



The Conviction of Search for Liberation from Traditional Covenant Rules Through Economic Independence and Self-Realization in Manju Kapur's Novel; *Difficult Daughters*.

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Abstract: *The ancient classical and prosperous cultural endowment of Indian civilization has remarkable and considerable values throughout the world intellectualism. Undoubtedly, Indian rich cultural heritage which has imprinted in its prominent influence and eminence amongst the universal mankind. Every citizen of India must certainly have gratified splendour to be the habitant of this highly endeared civilization. Indian highly acclaimed traditional values are admirably considered and adopted by the intellectual personalities of throughout the world creature-comforts. But on the other side, some of the contemplative orthodox and outdated propensities are rampant there within the rich Indian enlightenment, that have been resulted to lower down its highly esteemed cultural conscience. In dispersing through such orthodox dogmas, there is the subject of females position and their miserable conditions due to their devaluation and harassment within the male-dominated traditional construct of civilization. Definitely, the women of Indian human development have enjoyed a remarkable dignity in the different distinctive chronologies. The position of woman according to Indian folklore has been recognised as "Shakti" and "Devi", means, "The form of goddess", as inspired by the religious and spiritual construct of Hindu mythology. She is one of the most important components, observable to rich Hinduism inevitable to perform the ritual ceremonies as per the spiritual obligatory. In consonance with Hindu theology, the female in her childhood period, is worshipped as the form of goddess and after her marriage, she is acknowledged a doctrinal companion of her husband to perform all the religious rituals. Consequently, she is procuring abundant amount of respect and reputation within her respective household and community. Meanwhile on the other side, she is confronting with the hard reality of gender-based discrimination being the female member of the traditional society. She is the victimised creature of infanticide, is discriminated after her birth being a female child, obtains less care and nutrients as compare to the male child of the same households, is burnt down by her dowry seeker in-laws and is being harassed, some obstacles are also being created by the society in the path of their economic and intellectual growth and independence, oppressed and contemplated to play the conventional role for their traditional households. This is the dark side of female reputation within her respective communities which is needed to reveal out. Genuinely, she is used and misused by the society for the sake of traditional norms and conventions of every civilisation. Most of the women are playing their corresponding roles towards the conventional construct of the customary sophistication but some educated and awakened females of the society do not want to be slavish and subordinate to the traditional male-dominated patriarchal system of society. They want to project themselves as an independent human being through the self-realization and economic independence of their own, owing to have a desirable liberation of their own. These women raise a revolt like situation to their own concerned familial households and to their corresponding societies in which they live in but unfortunately are being ignored, oppressed, harassed and exploited as per the traditional orthodox demands of the patriarchal society.*

KEY WORDS: *Traditional, Discrimination, Cultural, Conventional, Oppression, Customary, Exploitation, Orthodox, Civilization and Patriarchal*



1. INTRODUCTION:

Manju Kapur is distinguished and venerable feminist Indian English writers who is popularly known for the depiction of middle-class females struggling for their unconventional individuality under the domination of orthodox patriarchal male-dominated system of civilization. The female protagonists of Manju Kapur are well educated and well civilized, who are following the traditional norms of the conservative families but they are so much tired with the traditional perspectives of the society and looking for themselves, a secure position and desirable respect, reputation and recognition as well. Consequently, they are being ready to sound a death knell against the very outdated primitive conservative precedents of their respective households and communities as well. The present research paper is the study of one such female protagonist of Manju Kapur named; Virmati who is silently obeying the traditional criterion of society but when she realizes that by following such norms, she is going to be lost her liberty and identity, she augments a rebellion against such tyrannical oppressive observances of the corresponding civilization. Virmati makes her sincere endeavours to secure herself a reputable space within her familial household and within her society by raising revolt against her own parents' family lineage. She strives to acquire self-reliance through her love affair with Professor Harish Chandra, through her economic independence and later on by becoming a second wife of Professor Harish, she gets satisfaction by procuring a dignified position within her corresponding community.

Virmati's Search for Liberation from Traditional Covenant Rules Through Economic Independence and Self-Realization in the Novel; *Difficult Daughters*.

