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Female Masculinity in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Female Masculinity in Manju Kapur’s *Difficult Daughters*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Apshara Ghimire has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee:

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Abstract

This thesis examines the Female Masculinity of the central female character Virmati in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters. In the novel, we see the beginnings of new women and women emancipation in the novel. Analogically, India fights for freedom from British Raj, as Virmati fights for freedom to live on her own ways. This novel moves around the protagonist Virmati who feels more comfortable behaving and looking masculine. She is attributed with masculine traits like reason, rebellion, power and potency, courage, combativeness, assertiveness and so on. She consists of a dream to live an independent and a dignified life full of happiness and bliss. She disobeys her family members 'advice to get married and deliver children accomplishing her feminine gender roles expected by the society. Set in Lahore and Amritsar, this novel is both a romantic and critique of English society at the beginning of the twentieth century as represented the protagonist by Virmati.

Key Words: Search of identity, Women emancipation, Self disintegration, Female Masculinity, Violence

This research paper attempts to analyze Manju Kapur's, novel *Difficult Daughters*, story of sorrow, love and compromise from the perspective of "Female Masculinity" epitomized by the central female character Virmati. Female masculinity is defined as the study of females who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine. In other words, female masculinity can be described as female born person feeling more comfortable having or looking masculine. Furthermore, female masculinity is masculinity outside the male body. However, critically thinking masculinity outside the male body is suggestive of female masculinity because it directly interferes with the presumed male ownership of masculinity. Judith Helberstam claims, "Female masculinity is about women who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine" (xi). She further argues that female masculinity "is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than simple a derivative of female masculinity" (77). She refutes the notion of reserving masculinity for the people with male bodies and denying it to those with female bodies. She claims, "Masculinity, one must conclude, has been reserved for people with male bodies and has been actively denied to people with female bodies" (269). In other words, if females are attributed with the conventional notion of masculine traits like pro-activeness, power, potency, rationality, assertiveness and so on, they are said to be masculine females.

In *Difficult Daughters* the main part deals with Virmati's love affair with the professor and the remaining part deals with her struggle for realization of her own independent identity. The novel begins with daughter Ida going back to Amritsar from Lahore carrying her mother's ashes to meet her maternal family. Kapur sets the scene against the bloody backdrop of Partition in Amritsar and Lahore and she recreates that time and the locales beautifully. This is a powerful portrayal of society where shame is more important than grief; pragmatism goes hand in hand with superstition. It is

about women who is shredded by conflictual forces and torn apart by oppositional structures in life (Observer). The protagonist Virmati is caught between the dilemma of family duty and personal desires. The novel focuses upon the struggle of an educated young middle class against the norms of family that cherishes old values of arrange marriage. The story is about the search of the protagonist for autonomy and selfhood.

In female masculinity, appearance is very important, though it is not about how one looks. Halberstam refutes the notion of reserving masculinity for people with male bodies and denying it to those with female bodies. She argues that “masculinity, one must conclude has been reserved for people with male bodies” (269). Masculine women experience their masculinity as an “integral identity effect.” Halberstam further supplies impetus as female masculinity is, “far from being imitation of maleness” rather it provides “a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity” (1). Her argument stresses on the fact that female masculinity is created and constructed in the society in relation to femininity.

We see the blooming of a ‘New Women’ in Virmati who does not want to be a rubber doll for others to move as they willed. Defying patriarchal notions that enforce a woman towards domesticity, she asserts individuality and aspires self-reliance through education. She is not a silent rebel but is bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented. She knows she cannot depend upon the Professor to sort out the domestic situation and proceeds to tackle it on her own. Later, she very decisively avoids the professor, ignoring his plea and keeps the power in her hand. She portrays a marvelous strength of mind in overcoming her dejection. She is strong to bear the pain, silently without anyone knowing. The determined and undisturbed manner in which she burns the Professor’s letters shows her resolution to close the chapter and

forward to a meaningful life in Lahore.

However, does Virmati blossom in to a 'New Women' in the real sense? No. In spite of her initial revolt against the family and firm stand against the professor, she force to his implorations and passion in Lahore. Loss of virginity pricks her conscience but then she overcomes the guilt by rationalizing it as "outmoded morality" (114). She had come to Lahore to broaden her horizons but instead she gets involved in useless love, doubtful marriage and unwed pregnancy. She wants to spread her wings like Swarnalata, her roommate, who is committed to meaningful activities regarding the freedom movement and women's emancipation. However, her emotional dependence on the Professor who constantly evades the question of marriage stops her from doing anything that he disapproves "may I could be like Swarna from the inside, secretly" (124). At the Punjab Women's Student Conference, she is amazed at "how large an area of life women wanted to appropriate for themselves" (144). However, these larger spaces are not for her. She wastes her time awaiting the furtive meetings with the Professor in spite of the awareness that there were "myriad instances of where she felt she had been weak or wronged" (129). She is being used. Professor enjoys the better of the two worlds and is not there even in the most crucial time when she undergoes the termination of pregnancy.

