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Search for an Identity: A critical Study: Manju kapur's Difficult Daughters

“Identity is a multidimensional word. The study of identity has been pursued from a number of perspectives. Identity encompasses the ways in which people view themselves And it predict a number of important psycho -social and relational outcomes”²

Identity is a search for meaning for a life, in a meaningless and futile society. The concept of Identity is related with psycho analytical process. Without an identity, human being is nothing. Self search is an eternal theme for all great works of Literature. The search for identity is prominently seen in the works of postcolonial Indian women writers. They brought a notable changes in portraying women characters. They portray women in Indian society in various manifestations. The Nation's struggle for freedom played an important role in the lives of Indian women .Indian women begin to experience the reformist zeal. With the arrival of Feminism, Indian women writers brought incredible transformation in the patriarchal society.

The major theme of post colonial women writers is quest for identity. These novelist have developed their own style to express the feminine sensibility. They gave a new dimension to the Indian literature. They describe the world of women with stark realities of life. As noted critic Simon de Beauvoir says “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, economic fate determines the figure that the female presents in a society, it is civilization as a whole that produces the creature, which is described as feminine”³. A group of Indian women novelists like Ruth prawarjhabvala, Kamalamarkandaya, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara saghal, Manju Kapur etc.. has given a new dimension to the issue of self identity and focuses on individuality and emotional independence.

Manju kapur predominantly shows in all her novels the psycho dynamic aspects of women. Her works reflect man-women relationship, human desire, longing body, gender discrimination, marginalisation, rebellion, and protest. She stuns the reader by her sharply edged characters and emotional settings. Her themes are women centric and revolves around the issues of home and family. She confesses “I have been forever interested in the lives of women, whether in the professional arena or in domestic spaces one of the pre occupations in all my books is how women manage both and what sacrifices they have to make in order to keep the home fires burning and sanity in personal lives”

Kapur's protagonists are mostly educated and an ambitious woman, chained in a conservative society. Education makes them independent leading them to become intolerant to both society and their family. She transformed her shackled, suffering women protagonist in to daring and independent. She amazingly depicts the psychological trauma of her heroines. During this transformtion, Manju kapur depicts the Indian society where all the ways to social freedom is denied in the conventional family.

Manju kapur is acclaimed as Indian Jane Austen as she is a chronicler of middle class Indian women. She wrote six notable novels *Difficult daughters* 1998, *A Married Women* 2002, *Home* 2006, *The Immigrant* 2008, *Custody* 2011, and *Brothers* 2016. In all her novels, the women character is the protagonist, the male characters are portrayed as dominative. The women protagonist is caught in the midst of personal and social life. *Difficult daughters* is her first novel at the age of 42, it is awarded 'The Commonwealth Award for Eurasia'. This novel has won her international acclaim. A quest for identity is a predominant theme in all Manju kapur's novels, mainly in this novel *Difficult daughters* more or less all the women characters like kasturi, Lajwati, virmati, shakuntla, swarnalatha .and Ganga longs for their space, and they search for an identity. The way they fix their identity differs from one another. All the female characters in the novel suffer from loss of identity. She weaves the theme of quest for identity in a peculiar note of authenticity.

The novel is set in the backdrop of Amritsar in Punjab and opens with dramatic lines "the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" DD(1). The narrator is Ida, protagonist s daughter, she goes in search of her mothers root. The novel is seen through the eyes of Ida the daughter of virmati. she is the narrator, a divorcee, seeking the past life of her mother virmati. *Difficult Daughters* is a story of protagonists struggle for career and identity against the dominant ideology of domesticity. Manju Kapur realistically depicts the story of three generation women focussing on Virmati, the second generation women.

Virmati is the eldest daughter of ever pregnant mother hailing from traditional Aryasamaj family. She is a care taker of all children she longs for a space. Her inner being searches for a space and support from her mother, but she is sharply avoided by her. This creates an emotional starving in her, to satiate her carving there arrives a professor .She falls in love with married professor Harish. The educational opportunities are given to her but she

did not take proper advantage of it. Virmati done many courses like FA then BA, then BT ...the family pressure does not shrink her taste for knowledge.

