whole existence, her soul, is with Harish, so to speak.

She tricks her father, who had given her the freedom to think more profoundly, even though doing so would have embarrassed her grandpa, who was well recognized as a champion of female education and put her family's prospects of getting married in jeopardy. She had a mental breakdown. Family, tradition, norms, and traditional attributes were on the one hand, while her admiration and desire to educate herself were on the other. As the days went by, Virmati grew increasingly confused. Manju Kapur tries to comprehend the situation of a working-class marriable young woman who falls madly in love with Virmati's help. Virmati and her mother are very different from one another in terms of their pressure, outrage, and

perceptions. Virmati's mother believes that she should marry quickly and that fulfilling her basic marital duties is just as important as receiving an education. Normally, she was anxious. She was amazed at what had happened to the girl. She understands that Virmati has always been a fantastic and sensible person. She was unable to see her happiness as she married a child who was above average and was handling things quietly. In addition, her family members have informed him. She also became aware of how education is valued. She wants that Virmati be reminded of no less than somewhat thankful to her granddad and father, who allowed her to consider further. "Ever since we have come back, you have been making difficulties," said Kasturi crossly. 'You had the kotha storeroom to study in during your exam time, and still you fuss. When Shakku used to study there, she never complained". (Kapur 21)

Virmati just rejects to be married, instead of offering an explanation. Her mental condition is primitive. Another problem is that he is a married father of a kid. Which family is up for this sort of relationship? She's not brave enough to tidy up after herself. Her mother couldn't comprehend her opposition to marriage. Virmati had a very simple mental state. Things started to get out of hand. When she thinks about the teacher, she discovers the essence of his better half. Virmati decides to end everything since she has no possibility of finding a solution to her problem and believes that her death would solve all the problems. Virmati just rejects to be married, instead of offering an explanation. Her mental condition is primitive. Either way, Virmati tries to finish her life instead of exhibiting inner quality. The next few months were marked by extreme discomfort as well as despair. Virmati gets the method for correspondence, with the assistance of her younger sibling Paro. (Kumar)

They converse with one another via letters, exchanging every little detail of what is happening at every instant. Virmati crafts a high stream of sensuous expressiveness via his romantic thoughts of a glorious cosmos of possibility and love. Instead of being married, Virmati would like to investigate more. Through emails about her illness, Virmati lets Harish into her heart. Harish tells her, on the one hand, that he cannot live without her. Her parents must, on the other hand, protect her from him. Her mother consistently corrects her, saying, "You are the oldest, Viru, and your obligation is more noteworthy, "when her opinions diverge. You are aware of the admiration the younger ones have for you. Both your father and grandfather have faith in you; otherwise, would they have offered you this much opportunity? What will they feel now when you want us to violate our word and destroy our excellent reputation? How are they going

to obtain it? Harish never stops captivating her. Not that he's ready to let her go from him. He declares: "I can't, can't live without you. Not in this world or in the following." (Kapur)

Her family has finally decided to send her to Lahore for more testing. Once more, her mother tries to get her to get married and ask what she wants out of life. She must be married in order to be released from her caring responsibilities. She makes an effort to comprehend her about the proper arrangement of everything, and now is the time to fulfil basic obligations. She asks to be told of her responsibilities as a young child. As her name suggests, Virmati is strong. Despite her best efforts to follow moral guidelines, fate has other plans. She was seen as the strange one out of the family, despite her confidence and sorrow. When she travelled to Lahore for more research, a new chapter in her life began. Her roommate Swarnalata and her cousin Shakuntala are the two individuals she has the most impact on. These two ladies lack parental weight and are disobedient. They entered her life suddenly and sharply. These women have formally left their mark on the academic community by being disobedient in their own unique way. Virmati attempts to blend in new air. She chooses not to consider past and think for productive future. He quiets her. He says: "There is a void in my heart and in my home that only you can fill." (Kapur)