With the changing course of time, Virmati keeps on behaving as a male in the family. In this regard, this research tried to prove the hypothesis how the central character of the novel is attributed with masculine traits, how she refutes the traditional stereotypical masculine. On the contrary, she proves to be assertive, proactive and brings reconsideration in the concept of women's role and nature in the family and in the work place. As mentioned in the text; "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” (17). Here Virmati does not want to indulge her in family making process rather being a masculine she wishes to participate in freedom movement.

Thus we can say Virmati life moves two and fro like a wheel as time and fate play crucial role in her life and she become the victim of adverse circumstances even after going to Lahore for her better future. Like the life of Virmati the whole nation also get fragmented into the pieces in the name of religion as well as race. In the name of unity there arise clashes between Hindu and Muslim during the time of Partition.

The novel is set mainly in the pre Partition Punjab. The national political events of fighting colonialism are reflected in the enthusiastic young women who are seen defying the colonization of their own self, and the Virmati is one of them. Thus the impact of national struggle cannot be banished. The portrayal of women in Indian English fiction as a silent victim and up holder of the tradition and traditional values of family and society has undergone a tremendous change and is no longer presented as a passive character. However, Mrs. Kapur seems aware of the fact that the women of India have achieved their success in sixty years of independence, but if there is to be a true female independence, too much remains to be done. We see the emergence of new women in Manju Kapur’s heroines, who do not want to be rubber doll of others to move as they will. Defying patriarchal notions that enforce women towards domesticity they assert their individuality and hope self-reliance through education. They nurture the desire of being independence and leading lives of their own. They want to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond a husband and children. They are not silent rebels but are bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented. The protagonist knows she cannot depend on others to sort out the domestic situation and proceed to

tackle it on her own. In spite of getting education and freedom the women protagonist of Manju Kapur's novel does not bloom in to new women in the real sense.

Although Kapur dares to cross one patriarchal threshold, they are caught in to another, where their free spirits are curbed and all they do is adjust, compromise and adapt. More than half of the world population of the world is made of women but she is not treated on par with man despite innumerable evolutions and revolutions. She has the same mental and moral power, yet she is not recognized as his equal. In such conditions, the question of searching identity is justified. Actually in this male dominated society, she is wife, mother, sister and home maker. She is expected to serve, sacrifice, submit and tolerate each ill against her peacefully. Her individual self has very little recognition in the patriarchal society.

Difficult Daughters is the story of freedom struggle. While India fights for freedom from the British raj, Virmati fights for the freedom to live life on her own terms. In the end it appears that she might have achieved all that but it ceases to be important. During the struggle she losses a part of herself. She is torn in to two halves; one of which is the side she is fighting against. All this occurs when India attains freedom but at the cost of Partition at the cost of losing half of soul, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives lost in the fire of communal hatred. India's hollow victory is mirrored in Virmati's whose dream is to live an independent and dignified life in the repressed culture of Amritsar. She has a dream to live an independent and dignified life full of happiness and bliss who tackles down all the hurdles occurred on the way to her dreams. She is assertive and combative enough in nature who does not like to remain within the four walls of a house that disobeys her family members' advice to get married and deliver children accomplishing feminine gender roles expected by the society. On the contrary to the expectation of her family

and society, she goes to Lahore for the sake of education as well as freedom and independent life.

Kapur presents the psychic distress of women through the rebellious character of Virmati when she desperately proclaims, “We have to accept this is our lot in life” (27). The novel not only refers to the difficult daughter Virmati but also alludes to the several other difficult daughters who left the confines of their household and engaged themselves in the national struggle for independence.

R. K Dhawan in an article Manju Kapur’s “*Difficult Daughters: A saga of conflict and crisis*” says: “A number of novels were written on the theme of Partition, the destruction it brought and the flight of the refugee. They faithfully record the reign of violence that characterized the period and provide a sad telling commentary on the breakdown of human values. A strain of despair and disillusionment is predominant in these novels”(14).

