



Available online at www.jlls.org

JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTIC STUDIES

ISSN: 1305-578X

Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 17(4), 3360-3364; 2021

Virmati's Battle For Self-Actualization In Manjukapur's Novel Difficult Daughters

Mrs. P. Kalaivani^a, Dr. A. Santhanalakshmi^b

^aPh.D Scholar, Department of English, ADM College for Women (Autonomous), (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli) Nagapattinam- 611 011

^bResearch Advisor & Associate Professor & Head (Rtd), Department of English, ADM College for Women (Autonomous), (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli) Nagapattinam- 611 011.

APA Citation:

Kalaivani, P., & Santhanalakshmi, A. (2021). 'Virmati's Battle For Self-Actualization In Manjukapur's Novel Difficult Daughters' *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(4), 3360-3364.

Submission Date: 11/10/2021

Acceptance Date: 25/12/2021

Abstract

This study aims to examine a middle-class woman's need to survive, as well as her need to carve out a place and an identity for herself in a patriarchal society. The middle-class woman exhibits a trait of rebelliousness and silent protest even in her submissiveness. Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* delves into the complex terrain of the Indian patriarchal family, leaving us in awe of the various issues that are deeply rooted in any Indian middle-class family – the revolt against age-old traditions, the quest for identity, marriage problems, and, finally, the struggle of women for survival and the desire to create a separate identity for herself apart from her roles as a wife, mother, daughter, and daughter-in-law. The paper entitled "Virmati's battle for self-actualization in ManjuKapur's novel *Difficult Daughters*."

Keywords: loneliness, marriage, Patriarchal Society, Struggle for Survival, self- Actualization, Woman Protagonist.

1. Introduction

With their excellent vision of men and matters, Indian women writers such as Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Gita Hariharan, and Shobha De have given Indian-English fiction a new depth. It offers a wealth of knowledge and insight into the meaning-making process. We can view a new world through the eyes of women writers, and we can attempt to realise the potential of human achievement, particularly among women, with their help. They have addressed the place and status of women in Indian society, as well as their concerns and plights, on several occasions. Marital bliss and the role of women at home are a primary focus in a culture where individualism and protest have frequently remained unfamiliar concepts. However, today's female authors can openly and brazenly express themselves.

Kasturi and Suraj Prakash have a daughter named Virmati. Kasturi had eleven children, one after the other, and she continued to give birth to children on a regular basis in order to replace the children she had lost. As a result, the entire weight of home duties shifts to Virmati. Virmati's silent struggle starts at home, where she has an unfortunate position. She bears the brunt of the family's

responsibilities as the oldest kid. When virmati ached for her mother's attention, she becomes enraged and pushes her away, exclaiming:

“However, when she puts her head next to the youngest baby , feeding in the mothers’s arms, Kasturi would get irritated and push her away. ‘Have you seen to their food- milk- cloth – studies?’ ” (DD, 6)

Virmati despises her mother's pregnancies because they bring caustic comments from Lajwanti and others, which embarrass her. Kasturi was pregnant the second time around. Her sister-in-law comments:

Her sister-in law’s words echoed in her ears, ‘Breeding like Cats and Dogs’, ‘Harvest time again’ (DD, 7)

Her siblings and sisters referred to her as their "second mother." Virmati's friendship with Shakuntala allows her to delve deeply into the nectar of liberation that she discovers beyond the house. For her, education entails the attainment of independence as well as the development of fresh perspectives and attitudes. Both of them talked about education and independence. Kasturi notices the changes in her daughter Virmati as she grows older.

Virmati's perspective changes after a single trip to Lahore. She strives to achieve her goals by receiving an education, but her dream of moving to Lahore is still a long way off. She wanted to continue her studies, but her family was not at all ready for it. She becomes absolutely frustrated. Even the faintest of things bothered her too much. As a mother of many children, Kasturi saw her daughter's engagement as the most important matter. She was unconcerned about her education. Virmati, she believes, should be aware of the duties of married life. Virmati matures into a lovely young lady and enrolls in college. Professor Harish's interaction with virmati gives him the chance to fulfil her ambitions.

Harish's interaction with Virmati gives him the chance to fulfil her ambitions. Harish, the professor, was appointed by her family to look after her studies. As is normal, Virmati builds intimacy with him. In the presence of the professor, Harish, she begun to experience a peculiar type of joy and satisfaction. Her emotional needs appear to be met by the professor, despite the fact that it is against society's moral standards. Both Virmati and professor are perplexed about the fate of such a human interaction. The state has been identified by the author:

“Days passed, and Virmati’s confusion grew. She would sometimes wish that but what could she wish? Early marriage and no education? No Professor and love? Her soul revolted and her suffering increased” (DD, 54)