She felt tense and uncomfortable during their first sexual encounter. Though Virmati is sorry, she consoles herself by considering the inclination to be one of profoundly outdated quality. It became unusual for Virmati and the teacher to get together in Lahore. An early step towards an outright declaration was taken on their first Diwali in Lahore, which they spent together and explored the city's streets as a pair, joined at the hip. The 'mystery spouse' of a teacher is how people refer to her. She seizes the opportunity to formally end their relationship. Nevertheless, every time he receives his "certified" pardons. In December 1940, the Satyagraha Movement was at its peak in Lahore during the winter season. In the city, the encounter happens quickly and angrily. There are a lot of conversations going on around parcel. To support the war, weapons, cash, supplies, and men were being sent out of India. Virmati and Harish spoke about a lot of things, including literature, unity, and the war. They meet much of the time and hung out. (Mandal)

Virmati attends a meeting that Swarna has with a woman. Political problems such as the All-India Sikh League and the Anti-Pakistan Conference were all over the air. Virmati discusses women involved in national progress, such as Mohini Dutta, Sita Rallia, Mary Singh, and Mrs. Leela Mehta. They all appeared so far away from her. She begins to think. She felt that she

didn't care for these ladies, who are using their psyches to sort things out and become involved in politically charged events. She believed that she was spending her time adoring him and holding him close. Virmati's meetings with Harish grow rare. Whenever she brought up marriage, he had a specific motive. She believes that he is responsible for everything that happens to her in daily life. As it turns out, she yells at him in disappointment. She holds herself accountable to Harish for everything that has happened in her life, including breaking promises and running away from home. They were all so identical that she was unable to imagine living without him. Harish has made no further decisions for her, and her spirit has remained connected to her name. Virmati accepts a key job at Nahan's Prathibha Kanya Vidyalaya. This moment represents the one shining minute of Virmati's turbulent existence. Nahan is indeed a gorgeous place. Nahan is a place under the rule of a refined, magnificent imperial pair. She discovered her hidden potential and ability here. She sees her stay there as a period of holding up rather than starting a career, even though she is motivated by another activity and derives a charge from the result of autonomy. She is mostly motivated by her desire to spend time with the teacher. Their covert correspondence persisted, and they kept writing to one another. Nevertheless, there were always challenges in the path of a beloved. They were happy when he paid them a couple of visits. Together, they endured a night. Both are cheerful and Virmati needs this happiness more.

“No dread of time limit, or of home, no dread of anyone hearing, anything. For a concise minute Virmati experienced that night as if there was no tomorrow. The streaming thick and solid between them.”
(Choubey 4)

She was asked to exit when the school's executives saw how good this secret project was, as the school's reputation was in doubt. After school, she gets driven home. Once more, he didn't see her anywhere. She decided to leave Nahan and travel to Shanti Niketan since she had no intention of going back to Amritsar. She is disappointed that she is no longer in the Nahan, but with every mile she travels, she begins to feel more grounded. She understands that God could have had a thought for her. She planned to create a persona for herself and believed she had a long life ahead of her. Prior to visiting Shanti Niketan, she considered paying a visit to Harish's Delhi-based artist friend. Her decision astounded him. As she gets closer to Shanti Niketan, he stops her. He phones him in Delhi and leaves a sincere message. He influences Harish for marriage:

“You should wed her now, or she will be lost to you for eternity. Be set up to release her. In the event that you can't force yourself to do this, you will never observe her again.” (Kapur)

Finally, he weds her. In accordance with religious ceremonies and traditions, they were married. At last, Harish takes her to his home in his car. He exchanges vows with Virmati as a "second spouse." Virmati sighs with relief from the weight of the last many years. Virmati and Harish show there to his place. Having them makes no one happy. Virmati, who later marries the instructor, knew she would have a very tough time in the days to come. Virmati's marriage to the Harish ends tragically in her day-to-day existence. She is considered a spouse snatcher and is therefore an unwanted guest. Her family does not give her full recognition. She feels chilly sensations from Ganga. In any case, the teacher helped her and gave her the support and encouragement she needed. Except for her own, which was hanging desperately towards the end, Virmati went to the angan at night to retrieve the textiles to which the line was exposed. She bit her lip and brought them down. She sadly wondered if she would be imprisoned till an unbelievable conclusion.

