

## Unravelling Societal Constructs and Feminine Agency: A Critical Analysis of Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

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### ABSTRACT

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* stands as a pivotal work in the realm of Indian English literature, delving into the intricate complexities of familial dynamics, societal norms, and individual agency against the backdrop of pre-partition Punjab. This research article aims to explore Kapur's narrative through a critical lens, dissecting themes of tradition, rebellion, and the quest for identity within the context of a patriarchal society. By examining the characters' struggles and triumphs, this study seeks to unravel the multifaceted layers of gender roles and societal expectations depicted in the novel. Through a combination of literary analysis and sociocultural critique, this research endeavors to shed light on the enduring relevance of "Difficult Daughters" in contemporary discourse on gender, tradition, and autonomy.

**Keywords-** Indian English literature, gender roles, societal norms, feminine agency.

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* has garnered widespread acclaim for its poignant portrayal of women's lives in colonial India, offering a rich tapestry of emotions, conflicts, and aspirations. Set against the turbulent backdrop of the Indian freedom struggle, the novel follows the journey of Virmati, a spirited young woman grappling with the constraints of tradition and the allure of independence. Through Virmati's narrative, Kapur intricately weaves a tale of love, sacrifice, and self-discovery, inviting readers to confront entrenched patriarchal structures and the indomitable spirit of feminine agency.

Kapur's oeuvre occupies a significant place in the landscape of Indian English literature, with *Difficult Daughters* often hailed as a seminal work that transcends geographical boundaries and cultural barriers. Critics have praised Kapur's nuanced characterizations and evocative prose, noting her ability to capture the zeitgeist of a bygone era while resonating with contemporary audiences. Scholars have explored various thematic threads within the novel, ranging from the clash between tradition and modernity to the complexities of female

identity in a male-dominated society. Moreover, Kapur's exploration of familial relationships, particularly the mother-daughter dynamic, has sparked scholarly interest in the interplay of love, duty, and autonomy.

At the heart of *Difficult Daughters* lies the protagonist Virmati, whose journey epitomizes the struggle for self-actualization in the face of societal strictures. Born into a conservative Punjabi family, Virmati defies convention by pursuing higher education and engaging in a forbidden romance with a married professor, Harish. Through Virmati's clandestine meetings with Harish and her eventual marriage to a respectable widower, Kapur interrogates notions of love, duty, and personal fulfillment. Virmati's clandestine affair with Harish serves as a catalyst for her emancipation from familial expectations, prompting her to question the traditional roles assigned to women in society. However, Virmati's rebellion comes at a price, as she grapples with the consequences of her choices and the societal backlash that ensues.

Furthermore, "Difficult Daughters" delves into the complexities of mother-daughter relationships,

particularly Virmati's fraught interactions with her domineering mother, Shubh. Shubh represents the embodiment of patriarchal values, imposing her rigid beliefs on Virmati and perpetuating the cycle of repression and conformity. Yet, beneath Shubh's stern facade lies a woman burdened by her own unfulfilled desires and societal constraints, underscoring the cyclical nature of female oppression. Through Virmati and Shubh's tumultuous relationship, Kapur illuminates the intergenerational struggle for agency and autonomy, highlighting the enduring impact of familial expectations on women's lives.

Despite the fact that women make up about 50% of the global population, they are not granted the freedom to live their lives according to their own desires. The standards governing their existence have been established by the male population. Thus, people encounter discrimination solely based on their gender. Manju Kapur's "Difficult Daughters" explores the lives of women from three different generations in the Indian socio-historical context. The brilliance of Manju Kapur's fictional narrative rests in her skillful integration of social history with the political history of the era. Kasturi and Lajwanti belong to the original group. They are biologically feminine yet exhibit predominantly male-oriented behavior. They recognize the norms of a culture that prioritizes males and expect others to adhere to those norms. Virmati, Shakuntala, and Swarna Lata belong to the same age group. They assert their uniqueness to some extent and refuse to conform to the regulations established inside the male-dominated social structure. Ida, the daughter of Virmati, belongs to the third generation. She is the most emancipated woman introduced in the novel. She refuses to adhere to the male-dominated norms about her attire and behavior. She ends her relationship with her partner when he compels her to terminate her pregnancy. The presentation demonstrates the advancements that have occurred in the status of women throughout history.