Manju Kapur presents women dilemma in her novel. We can easily find out the struggle of women character for self identity and liberating attitude and portrayal of female psyche and their biological world. She deals with the traditional and modern ethos, women trying to find their self identity and freedom. The novelist gives the picture of war time. It makes us realize the difficulties faced by common people during the time of Partition. The characters affected by war are Virmati, Ganga and Kasturi. Virmati had miscarriage because of depression which existed due to the death of her own father and grandfather due to the shock of his own Son’s death. In the novel brutality arises out of Partition recall the horror which resulted in loot and murder of several million people on the both sides of border. Despite of higher education, Virmati failed in every role, neither she can be good mother nor daughter.

When the narrator goes to Amritsar on the train, she feels lonely there. She

does not eat anything just look outside the window. To separate from the family is like leaving the world for her. Though there are many people around her, she feels alienated. It shows the past memory that her family had. She is not aware manifestly but her past wound is still working.

The opening line of the novel gives a jolt to the readers, “The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother” (1). This cryptic statement is made by Virmati’s only daughter, Ida, a divorcee and childless performer. She could not develop an understanding with her mother during her life time and after Virmati’s death this realization engulfs her with guilt. Ida sets out in a journey in to her mother’s past by piecing together the fragments of memory in search of a woman she could know and understand. Virmati had been unclear about her past with Ida, and now she hoped to fill the critical gaps. Although as an individual her defeat was the worst of all though she was presented as the bold and more vocal character and aware of the rights for education and economic independence.

Similarly, Suvir Kaul In his Introduction to *The Partition of memory* argues that “ If one powerful meaning of Partition is the cleavage of the subcontinent another is represented by the desire, expressed in story, in poem and in conversation to cleave to near utopian memories of undivided mohallas, communities and indeed nations” (26).

It means, in *Difficult Daughters* the memories are not utopian alone, rather Lahore emerges as the core of Punjabi identity whose loss is not just showing psychic wound but also a loss of enormous cultural capital. More importantly, what the novel laments is the devastating loss of the vital traffic of culture and commerce, of the circulation of goods, people and the ideas between the two cities that was the lifeblood of prosperous Punjab.

The writer, in these lines directly presents how Virmati was blamed for the death of her father rather than the existing situation:

What a shock for the old man. Poor thing, her live is over. How young he was. Only fifty. How did it happen? Nobody knows. He was all alone. There was firing at the procession, and tear gas. Baoji always looked pale and tired. After what his daughter did he was never the same. All last year, so silent and listless. Everybody could notice. It killed him. Definitely killed him. (238)

Here we can notice that though Suraj Prakash died in bomb attack during curfew because of which his family has to suffer a lot as he was only the source of economy but Virmati get blamed though she was not the cause of disaster that take place within her family. Despite this horrible situation Virmati keeps on revolting due to her masculine quality. This shows that until the nation is not peaceful its citizen has to suffer a lot.

Another critic Jisha Menon in *The Performance of Nationalism* explains the relevance of female body in communal conflict. She states “The female body served as the terrain through which to exchange dramatic acts of violence. The gendered violence of Partition thus positioned women between symbolic abstraction and embodiment” (121).

It means women were dominated more during the time of Partition. Their body is used as the advertisement and is taken as none being. As in the novel it is mentioned that:

In Amritsar we went wild. Wild with enthusiastic welcome for those who made it to safety, wild with grief for the loss of a sister city that was steeped in blood. The Mussulmans chopped our people’s heads off, rape our women, cut off their breasts, all of which they claimed was in retaliation for what the

Hindus were doing to them. (270)

Here, Women become the object of violence during the Partition. Women during the time did not have any voices or were not given a chance to make a choice as a citizen. They were seldom seen as subject during the Partition riots. These women were treated as object through which a community's idea of purity and pride was achieved by controlling their bodies and sexuality.

Likewise, critic Shumona Dasgupta in her essay *The Extraordinary and the Everyday: locating Violence in Women's Narrative of the Partition* claims, that violence against women was a way for men to reclaim their masculinity. Dasgupta states:

Partition was coded as the failure of the male nationalist to protect the political integrity of the nation, as well as inability of the Hindu and Sikh men to protect their women. This lead to a very violent compensatory performance of... masculinity. Women were accommodated within the disciplinary parameters of a neo- nationalist discourse, only if they consented to be objects of violence. (46)

It means women become the object of violence during the partition since their bodies were anchored to the ideology of religious and national honor. Their body represents the purity of the nation thus is protected by the men. An attack on these bodies refers to attack on masculinity. Hence, Women body needs to be protected.

Likewise, Maggie Gee in *Sunday Times* reviewed the novel *Difficult Daughters*. Her view regarding the novel seems to be quite different from other reviewers. She asserts that Manju Kapur has created – “A completely imagined, aromatic, complex world, a rare thing in first novels” (420). It means this novel gives new flavor where the protagonist is presented having female masculinity.