The Professor and Virmati exchanged a number of letters. She's undecided about what she should do. It was quite tough for her to tell anyone in the family about her and Harish's relationship. The Professor, on the other hand, was developing a romantic mentality. She is to accept the advice of her elders, particularly in regards to her marital settlement. She's formed her own set of loves and dislikes. Despite the fact that Shakuntala had motivated her, her troubles seemed to escalate. Kasturi is eager to perform her daughter's wedding as soon as feasible. Virmati and the Professor continue to meet and part ways, despite the objections of their families. They want to go over the limit and have no qualms about doing so. Their love making as revealed in the following lines:

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"The Professor turned Virmati towards himself, and cupped her face in his hands. He took off her glasses, then stroked her face, with small, caressing gestures. He kissed her eyes, her nose, her soft, full mouth" (DD,67)

Virmati's affection for the professor grows increasingly ardent. She informs her parents of her desire to marry the professor alone. She then chooses to continue her education in Lahore. The rest of the family is opposed to her decision, but they will submit to Virmati's wishes. Her intention to study in Lahore remains unaltered. The Professor is already married and the father of a kid, which Virmati discovers. In the residence, he shared a room with his wife. The professor is always attempting to meet with Virmati. He is aware of the nature of her relationship with the professor, but her defiance is short lived because Harish was successful in persuading Virmati to engage in sexual activity.

In the companionship of the professor, she might satisfy her sexual desire. However, she perceives the moral fall in her heart after this activity and a sense of regret sweeps through her mind. After a while, Virmati becomes pregnant. The Professor feels frustrated and dejected, and he seems unable to make a decision. He is already married, and this only adds to the confusion. Virmati believes the professor is responsible for her life's misfortune. She asks the Professor,

"I break my engagement because of you, blacken my family's name, and locked up inside my house, get sent to Lahore because no one know what to do with me" (DD,149)

The double standard has also affected Virmati. Society. It is hardly noticed if a man remains single for a long time. On the other hand, if a girl is unmarried for a long time, it becomes a source of gossip and speculation. Wherever Virmati walks, she is constantly confronted with a barrage of questions. When she meets other teachers, they all have the same reaction:

"All of them wanted to know why she was not married young and pretty, and coming from a good family what could be the problem? It bothered them."(DD,187)

It is unthinkable for an Indian woman to get pregnant before her marriage. Virmati finds it difficult to prolong her pregnancy for an extended period of time. Virmati finds it difficult to prolong her pregnancy for an extended period of time. She makes the decision to terminate her pregnancy. She will be admitted to the hospital as a result of this. The professor and Virmati both become victims of their own web. Harish was in a pickle and sought guidance from a variety of sources. He met with a poet, a friend, who recommended he marry Virmati right away. He explains:

"What can I do? I am hummed in and tortured on all sides. I know I have been unfair to her. I know I have been unfair to her – I know. And yet what can I do?" (DD, 201)She says that she can't explain anything to you.

After five years of love, the Professor and Virmati finally married. Virmati's marriage to the Professor provides her with a lot of joy. She, on the other hand, feels guilty. It was also tough for the

professor to keep track of things at home. He is hesitant to confront his family, particularly his wife and children. After her marriage, Virmati intends to return to her hometown. She was unsure whether or not her mother and other family members would accept her. She is aware of the hazard. Kasturi, her mother, is not pleased with her newly wed daughter. She starts berating her:

***“Get out of her! Why bother to come now? Kasturi’s harsh words hit Virmati, and she bent her head, hoping this was just the initial reaction, her mother was understandably hurt”.*(DD,220)**

Virmati tried to convince everyone in Harish's family and also her own. She was doomed to fail. It is difficult for a girl to please everyone in her family. Virmati is alone in Harish's house; no one welcomes her when her father dies, and every member of the family seems to blame her for his death. In Lahore, her existence is filled with mental anguish and disappointment. She is in Lahore for higher education, but she has no plans for the future. She is lonely and avoids interacting with other students at college. In her writings, Manju Kapur expresses her mental anguish:

***“Virmati’s life in Lahore was isolated. She was married with a husband, a Co-wife and two step children. She had one abortion and one miscarriage. These barriers divided her from her fellows. She read she studied, and she spent time in the quiet hush of the library with its gallery running round”* (DD, 251)**

2. Conclusion

In the usual Indian society, life as a second wife is difficult for any woman. This is the case with Virmati. She is constantly on the lookout for her own identity and acceptance in both her family and society. She no longer feels at ease after three or four years of marriage to Harish. She doesn't have the legal right to be a wife. But now she wants to be able to move into her husband's home. She does whatever she wants when she returns to Motti Cottage. Leaving the house and making such decisions was not easy for any girl. But she has the courage to do so.

As a result, the story provides insight into the inner turmoil and loneliness that have an impact on have an impact on one’s personal identity. It depicts women’s lives, their struggles for basic rights, their search for identity, and their survival. Through education, they become conscious of their self-elimination, which is demonstrated in the case of new women.

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