The family pressures for her marriage. There is a endless struggle in her life education vs marriage. Virmati's mind is a complex one, it doesn't show her, what she desires for, she comes to Dalhousie only to be with her mother and says "I am here to look after you" DD (22) . Her other self cries to have education in Lahore . She struggles a lot without proper destination forums and the path, for her quest for identity. Virmati breaks all the chain of family tradition in search of her identity. She longs for the space in the family .Virmati's dream of independence is influenced by her cousin sister shakuntla who is a rebel and liberated. For Virmati, Education is a way to escape from the reproaches of her family and freedom from her mother s control. Shakuntla s words about her independent voice in Lahore inspired her "we travel, entertain ourselves in the evenings; follow each other's work, read papers, attend seminars" DD Pg.(43)

Virmati firmly believes that education in Lahore will give her desired result of fullfilment of her identity. Virmati almost without her knowledge passes through a kind of metamorphosis on her own, the impact of shakuntla s words on virmati is clear from her latter words "I want to be like you pehnji if there are two of us they will not mind so much" DD Pg.(41) .The major crisis in her life is falling in love with professor. She is gripped by the professor's love which makes her to fail in her mission.

Virmati denies to marry Inderjeet arranged by the family and revolts against the family. she is sent to Lahore for her higher studies. To her fate, she succumbs to the temptation of professor and becomes pregnant. She is helpless and she pledges a gold bangle and undergoes the agony of abortion all alone .During abortion, she feels an emptiness inside her and believes that "She was his for life whether he ever married her or not her body was marked by him she could never look elsewhere never entertain another choice" DD Pg.(163)

she has to suffer the whole process on her own. She has the realization “nothing was hers, not her body, her future ,not even a pair of paltry insufficient gold bangles ,” DD Pg.(174) This incident makes her to suffer an alienation .She dangles between the temptation of heart and politics and intellectual movements of her time. She is moved by Swarnalatha’s words “Marriage is not only thing in life Viru. The war the Satyagraha movement because of all these things women are coming out of their houses ,talking, jobs fighting ,going to jail”DD Pg.(222)

Virmati is perplexed between her own world of love and miseries and freedom struggle. She tries to evade the love of Harish. She loves her family she hates the secret relationship with Harish. To the contrary she marries him, this is due to the urge to make her own space, “Her life is smeared under the pressure of family responsibilities ”DD Pg.(16)she becomes a headmistress of a girls school in Nahan.She travels from place to place like a rolling stone. This is the only successful phase in her life. She becomes autonomy but this doesn’t runs long. The temptation from Harish drags her to marital relationship . she is turned down due to affair with Harish,utter disappointment made her to say ,“.....that all my education has achieved is the destruction of my family”DD Pg.(91).

she becomes her co wife but she was not welcomed in Harish house. She once again feel the loss of space and she is confined to a small room. This creates a chaotic feeling of loss in life.Virmati is sure that neither her parents nor grandfather would ever forgive. The process of rejection that has started with Tarsika would be completed .“Let them damn her as they might at least she had this new life ..she promised herself a blissful marriage ;after all they had gone through so much to be together.her husband would be everything to her. This was the way it should be and she was pleased to finally detect a recognizable pattern in her life.,” DD Pg (207)

“A value charged almost a charismatic term with its secured achievement regarded as equivalent to personal salvation” 4. This is the motif of Manju Kapur's novel her quest for self identity ends up with disappointment, delusion, social pressures and uncertain future. She feels neglected she is unwanted in Harish family avoided by her own family as she brought disgrace to the family. “she finds herself in deep trouble and crisis” DD Pg (231) she feels that she is losing all sense of identity. Becoming the co wife of Harish added fuel to the fire her condition becomes worse she is ill treated and shut up in a small room. She longs for a space in her house it is this feeling made her to revolt against the conventional family rules and get married to Harish. To her fate, her identity is totally crushed after her marriage.

Virmati has many chances in her life to assert and to “forge her identity” DD pg (198) but shattered by the illicit love for Harish. Kapur delves deep in to conscious and unconscious mind of Virmati. Due to her warring mind she remains unsatisfied all in her life. Virmati wants to participate in the freedom struggle but she is discouraged by Harish. He wants her to take care of child same as Virmati acted as a caretaker so her struggle for space and identity is again shattered Virmati wants to name her child 'Bharati,' with the association of birth of the country. Harish suggests, 'Ida' Virmati suggests it sounds alien. But Harish justifies saying, “let anybody think what they like. for us it means a new slate and a blank beginning” DD pg (227) Manju Kapur beautifully portraying evolution of growth and maturity in Virmati. Virmati is alienated from her roots and it is a cause of her identity crisis Virmati is clear about her identity crisis. Virmati is clear about her identity in the initial stages of her life. Her quest of self identity has been a dominant preoccupation in her mind and she tries to articulate her cry for her existential equality. According to Mayur Chhikara “the novelist has portraying her protagonist as a woman caught in a conflict between the passions of the flesh and a yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movements of the day. The women of India have indeed achieved their success in half a century of

independence but if there is to be a true female independence much remains to be done.” 5

The fight for autonomy remains combat. This paper seeks to analyse the attitudinal change in women and how they negotiate to outer world.

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