Various critics have analyzed and researched about this novel from multiple perspectives, this text is still important for further study. It is because no researcher has researched and analyzed this novel in the theoretical perspective of the female masculinity till date. Some critics points out this novel's plot constructive whereas some of them argue about the central female character Virmati's quick and rational decision taking power. In this regard, there lies a gap in the existing knowledge about this text regarding the issue of female masculinity inherent in it. In this regard, my issue of research is an unexplored issue which fulfills the gap of the existing knowledge on the text. My research portrays how Virmati is epitome of the masculine female, how she subverts the traditional stereotypical masculine ideas like female are irrational, submissive, receptive and cowardice. O contrary, she proves to be assertive, proactive and brings reconsideration in the concept of women's role in the family and in the work place. By creating a woman character such as Virmati, the novel proposes a critique of traditional gender division between masculine and feminine.

Generally, female masculinity is understood as the study of females who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine. Judith Halberstam in *Female masculinity* argues that, "given my premise in this book, namely, that female masculinity is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than simply a derivative of male masculinity" (77). In this sense, female masculinity is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than a derivative of male masculinity in which women embody qualities that are usually associated with maleness, such as strength, authority and independence.

For Halberstam female masculinity is a way of describing a particular version of gender variance in the female body. She further says that much of the work on gender variance is modeled on male to female crossing and so female masculinity fills

a huge gap in the literature. In terms of asymmetry of gender, she points out that even though male and female are set up as opposite; they are neither opposite nor even symmetrical. Halberstam argues that masculine female not only challenges the traditional gender system, but also they are fixture of history. She further argues:

Some popular accounts of female masculinity suggest that appearance of the virile is a relatively recent occurrence and that is herself a product of feminist ideology. Other accounts situate her as a sign of the relaxation of gender conformity and a harbinger of greater latitude for gender identification. Few popular rendition of female masculinity understand the masculine women as a historical fixture, a character who has challenged gender system for at least two centuries. (45)

For Halberstam, masculinist character is an outrider of greater latitude for gender identification. For her if women behave like men, it is influence of the feminist ideology.

Female masculinity coincides with the excess of male masculinity. It codifies the form of rebellion. For Halberstam, female masculinity sometimes coincides with the excess of male supremacy. She also argues that sometimes female masculinity seems to be in the form of rebellion against the stereotypical patriarchal domination. She claims that, "Sometimes female masculinity coincides with the excess of male supremacy and sometimes it codifies a unique form of social rebellion" (9). This argument clarifies that female masculinity sometimes appears in the form of rebellion.

For Judith Butler, in female masculinity, the link between sex and gender is clearly broken. It is important to note that female masculinity do not want to reproduce forms of masculine power or male masculinities, but engage in its own form of masculinity. The following lines suggest this fact:

This rough sketch of gender gives us a clue to understand the political reasons for the substantializing view of gender. The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practice of heterosexual desire.

The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire. (22-23)

It means one should not create another binary system in which female masculinity is the simple opposite of male masculinity or the female version of male masculinity. Rather it challenges the female masculinities and the heteronormative matrix by playing a trick on the idea of the visibility of gender and by refusing to accept standard gender expressions. It signals a new understanding of masculine behavior and identification. Female masculinity is not some bad imitation of masculinity, but a lively and dramatic staging of hybrid and minority genders.

The search for one's identity to control one's destiny is justifiable in the sense that this search does not only refer to the independence only aspired for and obtained by the nation but also refers to the independence yearned by a woman. *Difficult Daughters* is a novel that belongs to the genre of Partition novel. It is even called Indo-English novel because it shows how the sense of alienation under the darkness of biculturalism leads one to the cultural trauma. Manju Kapur, as being a witness of the violence, bloodshed and killings that flooded the entire nation during the time presents how women used to survive for their independent identity.

As the writer asserts in the given lines: "People die- roasted, quartered, chopped, mutilated, turning, turning, meat on a spit- are raped and converted in

rampages gone mad, and leaves a legacy of thousands of sorrow, thousands more episodes shrouded in silence” (263).

Here, Kapur’s attempt is to reflect the bitter truth reality of how malicious the history of partition was and importance to repair those unendurable traumatic experiences for the restoration of peace and stability. The central hero Virmati stands as the mouthpiece of the novelist who witnesses the whole shocking scenario that overshadows the motherland in amidst of transitional phase of the nation. Every character becomes an effective tool to speak of the extreme conditions that shattered the contemporary victims both emotionally and physically.