This study aims to explore the various nuances of orientation inequality depicted throughout the course of time in Manju Kapur's fictional narrative "Difficult Daughters". Historically, the exchange of women has been one of the three fundamental transactions that have contributed to the advancement of society, alongside the trades of labor and goods, and the trade of ideas. This trade has stimulated the establishment of a framework for family relationships. However, it has also sowed the seeds of imbalance for the feminine perspective. It is now being regarded as a commodity, similar to labor and goods, from the male perspective. When the girls are relocated from their birthplace and resettled elsewhere, they lose their sense of belonging. In addition, the male orientation has also established guidelines for this profession, such as determining who should be exchanged and with whom. The society recognizes and values girls who conform to these norms, which are associated with certain qualities such as being virtuous

and devoted, like devi and savitri. However, individuals who refuse to adhere to these regulations are referred to as paramours and whores.

Virmati, the protagonist of the novel, along with her cousin, Shakuntala, and her companion, Swarna Lata, belong to the future. They strive to assert their uniqueness and refuse to conform to the rules established by the male-dominated society. Their level of happiness or despair is contingent upon their degree of conformity or, conversely, their divergence from the accepted norms. Ida, Virmati's daughter, belongs to the latest generation. She asserts her uniqueness and decides to separate from her husband since he forces her to terminate the unborn child. She is the most emancipated of the female characters introduced in the book. The variation in the predicament of these women, belonging to different age groups, is partly attributed to their individual identity and actions, and partly due to the shifts in the socio-historical context.

Kasturi, Lajwanti, and Kishori Devi belong to the first generation of women portrayed in the story. They are conventional women characterized by male-oriented attributes. They envision that the primary purpose of a woman's life is to marry and procreate. Adhering to this male-focused tradition, Kasturi has given birth to eleven offspring, consisting of six females and five males. She becomes quite angry when her eldest daughter, Virmati, refuses to marry the person chosen by her elders. Due to the influence of a male-dominated culture, she wholeheartedly believes in the marriage rules established by it. The guardians have the authority to select the life partners for their young daughters. She becomes quite angry when she learns that her daughter, Virmati, has entered into a love marriage with a man who is already married. She derides and labels her as 'badmash' and 'randi'. She firmly instructs her to never encounter her again in the future. In addition, Lajwanti, her sister-in-law, is a product of a society that is predominantly focused on men. She has given birth to two children herself and has undergone three miscarriages. Similar to her sister-in-law, Kasturi, her primary focus in life is her daughter, Shakuntala, who has chosen not to marry and has opted for a life of independence in Lahore. Similar to other traditional women, she believes that a woman's life is not settled until she is married and has given birth to children. Kishori Devi, the mother of Harish Chander, who is a teacher, is portrayed as a traditional woman in the book. She experiences intense irritation at discovering her child's secretive activities with Virmati. The woman is shocked when her child abruptly arrives in front of her with a newly married second spouse. However, upon realizing that there is no alternative, she accepts Virmati as her daughter-in-law. Finally, she assumes the role of a caring stepmother upon learning about Virmati's pregnancy.

The mistreatment of women's orientation becomes evident when we examine the predicament

faced by women belonging to the younger generation. Virmati, the protagonist of the novel, undergoes the most profound experiences in life as she deliberately opts for the untrodden path. She opts against adhering to the conventional practice of early marriage and instead decides to pursue higher examinations. She becomes obsessed with Teacher Harish Chander and engages in illicit sexual intercourse with him, becoming the sole survivor of her fixation. However, she is excessively aware of her position in her sweetheart's life. She does not appreciate him when she has a skeptical perspective on his goals. She confronts him, stating, "I am renouncing my commitment because of your actions, tarnishing the reputation of my loved ones. I feel confined within the walls of my home and have been sent away to Lahore because no one knows how to handle my situation." Here I find myself in the position of being your enigmatic partner, burdened with shame, contemplating the potential repercussions of others discovering our situation, unable to achieve a state of tranquility or focus. Moreover, for what reason? As I possess a lack of intelligence." The citation is from Kapur, page 149. Undoubtedly, she inquires about her position in his life. She proposes a socially acceptable position in the form of a marital alliance, asking, "Why don't we get married?" You claim that your family has no influence. However, simultaneously, you enjoy behaving in that manner. Be honest with me. I can tolerate everything except this persistent indecisiveness. Swarna is an exemplary man who truly takes advantage of women. The source cited is from Kapur, page 149. Ultimately, she becomes his second wife. Nevertheless, this union creates a rift between her and her guardians, who view her as a disgrace to the family. She was incapable of attending the funeral ceremony for her father and grandfather. Even in her husband's residence, she is not extended an invitation. Ganga, his most unforgettable spouse, solidifies her influence over the household. She starts doing her responsibilities with heightened intensity towards her spouse and children. Commenting on Virmati's circumstances, Seema Malik observes, "Although she attempts to transcend one male-dominated boundary, she finds herself trapped in another, where her independent spirit is suppressed and all she can do is conform, compromise, and adapt." Malik Ironically, Harish, who is genuinely responsible for betraying his most significant partner, is recognized both in his social and professional spheres.