The female protagonist of the novel; Virmati, belongs to an upper middle-class urban Arya Samaj Punjabi family which is living in Amritsar Punjab (India) during the entire course of novel. The family of the protagonist is represented here by Manju Kapur as a perfect example of an oppressed female creature of mid-twentieth century's patriarchal traditional household of Indian civilization. The hierarchy of the household is, Lala Diwan Chand, who is staunch follower of Indian cultural heritage and customary rituals of the society. Virmati has been presented by Kapur, a woman of the time near 1940s, when women have their diminutive proclamation towards their own rights resulting to their awakening against their humiliation, devaluation and harassment within their male-dominated traditional familial households. Undoubtedly, these women are educated enough with the modern futuristic approach with regard to their wellness, progress and desirable improvement in their miserable conditions. But under the weight of the traditional orthodox thinking, they are being unable to express and demonstrate their desire for liberation as the human being of their respective civilization. In this connection, Virmati appears here as the woman what the Spenser has quoted about the women of the Indian environment:

"The creation of Indian consciousness."

(Spencer, 1960).

Virmati makes her appearance in the novel, as an elder female child of the family who has to play her respective role towards her household as a responsible daughter to her familial lineage on one hand and another role of a mother like nourished to her siblings on the other hand. She has to play her hard roles towards her family household at the early age of her life when every child is expected to devote his/her time in studies and in playing. But she is the elder sister of her ten siblings who has to look after them and moreover her mother remains in her sickness most of the time. She has also to care of her sick mother at the same time while she has to manage all the needs and desires of her younger siblings. Her study time is also a great challenge for her to manage. Subsequently, the protagonist's journey begins with the great responsibilities and accountabilities towards her traditional customary family at the very early age of her life as it has been contemplated and mentioned by Maurya:

"Virmati becomes a responsible member of her family at an early age because of the fact that she is the oldest daughter of the family and she has to look after her ten brothers and sisters as their "second mother."

(Maurya 72).

Undoubtedly, Virmati appertains to such a substantial paternalistic collective familial household, where the power to make inside and outside of home related decisions is only in the possession of head of the family who acquires the higher position among all the members of the household because of the male-dominated patriarchal set up of society. Men of the family procure the privileged to enjoy the freedom and some other important rights being the male members of the household and the women are under the spell of domination due to the prevailed orthodox tyrannical customs of the society. Subsequently, the female members of the household are completely dependent upon their male-counterparts for everything, whether emotionally, financially or being socially. They are contemplated only to be the silent followers to such customary rituals established by the customary conventions of culture since the very primitive era of human civilization. As prescribed by the traditional rituals, the women category cannot survive independently without the help



of male members of parental or in-laws' families. They must always be encompassed with the security of their father, brother, husband and their son if husband is not alive. Geetha has manifested in this connection:

“A daughter to her parents, a wife to her husband and a mother to her daughter.”

(Geetha, 35).

The protagonist's family seems in the novel the staunch follower of the ideology of one of the great Indian social reformists, Swami Dayanand Saraswati. This testament advocates that women education must be taken to great care and consideration imperatively. Swami has said that women must be educated on the compulsory basis and at the same time they must be given training in necessary home management practices also, reproducing progeny for their respective households, bringing up them and finally instruct their children about the human values to make them the responsible member for society. The family of Virmati is in the favour of protagonist's education, but family's customary rituals are not in the favour of their girl's freedom which might be encircle her with the modernistic approach to her further future life. The protagonist's mother, Kasturi Devi is herself an educated female of the household. Virmati once herself reveals it proudly:

“My mother, my masi, all studied. It is the rivaj of our family,”.... “Even now my father keeps getting my mother books and magazines to read.”(36)

As it is significant to note that the women characters in such traditional households have to play their roles with some substantial liabilities but here the protagonist has to pay her obligation for her conventional household up to a great extent. She has to take care of her sick mother and her younger siblings simultaneously with her studies. She feels inconveniences while she is torn between her familial duties and her passion for studies. Her younger siblings always create some chaotic circumstances during her study-time, for which she is more zealous and resentful about. Under such complicated circumstances, Virmati gets perplex which is intolerable to her customary mother. Her mother Kasturi Devi complains about Virmati in her wonder:

“Why was her daughter so restless all the time?” In a girl, that spelt disaster.” (11)

Contrary to her mother's contemplations, Virmati is desirous to lead a life free from such intricates having a little freedom and security of her own. She presumes the liberal ideology for her further future life ahead to her which seems her beyond the reality and if it might be there for her, it might happen only in her imaginations. Of course, the reality is always beyond imagination. In her convoluted state of mind, Virmati finds that her life is same as accordance to the viewpoint of Parikh:

“Life is far everybody else, but herself, there is no one for her.”