The display of the masculine nature of Virmati seems prevalent in her attitude and ambition. She wants to dismantle the prevalent social norms, values and practices in order to redraw the demarcation thought between males and females and their respective expected gender roles in the society by the very society. We can see the implication of masculine traits prevalent in Virmati in her vision of life, her quest for freedom and independence, her longing for going to Lahore for higher education in the time of partition. It means set in Amritsar and Lahore simultaneously, this novel presents a heroine Virmati with masculine nature who like males revolts against the society and does not affirm the social norms, values and practices of the then Amritsar. Rather she is bold girl who musters courage and set out her journey for Lahore. What this implication suggests is that Virmati is a valiant girl attributed with masculine traits like courage, combativeness and revolution who rebels against the social practices of confining women within the four walls of a house.

In the Story, Virmati overcomes all her anxieties and marries professor but the married life again makes her restless and dislocates her. She feels homeless regardless of being married as the line asserts “Virmati stopped walking. That was

how far she had come from her family, how much they hated her, She was not to be invited for her own brother's wedding, when the furthest, most removed relative would be pressed to come" (225). Virmati loneliness can be also illustrated through these lines:

It was only when Harish came to home that Virmati felt free to move about in the house in the areas that were considered his. The big front room, where he sat, read, listened to music and entered guests, the front garden, and the little dressing-room where they slept. When Ganga saw her, she would torn her face away, or what was worse, would stare intensely at her, her eyes moist, her lip trembling, her big red bindi flashing accusingly (219).

It is believed that marriage is only the institution that guarantee the peace, happiness and freedom in life but that does not seems to be applicable in the life of Virmati.

Except Harish none of the family members liked her. Despite these, she does not get troubled with what she does. It means Virmati is confident enough that her deeds do not discontent her because she prefers the moments of unreasonable joy came in to her life.

The proof of masculine traits of Virmati can be put forward in relation to her nature described by the novelist Manju Kapur in the novel. Kapur argues that Virmati do not stand for the medieval lady. It means that she is a modern and ultra-modern in thought who do not obey the dogmatic social norms and convection because her nature surpasses the nature of a normal girl. It means Virmati do not affirm each and every convection of the then society like other women does in the society around her. In this regard, Virmati do not bother to affirm the social restriction.

Female masculinity is masculinity outside the male body; but it is also a perspective with which to view gender, a gaze beyond traditional masculinity and

femininity. The study of female masculinity has been integral to the dissolution of the idea of a binary gender system; and more presently, the sliding scale gender spectrum recently popular in gender studies. However, critically thinking about masculinity outside the male body is the triumph of the female masculinity because it directly interferes with the presumed male ownership of masculinity. It is because the traditional concept of masculinity denotes masculinity as a privileged status which consists of power, strength, sexuality, toughness, aggressiveness and rationality. Though these qualities are considered commonly associated with men, women too can be masculine if they embody these qualities. It is because masculinity is not polar opposite of femininity. Regarding the masculinity and its relationship with femininity Chris Baker, in *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, claims, “In general terms, traditional masculinity has encompassed the values of strength, power, stoicism, action, control, independence, self- sufficiency, male camaraderie/mateship and work, amongst others” (302).

Similarly, psychological experience is so dangerous that it leads to destruction and self-punishment. The people do not want to get happy in life if they have some guilty feeling. To remain far from the society and desire to do so, can be the consequence of the psychological malfunction or dysfunction experience which is related to the trauma. Such things happen to the character here:

Lajwanti saw this as a golden opportunity to detach herself, once and for all, from her sister- in- law. Why should the shift to Lepel Griffin Road not be extended to include separate living quarters as well? When somnath married, there would be plenty of space for him and his wife in a new house, whereas if both the still lived together, there would be no room for anybody. She started to work on her husband. (28)

Therefore, Lajwanti wants to remain detached from the society or family because of her traumatic experience.

Regarding female masculinity Patrica Sexton argues that female masculinity refers to the traits like holding male values and following male behavior and norms. She claims:

What does it mean to be female masculine? It means, obviously, holding male values and following male behavior norms. Male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure, and a considerable amount of toughness in mind and body. (17)

For her female masculinity is associated with the values like courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, group solidarity and so on. She means to say that if females are attributed with such traits, they are masculine females.

Virmati demurring nature becomes crystal clear with an example of rejecting getting married with the one whom family has selected. She does this with the view to teach the society that females cannot be confined within their prescribed social norms and conceptions. Females do have feelings and emotions like males have. Virmati says that they are different in terms of education and social footing. What this implication suggests is that Virmati is bold woman having masculine traits who deserves endeavor and guts to underestimate the existing social norms and conceptions regarding the positional notion and gender roles of female.