Shakuntala is another woman belonging to the second generation. She is freer than her mother. She has instilled a strong longing in Virmati. She has completed a Master of Science degree and currently works as a teacher at a school in Lahore. She is a somebody who has experienced the benefits of seizing opportunities and possesses an unconventional form of confidence in herself. She dresses smartly, engages in equestrian activities, smokes, plays card games such as badminton, freely purchases items, and socializes with family

members. She informs her cousin, Virmati, about the manner in which she and her companions journey, occupy themselves throughout the evenings, monitor each other's tasks, comprehend documents, and attend lessons. She is the one who empowers Virmati to overcome the traditional barriers that confine women and asserts, "the times are evolving and women are venturing out of their homes, so why shouldn't you?" The reference is to the source "Kapur" on page 18. Upon arriving in Lahore for her higher examinations, Virmati establishes herself there. She becomes a significant source of profound support for Virmati when the rest of her family distances themselves from her. Regardless, she also rejects the patriarchal societal norm that obligates women to marry and achieve motherhood.

Swarna Lata is a member of the second generation of women shown in the novel. The protagonist asserts her identity, defies her caretakers, travels to Lahore to pursue advanced education and live autonomously. She transforms into an advocate for the liberties of women. She opposes the Hindu Code Bill draft that excludes women from inheriting parental property rights. Finally, she marries the person who promises not to interfere in her social activities and also agrees to assist with family matters. Within the narrative, she assumes the role of a foil to Virmati, the protagonist of the book. Virmati's quest for independence leads her into an illicit sexual connection with Harish Chander, resulting in an unmarried pregnancy. She jeopardizes her opportunity by engaging in a wedding conspiracy with Teacher Harish Chander, a married man. Conversely, Swarna Lata enters into marriage on her own conditions. She arrives at Virmati's salvage and assists her in obtaining an enigmatic abortion. Within the story, she transforms into the quintessential embodiment of an emancipated woman.

Ida, the daughter of Virmati and Teacher Harish Chander, belongs to the third and final generation of women depicted in the book. She is shown as a highly contemporary woman in modern-day India. Similar to other women, she also faces the oppressive mindset of her parents. Nevertheless, she rebels against the familial and social obligations and asserts her freedom. When asked to meet her father's expectations, she questions, "Why is it crucial to fulfill them?" Ida enters into a marital commitment, yet she does not allow the partnership to compromise her independence. She decides to end her relationship with her partner when he compels her to terminate the pregnancy she had planned. Ida's progressive perspective on life sets her apart from her mother, who existed in a transitional phase between tradition and progress. Ida also establishes a clear distinction between her husband and her father. Both individuals were highly intelligent and have extensive knowledge. Regardless, whereas Virmati yielded to her spouse, Ida will not do the same.

An analysis of the female characters in the novel reveals that all of them are subject to gender

inequality. However, as they cater to different age groups, the level of difference varies in each case. Each subsequent era is progressively more liberated than its predecessor. Kasturi, Lajwanti, and Kishori Devi belong to the original group. Although they are biologically feminine, their behavior and upbringing are predominantly focused on male perspectives. They not only adhere to a male-centered value system themselves, but also insist that their successors should do the same. Virmati, Shakuntala, and Swarna Lata belong to the future. They strive to express their distinctiveness in their own individual way. Virmati refuses to marry the partner chosen by her parents. Considering all factors, she marries a man who is already married. However, it is worth noting that she transitions from one male-centered construction to another. Shakuntala, her cousin, becomes an educator in a school in Lahore and enjoys a life of freedom. She attends workshops and comprehends academic articles. Swarna Lata, Virmati's roommate in Lahore, becomes into a model for the contemporary women. She successfully achieves a harmonious balance between marriage and her independence. Ida possesses a position that represents the final stage of women depicted in the novel. She is more liberated than the others. She will defy the male-centric norms about her attire and behavior. She decides to end her relationship with her partner since he does not allow her to have their unborn child.

