

A Feminist Approach to Manju Kapoor's '*Difficult Daughters*'

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Abstract:

This paper explores the feminist approach to Manju Kapoor's novel 'Difficult Daughters'. The novel depicts the struggles of Virmati, a young woman trapped in the patriarchal society of 20th century India. Through an analysis of the protagonist's experiences, this paper examines how Kapoor challenges traditional gender roles and highlights the importance of women's agency and empowerment. By employing a feminist lens, it aims to shed light on the societal constraints faced by women in India and emphasizes the need for gender equality.

Keyword: Feminism, Womanism.

Feminism is a social movement that advocates for the equal rights and opportunities of all genders. Its roots can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries when women began to fight for their right to vote and participate in politics. Since then, the movement has evolved and expanded to include a range of issues related to gender equality, such as reproductive rights, workplace discrimination, and sexual harassment. Feminism is not just about women; it is about challenging the societal norms and structures that perpetuate gender inequality, and striving towards a world where everyone, regardless of their gender, can thrive and reach their full potential.

Manju Kapoor is an Indian author who was born on May 27, 1961, in Delhi, India. She grew up in a family that valued education, and her father was a teacher of English literature. Kapoor pursued a degree in English literature from Miranda House, Delhi University, and later earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of Delhi.

After completing her studies, Kapoor worked as a teacher of English literature at various colleges and universities in Delhi. However, she always had a passion for writing, and in 1998, she published her first novel, "Difficult Daughters," which went on to win the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book in 1999. This success propelled Kapoor into the literary limelight, and she has since published several other novels, including "A Married Woman," "Home," and "The Immigrant."

Through her writing, Kapoor explores themes of family, relationships, gender, and sexuality, and her work is known for its nuanced portrayals of women's lives in contemporary India. She has been recognized with numerous awards for her contributions to literature, including the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2018 for her novel "Dilli Wali." Today, she is considered one of India's most prominent contemporary writers and continues to inspire readers around the world with her insightful and thought-provoking work.

She believes that feminism is not only about women's rights but also about gender equality. She argues that feminism is not just about women being equal to men, but about creating a world where all genders are treated equally and fairly.

Kapoor also emphasizes the importance of intersectional feminism, which means taking into account the multiple identities that individuals hold, such as their race, class, and sexual orientation, when fighting for gender equality. She believes that feminism should be inclusive

and that all women, regardless of their background, should be able to participate in the movement.

In her writing, Kapoor often explores the experiences of women in Indian society and the challenges they face. She believes that it is important to give voice to these experiences and to raise awareness about the issues that women face. Ultimately, Kapoor's view on feminism is that it is an ongoing movement that requires constant attention and effort to achieve true gender equality.

Feminism

A significant figure in the Indian feminist writing community, Manju Kapoor is known for her outspokenness on topics relating to women's empowerment and gender equality in her own country of India. In her writings, she has brought attention to the challenges faced by women living in patriarchal societies and has advocated for a social order that is more inclusive and equal.

Kapoor's points of view are extremely pertinent and significant when considered in the light of the present feminist discourse. She has attacked the simplistic and reductionist approaches that reduce women's struggles to only identity politics, as well as the need for a more nuanced knowledge of gender issues. She has underlined the need for a more nuanced understanding of gender issues. According to Kapoor's viewpoint, gender is a complicated and multi-dimensional phenomenon that connects with other social categories such as class, caste, race, and sexuality. Therefore, any examination of the problems that women face needs to take into account the many facets of the experiences and hardships that women go through.

In addition to this, Kapoor has voiced criticism of the prevalent feminist discourse, which she believes to be inherently exclusionary and elitist. She has advocated for a feminist movement that is more democratic and open to participation, which acknowledges the wide variety of women's experiences and perspectives. Kapoor has claimed that the feminist movement should not only focus on the challenges that middle-class, urban women face, but it should also address the concerns of marginalized and oppressed women, who are typically omitted from mainstream feminist agendas. Kapoor has made this argument in a number of her writings.