Whole family is suffering from the memory. They always want to stay together. If they go away from the family members, they feel uncomfortable. The story goes in such manner:

Lala Diwan Chand was vehemently opposed to any kind of division in the

family. As long as he was alive, everybody would be provided for. But with the new child Kasturi produced, the murmurs of discontent become louder and more persistent. Finally, worn out by his elder daughter-in-law's increasing quarrelsomeness in the home, and gently supported by his widowed sister, Lala Diwan Chand agreed to pension off his older son with a substantial monthly stipend. (27)

It shows the trauma of partition that took place in the past. Chand has understood the pain of being separated from the family. Therefore, he opposed to do so.

Similarly, the evidence of masculine nature prevalent in Virmati can be proved through her deeds. She does not bother to affirm each and every conventions of the then society like other women do in the society around her. As it is found in the text:

Slowly Virmati dragged herself away. As Kasturi watched her daughter's retreating back, the arms swinging uselessly by their sides, the head buried between hunched shoulders, her own despair increased. What had come over the girl? She has always been so good and sensible. How could she not see that her happiness lay in marrying a decent boy, who had waited patiently all these years, to who the family has given their word? (60)

It means Virmati likes to do something of which her well wishers disapprove. She keeps on doing what she likes. She rejects the person selected by her family members for her marriage. The opposing nature of Virmati suggests her thought who thinks that she should not always approves others' suggestions. Rather she should encompass her own stand regarding the question of her life and marriage. She prefers living a life full in freedom despite having been in the midst of perils resulted from her own decision.

Likewise, the survivor of bloody partition does not want to remember the horrific events as it hampers them psychologically as it is mentioned in the novel as

well:

It does no good to remember, no good to think of those things, we had to get on with our lives. If we thought too much we would go mad, as our uncle did after he fled Sultanpur. He could not forget what he had lost, could never find anything to do that he considered an adequate substitute for his old life, and he slowly sank in to senility and uselessness (268).

It shows the wound left by bloodshed, violence and the partition war and its effect on human psyche. Partition has given unbearable pain to every individual. It left everyone with emptiness and loneliness. The survivors were just like scapegoat having no enthusiasm toward life.

Virmati is rebellious in nature. For her society and people always want to see female in subsidiary position. In this regard, Virmati is a female having masculine nature. Her subversive spirit can be put through following lines:

Virmati become better, but not less dull. One abortion and one miscarriage. She was young, she told herself, years stretched out before her. Years of penetration, years of her inside churning with pregnant beginnings. God was speaking. He was punishing her for the first time. May be she could never have children. She had robbed her own womb three years yearlier, just as she had robbed another woman of her husband Ganga's face, swollen with hate and fear had followed her everywhere, the venom concentrated in the gaze of her evil eye. (246)

This is only the most painful phase Virmati passes through out the novel. She had miscarriage and she blames herself for the incident. She is not able to overcome her past as a result she become the victim of depression. Here we can also find out that she regrets for marrying professor as a result she is always neglected or hated by his

first wife. In spite of resisting the patriarch, Virmati has a feeling that whatever she did was not right; she had failed in her duty and that she would be punished for it someday. In the course of time her family words turn out to be true and Virmati is shaken out of her false dream. What she never realizes is that she is coward to face the world and goes on for abortion one after another. In spite of many trials, her life becomes an utter failure except the educational degree she had bagged. She disgraced her family; as a wife she was not perfect, on the contrary she sized the right of another woman and as a mother she was not careful about the needs of her daughter just as her mother. These all incident triggers her time and again.

The national or any kind of revolutionary movements seek to encompass participation from women including them at the main stream action. This situation is subjected to the younger generation of women in the novel, like Virmati, Sakuntala and Swarna Lata.

The Inquilab Zindabad was sung, and Virmati looked up, tears in her eyes.

The song was so moving. The students' flag, representing freedom, peace and progress, was unfurled. There was a hush in the hall and it was clear most of the girls identified with it. (142)

It means that the various movements coined during the freedom struggle emphasize Gandhi's effort to make women come out from their limited sphere and join themselves with a massive movement. However, Women's role in the anti-colonist nationalist struggle helped them to create their identity through small resistance act rather than being part of larger forms of liberation movements. The New Women represented by Virmati, Sakuntala and Swarna Lata are stimulated by the freedom struggle and they feel gratified in leading their independent lives personified by the nationalist movement.

Traditionally the notion of masculinity is confined to male. Being male is considered to be privileged with positive attributes like brave, active, strong, combative and ambitious and so on. Likewise, the traditional notion, on contrary, regarding women is supposed to be cowardice, emotional, receptive, and passive and so on. Supplying the similar argument, Halberstam asserts, “Masculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notion of power and legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of the state and to uneven distribution of wealth” (2). She means that the notion of masculinity is ultimately associated with power, legitimacy and privilege. In broader term it refers to the power of the state. For Halberstam, masculinity seems to extend outward in to patriarchy and inward in to family.