Difficult Daughters depicts the story of Virmati, a young girl who goes through physical and intellectual growth from childhood to adulthood. Her life becomes complicated due to her strong desire and need for education. Virmati's life history is influenced by various assumptions, desires, intense aggression, aversions stemming from fear, anger, or bitterness, as well as hopes and dreams for the attainment of joy and harmony. According to Sharmila, her life is a complex narrative filled with numerous intricate challenges. Kapur has portrayed the profoundly wounded psyche of Virmati, who is emotionally detached and overwhelmed by her family, desperately seeking solace in her former marriage to instructor Harish Chandra, only to face yet another unexpected disappointment. According to Dwivedi (105-106), the persona undergoes intentional splitting combination, where she is alternately divided and extended by various familial and public crises. Virmati typically seeks opportunities that are both unfortunate and limited for women in traditional Indian culture. She is required to "adapt, compromise, and modify" (DD 256) as this has been deemed necessary for women according to the long-standing strict tradition.

In the narrative, Virmati's adolescence is forfeited as she assumes the responsibility of caring for her siblings. During her early years, she was burdened with domestic responsibilities due to her mother Kasturi's constant work and illness. Given her seniority, Virmati is expected to shoulder a substantial portion of the family responsibilities. She yearned for affection and

tenderness from her mother. Regardless, Virmati's need was incomprehensible to her mother. Kapur portrays the scene as follows: "However, when Kasturi approached the youngest child, who was being held in the mother's arms, she would become agitated and push her away" (DD 6). Since her early years, Virmati longed for her mother's affection, but they never effectively communicated their emotions to each other. However, the act of being dismissed only intensifies her hidden desire for education and ultimately entraps her under the influence of the instructor who discovered this longing within her. She has a strong will to resist the prospect of marrying at a young age and yearned for the opportunity to receive an education. Kapur captures the state of chaos experienced by Virmati with the following observation: "As time went by, Virmati's disarray intensified." Occasionally, she may desire that - however, what could she ever desire? Is the individual referring to the practice of getting married at a young age and not receiving any formal education? The protagonist's resilience was tested as her anguish intensified. This is shown in the quote from "DD" on page 54. She is torn between marriage and pursuing more education, and is perplexed about which option to choose.

Steady dismissal of Kasturi's adoration leaves Virmati defenseless. It was solid desire for warmth that blinds her to the wedded condition of the teacher. The absence of feeling of understanding with respect to the two moms and little girls who need to break out new ways is depicted. Virmati secures the significance of adoration which is missed in her experience growing up days. So when it was stretched out by the teacher she promptly sustained it. Chandra explains the explanation of Virmati's shortcoming and adds: "The justification behind this conduct isn't love yet the absence of adoration. Virmati as a youngster got next to no affection. She needed it and missed it till the confirmations of adoration supported with sentences from English writing" (Audit). Karen Horney, a psychoanalytic scholar, expressed that when a few youngsters feel a lot of uneasiness and powerlessness they push toward others to look for help and acknowledgment. They will frequently become hopelessly enamored rapidly and feel an exceptionally impressive connection to individuals they may not know well. Thusly, Virmati, when dismissed by her mom rapidly acknowledges the adoration and friendship of the teacher. Horney accepted that depression came about because of fundamental uneasiness is brought about by relational connections.

The unending conversation about her marriage in the house upset her and further she feels choked in her home when she comes to be familiar with Ganga's pregnancy. Virmati understands the sadness of her unlawful enthusiasm for the teacher. His twofold standard bewilders her since he is communicating affection to Virmati on one side and simultaneously

making his significant other Ganga pregnant. She gets totally lost in the whirlpool of the lost energy of the Teacher. Virmati feels alarmed. She keeps in touch with the teacher.

