

Understanding Family Relations Through Manju Kapur Novel *Difficult Daughters*

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The Present paper tries to throw light on the family structure which Manju Kapur used in her novel, "*Difficult Daughters*". The paper also reveals how social values are cherished in family structure. The family life „Lala Diwan“ and its struggle to maintain the social values and family conventions is best studied here. The writer shows that the women characters in Manju Kapur's novels are not traditional women who think that marriage is their destiny and they are to obey their husbands. The women in the novels of Manju Kapur differs from this category of woman and breaks all social taboos, and conventions and emerge as a new woman who is aware of herself. The women in the novels of Manju Kapur are the personification of the new women. The theme of feminism in the novel of Anita Nair's novel „Ladies Coupe is critically is discussed here. The writer looks at the stories of the women in Ladies Coupe for example Prabha Devi, Janki and of course Akhila, the protagonist of the novel from feminist perspective. He shows that how the novel has feminist touch. The article looks into the life stories of the women characters in Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe. The writer tries to analyze the struggle of these women character from feminist perspective. The writer says that this book is not feminist; it is between feminist and female. It is an attempt on the part of the writer to show how the Indian women are reflected in the novels of both the men and women. He says that personality of the Indian women is somewhat neglected in the writings of men. The women writers are too much emotional and sentimental in depicting the condition of the Indian women. The article probes into the condition of the Indian women in the contemporary society. The article is about the emergence of completely new women in the novels of Manju Kapur. The writer discusses how the women characters in the novels are different from that of the traditional women with confined lives and confined thinking. He says that the women who appear in the novels are modern and away from the influence of social conventions and social taboos. How these women breaks the male supremacy and create their own world is critically discussed in this article.

It is a study of feminist ideology which Anita Desai employs in her novel Ladies coupe. The writer throws light on the character of Akhila, the protagonist who sacrifices forty five years of her life for the sake of her family. Eventually, she realizes that her sacrifice has gone in vain. She revolts against the false social values and taboos of the contemporary male dominated society and struggle to acquire her identity in the male dominated society where woman has no identity of her own. She is nothing but an extension of someone's identity. Whether Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe is feminist study or not is critically discussed here. It is an attempt on the part of the wrier to make the analytical study of the women's lives and their psyche within the context of south Indian family. Through this article the writer tries to show that the women in the Indian families are coming out of their traditional roles like someone's mother, daughter and above all wife. The change occurring in the sensibility and attitude of the Indian women is critically examined

through the characters like Akhil, Prabha Devi and Janki in *Ladies Coupe*. The writer exposes the changing roles of the women Indian society.³³ The article probes into the suffering of the protagonist, Virmati in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. The writer tries to get the answer of this question whether the sufferings of Virmati are imposed or self imposed. The writer studies the life of Virmati from different angles and brings before the readers the truth behind the suffering of Virmati.³⁴ Change occurring in the women's sensibility and her attitude is critically discussed. There is no doubt that the women of the modern times are conscious of their self, individuality and existence. They cannot tolerate any kind of injustice done by the male dominated society. Through this article, the writer raises the question about the consciousness of the Indian women. He questions whether the women are conscious of their consciousness?

The research is thus focused in this marked interest in the alliances between genealogy and history and the ways in which recent Indian fiction in English has deployed its apparatus with a view to contesting the workings of traditional historiography based on narrative linearity. At the same time, it also aims to explore how some of these novels interrogate the practices of an Indian nationalism that reveals a deep post-independence reliance on West inspired myths of the nation. For the purpose of focus and detail, this study will deal with two novels that bear striking parallelisms in the ways in which they symbolically address national history as a mirror to family relationships. Such similarities are undeniable in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* even though some occasional references will also be made in passing to other contemporary Indian English novels that are relevant to the essay's central thesis: to show how this fiction, while it definitely transgresses traditional historiography and the narratives and myths of nationalism, also presents flaws in its critique of historiographic discourse, such as the inability to readjust the marginal role reserved to women in India's political agenda and the lack of a wider social perspective that allows to reinscribe the subaltern as an agent in the alternative histories that these novels offer.