Similarly Kamala Bhasin, in *Exploring Masculinity*, argues that female masculinity and male masculinity are similar. For her, neither we can locate masculinity in male body nor can we do it with female body. For her a female can be masculine if one inherits such traits. Asserting this fact, Kamala Basin claims:

Masculinity does not exist in isolation of femininity. In most societies, masculinity and femininity are mirror image of each other; if men are supposed to order, women have to take order; if men are allowed to hot tempered; women have to patient, and so on. Even though there are masculinities, masculinity normally means having qualities like strength, assertiveness, fearlessness, independence, authoritarianism, ambition. (33)

Bhasin’s opinion clarifies that masculinity is integral part of femininity. It means masculinity and femininity are not polar opposite phenomenon. They do not exist in isolation to each other. If masculinity “means having qualities like strength, assertiveness, fearlessness, independence, authoritarianism, ambition” (33), females

can be called masculine if they are attributed with these traits. In tune with this argument, Yvonne Tasker, in his *Spectacular Bodies*, argues, “Power and potency are constitutive discourse of masculinity” (94). He stresses that discourse of masculinity is formed by power and potency. But he further accepts that, “Masculine culture is not limited to the male body within representation” (3). He means to say it is also associated with feminine culture too.

When British formally connect the different culture they feel relief because they have understood the pain of separation on the one hand. The characters bring the issue in this context because they fear of partition. When partition takes place, it is not the separation of physical body but also mental soul.

It shows that family always intends to be together. The family members want to share their happiness together. They are like the parts of the body feeling extreme pain of being separated. In case they separate, they notice vast changes in them as they are in the same condition because of the pain of isolation from the society or their beloved. It occurs in the novel as well:

They met after two months. Virmati had grown very thin. Nature cure, though healthy, takes its toll from the flesh. The Professor looked at her. He could not speak. He had thought of Virmati’s fair skin so often, its rosy overtones, with faint yellow ivory undertints. Now it was more yellow than rose, and he could feel the outline of her ribs. Tenderly he gathered her to him, and whispered in to her hair, ‘Darling, it’s has been hell for both of us, your being so ill. (148)

Therefore, familial bond is very important in one’s life. When this bond is broken various kind of problems are experienced. Another traumatic experience brings change in one’s life due to the bitter past. Sometimes there is destruction because of problems or sometimes there is change in life. In the novel it occurs:

As women, it is our duty, no, not duty, that word has unpleasant connotations. It is our privilege to be able to give ourselves to the unity of our country. Not only to the unity between rich and poor, but between Muslim and hindu, between Sikh and Christian. Artificial barriers have been created amongst us to gain power over insecure and fearful minds. Let the politics of religion not blind us to this fact. (145)

Here, women have decided to change the life from the traditional to modern. They did not want to confine themselves within the boundary of house rather they proudly want to be the part of social activist. It is because of the past experience and the tendency of change.

A number of examples can be presented in the novel that proves Virmati as an assertive female and tackles down the problems. Psychologically women are considered weak and contingent being by the male characters. They do not have necessary to study high as the male characters get. In this respect the text goes like this:

Virmati passed her FA with marks that were respectable enough for a girl, her parents thought. She now wanted to study further. Her parents thought that she has gone far enough. Her fiancé's parents thought she has already well qualified to be the wife of their son, the canal engineer. (45)

The family thinks that for women the low education is enough. The parents, who are the representative of old generation, have such concept that girls should have less education. However, she has assimilated that for women higher education is very important. She has past experience from the previous generation if women do not get education as the men the life would be very nice.

Virmati being a masculine cares more about her own freedom and happiness

rather than family or the existing society. She gets married with Professor against the family will and she is happy for her deeds as mentioned in the given lines:

Virmati was sure that neither parents nor grandfather would ever forgive her. The process of rejection that had started with Tarsikka would be completed. Let them dam her as they might, at least she has this new life. The thought of her husband, asleep in the berth below, made her eyes go soft with tenderness. She promised herself a blissful marriage; after all, they had gone through so much to be together. Her husband would be everything for her. This was the way it should be, and she was pleased to finally detect a recognizable pattern in her life. (207)

These above lines imply the acceptance of marriage by the Virmati. Actually she falls in to the domain of marriage only because she wants to use her marriage as a weapon against the social perspective regarding the roles of women. Through this act Virmati conceives to prove her faithfulness towards professor as normative society wants to see woman preserving fidelity after marriage with the person the society and the family approve.