Because they highlight the necessity for a more nuanced, inclusive, and democratic approach to women's issues, the opinions expressed by Manju Kapoor are extremely pertinent to the current state of the feminist discourse. Her works offer a significant perspective on the intricate and multidimensional nature of gender, and they underscore the necessity of respecting the diversity of women's experiences and voices. Her works also provide a valuable viewpoint on the nature of gender.

There has been a significant increase in the number of Indian female writers writing in the English language over the last decade of the twentieth century. Manju Kapur is one of them, and she is a well-known writer. She discussed the challenges that Indian women face living in joint families inside a culture that is predominated by men. Through her novels, she has presented a fresh perspective on the lives of Indian women. The Commonwealth Writers Prize for the Best First Book was given to Manju Kapur for her novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) in 1999. This honor was presented to Manju Kapur. Her book, *Difficult Daughters*, is where she investigates the lives of her female characters, some of whom have a more contemporary worldview than others. "The primary protagonist of this book is Virmati, a

traditional woman; however, her cousin Shakuntala is a very different person from Virmati." She has been exposed to western culture. Virmati is motivated by Swami Dayanand's concept of women's education.

The conventional view of marriage that is presented by Manju Kapur, which emphasizes its significance for all women. Consequently, she depicts the characters Virmati and Shakuntala as having two contrasting attitudes in a deliberate manner. The former maintains a more conventional worldview, while the latter adopts a more contemporary worldview. Shakuntala has a Master of Science degree in Chemistry and is currently employed in Lahore. She is a smart, independent, modern, and sophisticated young woman who does not believe in the concept of marriage and has a strong reaction to the idea that marriage is something that should be done. She then addresses Virmati with the following line: "however, women are still expected to get married and have no other responsibilities." She encourages her to live her life as freely as possible and points out that "times are changing" and that more and more women are leaving their homes, so "why not you?" This gesture on the part of Shakuntala reveals her perspective on getting married.

As a result, Manju Kapur chooses to portray this lady character as her own spokesman, placing a strong emphasis on the need of independence and education for Indian women. Nevertheless, the author emphasizes her perspectives on women and their relationships with other people, women's sexuality, love, infatuation, jealousy, marriage, gender roles, self-discovery, and a variety of other issues that women face. It has come to our attention that Virmati is a character that is not afraid to speak her mind, is aware of her rights to education and economic freedom, and is bold. Kapur illustrates the concerns that plague modern women, such as their sorrow and the challenges they endure, through the character of Virmati. She has a responsibility to her family, a desire to further her education, and an illicit

love for her professor, who is already married and the father of two children. She is devoted to her education, her parents, her family, and her romantic professor. She believes, as a modern woman should, that "Study means developing the mind for the benefit of the family" and that "a girl lives for others, not for herself" because "a girl lives for others, not for herself." Therefore, Kapur has done research on the difficulties that Virmati, a socialist feminist, faces in her situation, specifically with her fight for identity and freedom of expression.

Along with the debate, the primary focus of the majority of the book is on the challenges that Virmati presents for her parents in the role of a difficult daughter. She was aware that Professor Sahib was not a formidable opponent when she first fell in love with him; yet, as their relationship progressed, she found that she was forced to choose between furthering her study and getting married. She develops an attitude of defiance as a response to the professor's refusal to marry her. She went through the ordeal of having an abortion in Lahore, which was a horrible event for her, and then she found that her father had passed away without forgiving her. In this book, we see that Virmati's issues and conflicts are existential, and that her desire for self-assertion ultimately results in her alienation from herself. The final word In a nutshell, we are able to form an understanding of the fight against biases faced by feminists thanks to Manju Kapur's works. While reading her books, one could get the feeling that a woman's life is similar to the love of a nation, which goes through many different phases. Is and tribulations.

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