(Parikh, 75).

Being torn between her traditional accountabilities towards her household, Virmati is profoundly stimulated with the ideology of her cousin sister Shakuntla, an educated, liberal and rebellious mindwomen to the conservative patriarchal system, so as to approach independence from all traditional bonds of orthodox society. The traditional family of Virmati wants to marry Virmati at the earliest, so that the other siblings might be in turn to marriage. Kasturi Devi, the mother of the protagonist, seems in the novel, a primitive orthodox female character who does subsistence the conviction of customary rituals during her discussion about the women of society:

“A woman's shaan is in her home.” (13)

Therefore, the customary family of Virmati engages Virmati for marriage with a perfect matchable Punjabi boy; Inderjeet, a canal engineer. Virmati is deliberately agrees to marry with the boy selected by her family for her at the beginning of this new relationship. But later on, under the influence of her love affair with Professor Harish Chandra, an already married man, she refuses for marriage with Inderjeet. Even knowingly this hard fact about her lover, she makes up her mind to continue her relationship with Professor Harish Chandra. Under the provocations of her lover and her cousin sister Shakuntla, she musters up the courage to stand-up against the decision of her family regarding her marriage. Virmati reminds the convincing words of her cousin sister Shakuntla about the contemporary contemplation of society and freedom of women through the exploration of her opinion:

“These people don't really understand Viru, how much satisfaction there can be in leading your own life, in being independent. Here we are, fighting for the freedom of the nation, but women are still supposed to marry, and nothing else.”(14-15)

The protagonist emerges here as a perfect example of the Marxist as well as social feminist ideology being resulted in her struggle for own independent identity and self- realisation. She proceeds well with the attitude of



rebellious approach to the traditional patriarchal system of contemporary civilization. She decides to proceed on the path leading to her self-realisation by refusing to marry Inderjeet and on other hand, by choosing the way of further higher studies to keep alive her love affair with her lover Professor Harish Chandra. She outrightly rejects the idea of marriage with Inderjeet and reveals her will to study further with her expression to her family:

“Study”, “And no marry” “I don’t want to marry”..... “The boy”,.... “I do not like the boy”“Her silence though was not one of acquiescence, but refusal. She would not marry.”(80)

When Virmati is permitted by her family for her further higher studies, she is sent to Lahore, to accomplish her B.T. degree. But this approval for the education of their daughter is only to escape from the unfavourable circumstances which are according to the contemplation of family may happen against the fair name of family and may prove as a stigma resulting to the love affair of Virmati with Professor Harish Chandra. Under the compression of family for marriage and her commitment with Professor Harish on another side, she comes under the circumstances of hallucination which resulted to her unsuccessful suicidal attempt. Subsequently, when Virmati reveals her wish for further studies, the family reluctantly allow her to proceed her B.T. degree. A traditional customary family has the contemplation that it is the way by which their family honour might be saved and on the other hand, there is one another consideration that the degree to be procured by their daughter would be benefitted for her, to get the perfect household of her in-laws as per the cogitation of Prasad:

“Education is meant primary to help a woman to marry well, be socially useful to her husband, be adept at bringing up her children, equip her to render social service and is considered to be an insurance policy against a broken marriage.”(Prasad, 42).

Virmati’s search for freedom and self-realization begins with the permission granted to her, by her conventional family for her further higher studies. During her stay at Lahore for her studies, her customary family is contented with the consideration that her studies and unknown place will prove favourable for their daughter as well as for the household to distract her mind from the menace of Professor Harish Chandra and to avoid from public shame simultaneously. But beyond such calculations and introspections of Virmati’s orthodox family, the destiny has something else approved. It is the place, which is very far from the traditional association of her orthodox customary household, where she can freely enjoy her love affair and sexual life with her lover Professor Harish Chandra. The study of her B.T. degree is only a pretext justification of her independent life as recommended by Kapur: “To taste the wine of freedom.” (17) Further Erikson has added in this connection that the protagonist has so much modernised her personality in current scenario that she may:

“Commit herself to the love of a stranger and to the care to be given to his and her offspring.”
(Erikson).