The reasons for the self-destructive conduct result from the complicated cooperation of many variables. Ladies' more noteworthy helplessness to self-destructive way of behaving is because of orientation related mental misery or trouble. They endeavor to commit suicide when they can't endure the aggravation. The life altering situation of Virmati is the critical supporter of her self-destructive way of behaving. She was unable to find the glow from her family particularly from her mom which assists ladies with holding with the other relatives. Her brain falters between the longing for training and the affection for the teacher. She feels totally troubled. Thomas Joiner in his article "The Relational Mental Hypothesis of Self-destructive Way of behaving: Current Experimental Status" expresses that "The mental conditions of seen troublesomeness and a feeling of low belongingness or social distance happen in the psyche of individuals, they foster the longing for death" (n.page).

Finally, she was safely confined in the warehouse. throughout the winter evenings, they escort her outside and thereafter confine her in the godown throughout the daylight. Virmati is perplexed as to why she is confined in a manner like to a sack of wheat or lentils. She experiences intense frustration and embarrassment due to the lack of significance attributed to her existence. Currently, she experiences a sense of detachment from all her close acquaintances. In order to maintain a connection, she initiates a correspondence with the teacher, exchanging her emotions through written communication.

Virmati's future can be attributed to Kasturi's consistent neglect of her. She replies with confusion to Harish's passionate comments, as he becomes the first person in her life to make her feel loved and wanted. "No one else had ever regarded her as someone capable of greatness" (DD 74).

She explicitly states, "No one here is interested in engaging in genuine examination with me" (DD 99). The conflict between her internal and external selves intensified when her mother Kasturi's substantial identification with Virmati led her to view her daughter's desire for independence as nothing more than selfishness akin to thoughtlessness. Her insatiable craving for admiration, which her mother withholds, traps her, causing her to blur the line between love and lust, ultimately leading her down a path of perpetual shame and uncertainty. Virmati has experienced significant anguish and rebellion against the institutions of family, marriage, tradition, and society throughout her life. Her illicit affair with Harish exacerbates her already bleak existence. She becomes the epitome of dishonor and humiliation, tarnishing the family's reputation. Virmati is bound to a life of reciprocity according to the ethical

principles from which she finds no escape. Following her direct interaction with the teacher, Virmati appears to be ensnared in a sense of obligation and has become aware of the moral lapse within her. Kapur depicts the psychological trauma experienced by Virmati. When Virmati notices a change in her physique, she experiences unease. Occasionally, she encounters frigidity, fever, and mental torment. She is concerned about a serious problem due to her limited physical interaction with the teacher. Kapur accurately depicts Virmati's true illness.

Virmati's pregnancy before her marriage is the current situation. It is seen as abhorrent and appalling in traditional Indian society. She is aware of this deplorable situation she is facing. Virmati may desire to get married immediately. She informs the teacher, "Currently, you are required to elucidate the situation." Why don't we marry? You claim that your family has no influence. However, you seem to like continuing in this manner. Please communicate with me in a direct and clear manner. I can tolerate everything but this enduring indecisiveness. Swarna's statement is accurate. Men indeed exploit women! The document is identified as DD 149. Virmati's dilemma is representative of the plight faced by countless young Indian girls and women. Men indeed take advantage of such circumstances. They typically exploit individuals for their sexual and physical gratification. Virmati seems to experience a diminishing sense of profundity. A young lady with such characteristics does not possess any influence in conventional culture. She perseveres through her own choices and their consequences. Upon discovering her pregnancy, she realizes that Harish, the person for whom she defied both her spiritual and social aspects, shows little concern for her condition, causing her to emotionally shatter. Virmati experiences frustration due to the ordeal she must endure and contemplates the following: Following an abrupt termination, she comprehends a deep sense of emptiness within herself and the betrayal of genuine love. Ida accurately captures the extent of her inner anguish. Kapur depicts the monumental conflict that occurs in Virmati while she is in Lahore. She distanced herself from the situation, but her past memories with the teacher continue to haunt her, preventing her from moving forward in her life. Harish pursued her and once again a sense of intimacy developed between them. She pondered her own attendance at the Punjab Ladies' Understudy Gathering. She experienced a profound sense of loneliness and emptiness by remaining in that place. She contemplates the mission within her own mind by focusing on the discourse surrounding the importance of opportunity.

Virmati's marriage to the teacher brought her a great sense of satisfaction. Nevertheless, she felt a sense of guilt. She was aware of her loved ones. She frequently pondered her relatives and their potential reactions and actions. These things were significantly distressing her cognitive processes. She was experiencing hardship. Her

mental state oscillated between her significant other, who fulfilled all her needs, and her family, whose support and approval were crucial to her. The predicament she encountered may be representative of other young women in similar circumstances.