In this regard Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* represents the pathetic situation of the different characters. The preconceived notions are displaced by the traumatic experience. In the novel, the text follows, "Virmati stared fixedly at King Edward Medical College coming up, with a statue, she presumed, of the king in front. Her eyes were hot and burning. She was trying to live within a moral code, but her mother would never understand that" (113). In this context, Virmati and her mother have different life experience. They do not understand each other well because her mother belongs to old generation who believes marriage is the only institution that guarantees happiness in women life whereas Virmati was totally against such

stereotypical ideas.

Virmati elopes with Professor Harish astonishing her family in particular and the society as a whole. She marries Harish for the sake of freedom, independence, and self-dignity and for the pursuit of happiness after all. Furthermore, Virmati is enriched with masculine nature who feels comfortable looking and behaving like males. In this regard, she gets married with the person whom she chooses. She succeeds to transmit the message to the society that females can endeavor to transform the social dogmatism and conservatism prevalent in patriarchal society. The happiness of getting married to each other can be seen in the following lines:

That night, the newly wed couple made love quietly and furtively in the dressing-room before moving to their charpais outside. They'll hear,' he whispered again and gestured to the doors, two feet away from their bed. Let them. After all, we are married.' His hand was over her mouth and she could hardly get the words out. What's the matter? She asked, speaking as softly as she could to please him. She tried to turn his face towards her so she could see him. (213)

Both couples are happy to find each other as their life partner. Virmati selects Harish as her life partner despite of knowing that her life partner belongs to a low class family and has already wife in his house. But having been known, Virmati takes a bold attempt and gets married to her better half Harish.

Therefore, the novel compels one to think along these lines. We all know about women's emancipation and the serpent called colonialism, but Manju Kapur has dealt with both these relatively stable issue in such a manner that you read not just with your eyes but also with your heart. Just the way she has written. Moreover, in *Shakuntala*, *Swarnalata* and *Ida* we see the images of modern women, conscious,

introspected, educated, emancipated, driven by the zeal to assert their autonomy and separate identity and find a place for themselves in the society.

The concluding lines of the novel reiterate Ida rejection of Virmati, not as a mother but as a woman. “This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be. Do not haunt me any more” (280). Ida who grew up struggling to be the model daughter, does not have the heart to reject Virmati, the mother, but her head, the rationale, rejects her as a woman after having an insight in to Virmati’s past. In this way, the text is about the different types of problem related to the family, individual life and the cultural life. Partition has led almost all the characters to think in this way. Either hearing from others, reading or themselves experiencing partition, they have become conscious of their life.

Difficult Daughters thus is the story of a freedom struggle in broad sense through the character Virmati. Analogically, India fights for freedom from the British Raj, as Virmati fights for the freedom to live on her own ways. Like so many other Indian girls, she decides what to study and where, whom to marry and when. In the end it appears that, she might have achieved all that but it ceases to be important. Virmati fights throughout her life for the freedom as whole India fights for the independence. India attains freedom at the cost of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives, lost in the fire of communal hatred.

Kapur presents the condition of psychologically traumatized women through her bold protagonist character Virmati. The novel not only refers to the difficult daughter Virmati but also about the several other difficult daughters who left the household activities and engaged themselves in the national struggle for independence and freedom of nation because until the nation cannot enjoy the freedom its citizen

has to pass through various traumatic stages. Kapur is concerned with the problem of the newly emerging urban middle class, who suffered from partition and because of it they face different traumatic experience. For her, unity of people is necessary in a family and in a nation too. The unity makes one strong to fight against any kind of danger.

Female masculinity is a recent study of females who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine. Masculine women feel more comfortable behaving or looking masculine. It is a new brand of gender studies which is developed in 20th century. It is a perspective to view gender, a gaze beyond traditional masculinity. It has occurred as a specific gender with its own cultural history. Rather than a derivative of male masculinity in which women embody qualities that are usually attributed to male like strength, power, authority, control, independence and so on. It is beyond from an imitation of maleness.

In this regard, this research proves the female masculinity of the central female character Vimati who is attributed with masculine traits, how she refutes the traditional stereotypical masculine ideas like females are irrational, submissive and receptive and cowardice. Female masculinity is about a female born person feeling more comfortable behaving or looking masculine. Unlike the traditional stereotypical concept of female as emotional, receptive and passive, female masculinity as a new category of gender study signals a new understanding of masculine behavior and identification, and a new direction in the interdisciplinary scholarship. It is understood as the study of females who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine. In this sense, female masculinity is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than a derivative of male masculinity in which women embody qualities that are usually associated with maleness such as strength, authority and independence.

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