Her family' behaviour started to bother her more. They continued to ignore her. Her family' behaviour isn't really admirable. Her clothes are left unwashed in the bathroom and are dried outside. She thinks it's unreasonable given the circumstances of the family to give Harish advice on everything. It will destroy Harish's sense of harmony in life. She now sees why her mom had to stay away from this connection. That being said, the moment of no return has passed. She becomes the Ganga's criminal. Virmati has come to terms with her problem and believes that things would have been different if she and Harish hadn't been married. She states,

"I ought to never have hitched you. Also, it's past the point of no return now. I have never observed obviously." It's not reasonable." (Kapur)

She is persuaded to confess her shortcomings by Manju Kapur. In spite of the fact that she begins to look all starry eyed, there is no shortcoming of Ganga, his first spouse. (Nitonde) She believes she is responsible for Ganga's mistreatment. She has a murderous feeling. She feels her ears becoming red at the sound of Ganga's sobs and her mom talking to her in low voice. Her chest swells with despair at the consequences of some of the things she overhears, and she is unable to escape them. She is not abandoned by this blame. Harish reminds her that she has to pay a visit to her parents. She had done nothing wrong; he reassures her. Virmati never met her parents or made an effort to get in touch with them since she knew they would never forgive her and she had the impression that their relationship had not broken down as badly. He can't wait for her to meet her sisters. Virmati attempts to mend and find peace with her parents who

had taken her in; nevertheless, her mother's hidden indignation comes to light, and she is confronted.

“Leave! Why try to come now? It would have been exceptional in the event that you had suffocated in the trench. You have devastated our family, you badmash, you Randi!

“You've darkened our face in the disgrace on our family, disgrace on me, and disgrace on Bade Pitaji.”
(Kapur)

She was in basic health. Ganga acts as though there was something wrong with her as she entered the kitchen. She cleaned every utensil she used. She responds to her in another manner. She adds more sugar or salt to Virmati's food. Harish and Virmati had a meal together on the double. Ganga adds additional sugar and salt to the foods he dislikes. The teacher could not have cared less that she left these items to eat. In her dream, she even criticises herself. Either way, fate takes on a different profession. Virmati had a pointless employment and has a low point throughout her normal everyday life. Her instructor makes a job proposal to her. He thought that would make her more engaged and vivacious. She understands that a living at an assessment school is different from that of an A.S. school. Whenever she gets distracted and is late returning home, she needs to take a nap without eating. She is unable to complain to the teacher in any situation.

Harish obtained a job in Delhi upon his liberation. They moved there to reside. Ida, however, proved to be a rebel against almost everything. She's not excited about training. Virmati's attempts to recreate her early years had no organic results. Ida is just another annoying young girl. Presumably, Virmati saw how much of a bother she was to her mother (Kasturi) and how she was probably exhausted. She was aware of her mother's suffering. Most likely, Virmati is seen as the source of a great deal of stress and discomfort in other people's life. She regrets what happened, but she can't do anything about it. It was impossible to undo the injustice done. In any case, she had to be of some use after her death. “When I kick the bucket, I need my body gave. My eyes, my heart, my kidney, any organ that can be useful. That way somebody will esteem me after I have gone.” (Kapur) Virmati couldn't escape allegation ever after her passing. She was considered in charge of Ida's state.

Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* is a poignant exploration of Virmati's journey through societal expectations and personal desires. Set against the backdrop of India's Pre-Partition era, Kapur deftly portrays Virmati's struggle for independence and identity. Initially bound by family responsibilities and societal norms, Virmati's clandestine relationship with her professor

Harish Chandra becomes a catalyst for her defiance and self-discovery. Through Virmati's character, Kapur challenges traditional gender roles and highlights the complexities of love, duty, and personal fulfilment in a conservative society. Despite facing ostracization and personal turmoil, Virmati's resilience and pursuit of education and love ultimately to redefine her understanding of happiness and purpose. Kapur's narrative underscores the universal themes of empowerment and individuality, resonating with readers through its vivid depiction of a woman's journey towards self-realization amidst societal constraints.

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