The protagonist does not become rebellious to her family and patriarchal set up of the traditional society alone but beyond this, she abide with the deliberation of uprising vantage point regarding the male-dominating approach against women of the society which has already been acknowledged as a privilege of male members of civilization and the same is being utilised shamelessly by the male members of every section and class of the ancient civilization up to the present scenario of civilization. She is very conscious as well as honest with her approach and her passionate love affair with Professor Harish Chandra even knowing each and everything about his personal life but at the same time, she is also aware with the fact that her lover is only enjoying a sexual life with her with the approach of time killing practice to avoid from her persuasion of marriage. She is ready to immolate each and everything related to her for the sake of her pure and generous love for Professor Harish Chandra. But on the other side, Professor Harish is producing excuses against her urges of marriage. Once she boldly puts forth her standpoint before her lover with a note of suffering pain of companionship:

“I break my engagement because of you, blacken my family’s name, am locked up inside my house, get sent to Lahore because no one knows what to do with me. Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace..... and why? Because I am an Idiot.” (137)

Virmati’s economic independence begins with her job which she gets after getting her B.T. degree. She gets this opportunity in Pratibha kanya Vidyalaya at Nahan (presently situated in Himachal Pradesh) which is run by Maharani Pratibha of the state of Sirmour. As per her qualifications, she gets the post of Principal with certain responsibilities to be paid with her job profile. She succeeds to have her own identity and financial security on the other



side. It is the time for Virmati when she thrives to have her own course of life, having her personal freedom with the economic independence as per her preordained deliberation. She derives pleasure of her love affair with her lover while enjoying her economic independence. But unfortunately, she is being observed by the manager of the organization which further resulted to her dismissal from the institution. After this dreadful event she finds herself a shock of recognition. Consequently, her feministic perspective gives her the way to confront her lover with these passions, she pours out a straightforward demeanour to her lover Professor Harish Chandra:

“You think it’s so easy for me!”..... “Isn’t! People wondering all the time. Why I’ am not married. What should I say? That my lover is a coward? That he is waiting for permission from his family to bring home a second wife.” (178)

Virmati makes sense of her name as “Vir” meaning, “Brave” and “Mati” meaning, “Intelligent”, collectively presents the meaning that she is a woman with brave intellect who bravely faces the unfavourable circumstances and intellectually handles those predicaments, then finally succeeds in her expected prospects by presenting the perfect example of a woman who thrives to achieve her apprehensions by her direct approach to put forward her sincere endeavours towards her liberation from traditional covenant rules. She proceeds and gets desirable outcomes in her efforts by procuring economic independence when she becomes a self-dependent working woman and have a sense of self-realization after being used by Professor Harish Chandra to satisfy his selfish physical needs. She procures herself a respectable and reputable space for herself in the life and in the house of her lover Professor Harish Chandra. She ultimately triumphs in her endeavours to procure a lifestyle with the democratic approach of liberation from the customary traditional rituals with having the standpoint of economic independence and self-realization.

2. SUMMERISATION:

The place of women category in Indian civilization regarding their respect and reputation is highest enough as compared to the other cultures of the world civilization on one side and their predicament under exploited tyrannical rituals of male-dominated society has been persisted a matter of great debates and discussions on other side, since the very primitive society. They are being worshipped on certain occasions but most of the time, they are being devaluated, harassed, exploited and even misused by the male members of the society ascribed to the menace of male-dominated patriarchal system of the civilization. The male members of society have been granted with certain rights to enjoy every type of freedom, but the same freedom may not be granted to the female members of society, as they are being considered the subject to follow some traditional norms especially laid down for the female category only. They are being contemplated as the subject to be the subservient to the primitive conventions and subordinate to their male-counterparts. This retrospection is still considered to be continued up to the upcoming generations too. Some women like blind followers to these traditions are certainly subservient to these conventions, yet some awakened women of the community are trying to spread consciousness among the dead souls of women creature through their own examples of revolution against such dead habits of primitive civilization. The consequences resulted to such endeavours of women can be seen clearly among most of the women of society, who are now being able to have their own voice for their respect, reputation and dignified position within their own households as well as within their respective societies.

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