Destiny is so unfriendly to Virmati. She experienced unnatural birth cycle. Along these lines, she experienced mental anguish and wretchedness. Virmati's life in Lahore is brimming with mental trouble and disappointment. She went to Lahore for concentrate however there is no extension in her life. She felt totally desolate and didn't stir up with different understudies in the school.

As a second spouse to the teacher, Virmati is dependably looking for her own personality and acknowledgment. Virmati loses all feeling of personality and encounters embarrassment as a second spouse of Harish and battles to account for herself. She is actually somewhat straightforward to negate Harish's exotic oppression. She becomes compliant and succumbs to the impulses and likes of Harish. She observes that she is as yet stupid and quiet and she is as yet expected to follow and never to lead. She had to be quiet all through her life. Kasturi's words have, "a generally hitched and a become valid, "As a man backstabber to his significant other can never bring joy to any ladies. He is a common individual trapped in his own longings" (DD 85). She isn't allowed an opportunity to think and envision within the sight of her significant other. As of now she feels estranged in the place of the teacher and further the reality of voicelessness expanded her interior injury. The awful injuring of voicelessness begins from the variable of 'othering'. Her encounters become unspeakable. Ladies are injured by this avoidance that looks to represent them.

Actual enduring of Virmati is brought about by the teacher's absence of comprehension of mental tension on Virmati. Kapur, hence, depicts the perpetual battle seething in the fomented soul of Virmati at the cognizant level.

Ida's assurance to find her mom's past comes full circle in laying out major areas of strength for an among her and her mom with "each word a block in a chateau" (DD 259). At the point when she understood this, she is by all accounts freed and argues to her dead mother, "Don't torment me any longer" (DD 259). Ida, looking for 'oneself' lost trying to be a model girl under tension from her folks, attempt to "attempted to connect the inconsistencies in her day to day existence by wedding a man who was likewise a scholar" (DD 268) to wind up in "heartbreaking marriage" (DD 258). In this unique circumstance, Celly suitably comments, "The clashing cases of Virmati's own longing for opportunity, satisfaction and joy, following into the gaps of 'parcel' in her mental and actual development into the completeness of womanhood, are bound to re-ordered in

the predetermination of Ida and numerous different ladies in Indian culture" (72).

The elderly individual experienced a profound surprise. Regrettably, his life has come to an end. He appeared remarkably young, although being just fifty years old. What is the potential solution? The answer remains unknown. He was in seclusion. There was a cessation of activities at the procession, and the presence of toxic gas. Baoji appeared visibly pallid and fatigued. Following his daughter's actions, he seldom experienced something comparable. Each preceding year, characterized by tranquility and lethargy. It is advisable for everyone to pay attention and learn from this. It caused his death. Undoubtedly caused his demise. The user's text is "(DD 238)".

Her father became the victim of communal rage, but she was denied the opportunity to attend his funeral and mourn. Interestingly, the teacher was allowed to show concern, but the deceased's daughter was not. Kapur effectively portrays Virmati's inner turmoil: Harish approached each relatives, firmly grasped their hands, and offered his condolences. Virmati, who had been isolated from her family circle throughout the evening, was astonished to witness these condolences being received with the same level of kindness with which they had been presented. He was being recognized, what could be stated about her? She strongly desired to isolate herself and cry within the group that surrounded her mother. She desired to be enveloped in its comforting inclusiveness as well.

However, Virmati's mentality persevered through all challenges, resulting in her increased stability. She ignores the opinions of people at present. She confronted it and utilized the physical and profound injuries to her advantage in her approach, resulting in a complete transformation of her internal mentality. Kapur elaborates on her transformation.

In this manner, the narrative portrays the propagation of orientation imbalance across three generations. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the advancement of time is coinciding with favorable advancements in the status of women. Women have initiated the act of expressing themselves and asserting their rights. Nevertheless, actual opportunity and fairness remain elusive for them.

In conclusion, Manju Kapur's "Difficult Daughters" stands as a literary masterpiece that continues to captivate readers with its timeless exploration of gender, tradition, and resilience. Through Virmati's indomitable spirit and Shubh's poignant vulnerability, Kapur invites us to reflect on the intricate interplay of societal constructs and feminine agency. As we navigate the complexities of our own lives, "Difficult Daughters" serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring quest for identity and self-determination in the face of adversity.

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