In the case of Manju Kapur, the family memoir of *Difficult Daughters* is clearly configured around independence and Partition with marginal references to the European scenario so, as will be seen, this global perspective is somewhat lacking. But the relevant fact is that both of them can be alternatively and complementary readers family and national histories, and the site where they articulate their strategy of historical genealogy is the domestic space. This is salient in two respects, because (i) they recapture the frequent fictional recreation of Indian Partition through the allegory of the divided household⁶ and (ii) they also connect it with the allegorical allusions to femininity, matriarchy and motherhood ascribed to an otherwise markedly patriarchal Hindu nationalism. In the first place, it is necessary to examine how the household and its traditional connections with domesticity and, consequently, its enunciation as a space of female encapsulation in a gender-ridden world is also reconfigured and enriched with metaphorical allusions to the tragedy of Partition and the Hindu-Muslim breach. The childhood tale of the "upside-down" house (Ghosh 1988: 123) that Th'amma fervently repeats to Mayadeinight after night in *The Shadow Lines* not only points to the family tensions alluded to in the novel but clearly mirrors the increasing polarisation of Hindu and Muslim positions leading to Partition after independence.

Curiously enough, Th'amma is linked to domestic space throughout her life. The only time when she somehow opens herself outdoors is when she starts frequenting Gole Park and casually finds the link to her long lost father's family branch in Dhaka. It is only then that she quits the family

home temporarily to cross the border in search of her old uncle Jethamoshai, who lives at peril in the old Dhaka house, the very same house that stands in the novel as a symbolical reference to Partition, which is now inhabited by a family of Muslims who take care of the elderly Hindu judge in return for shelter. After her tragic failure to bring his uncle “home”, Th’amma will condemn herself to permanent retirement until her fatal illness and subsequent death. In a similar way, *Difficult Daughters* opens with the building of the Amritsar house, which results in a source of dispute in the family. Virmati is also bound to household encapsulation in ways that blatantly match the political situation beyond its thresholds: she learns of the ravages of the Second World War and their impact on the Indian Independence process in the punishing confinement of the go down to which she is subjected by her family when her illicit relationship is discovered; she is transferred from the marital bed to her mother-in-law’s bedroom during her miscarried pregnancy, in between the riots that plucked out her father’s life. Finally, Virmati achieves reconciliation with her family at the end of the novel, and her mother Kasturi feels the urge to make it up with her daughter “because the need of the hour was to feed the scores of people who passed through their house fleeing from the mobs in Pakistan” (Kapur 1998: 274). The walls are reinforced to resist goonda attacks and the house is barbed wired in a metonymic reference to the outside war field. In a fit of fury, as Harish sends his first wife Ganga and their children to the other side of the border and fully commits to Virmati, she returns to Moti Cottage and forces Ganga’s cupboard open to get rid of every single trace of her presence in the house (1998: 276). The parallel between Partition and Harish and Virmati’s final union through his separation from Ganga cannot be more graphical. As regards femininity as an ingredient of the nationalist myth, the coalescence in both novels of the Partition allegory and the motif of the woman in the household makes it impossible to read the references to women and motherhood simply as a context to the larger political plot. Rather, the target of this fusion is the discourse of Hindu nationalism, which has been tightly woven with the feminine at the centre of its sustaining allegory but has banished women from nation-building in practical terms or at least has kept them on the margins and inhibited their agency. This discourse is strongly linked with the myth of *Bharat Mata*, Mother India, incarnated as a goddess in the Indian epic of the *Ramayana*, and in many ways perpetuates the language of colonialism in which, as Ania Loomba notes, “female bodies symbolise the conquered land” (1998: 129) and whose allegories “positioned these continents as available for plunder, possession, discovery and conquest” (1998: 128). In the case of Hindu nationalism the allegory works in reverse, positioning women as securers of family cohesion and religious tradition while Indian men .

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