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## FEMININE VOICE: NARRATIVE PATTERNS THROUGH INNOCENT EYES IN MANJU KAPUR'S DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS

### Article Particulars

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### Abstract

*Narrative technique is a prospect through which the writer shows the characters, settings and actions of the incidents. She develops a narrative technique with the intention of developing the reader's attachment. It fosters both the intellectual and emotional involvement within the reader by exciting particular psychological states of perception. A reader's understanding to literary text is influenced by his discernment of objects in general. Readers receive different links between time and space. To highlight the different patterns of relations that, readers might arrive at. A novelist who is focused to explore her imagination and experience might show invented records and observations in the correct proportion to satisfy the reader. By accepting definite narrative techniques which are most appropriate to her, she gives an honest and actual portrait through her fictitious writing.*

**Keywords:** *Marital Relationship, Female Voice, Violence, Displacement, Adjustment.*

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Indian Nationalism was a cultural production as it was an ideological construct. The forging of nationalism was a careful reiteration of separation from western tradition. The nationalist recognized the domain of culture as consisting of two opposite spaces: the material and the spiritual. The material life was an extension of the western tradition while the spiritual life represented the pure and real meaning of eastern belief. The material and the spiritual distinction was connected to everyday life and happened similarities when social position was divided into inner and outer life. Men represented the material world and women are the protector of home and inner world that was genuine and important to the formation of national individuality.

Manju Kapur in her novel, *Difficult Daughters* explores these two spheres spiritual and material. Emancipation and empowerment did not provide space to educated woman that was easily enjoyed by men. Kapur explores the pre-partitioned days to examine the process of education and attempts to locate the identity of women in male-dominated society.

Pratha Chatterjee in his *The Nation and its Fragments* reveals the anti-colonial nationalism that constructs its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it commences its political strife with the imperial force Chatterjee states the anti-colonialism acts, thus by distinguishing the world of social institution into spaces, the material and the spiritual. Marjorie Boulton, in her polemic says:

A good novel is true in the sense that it gives a sincere, well-observed, enlightening picture of a portion of human life.(Boulton 95)

The novelist draws no limitation between the real world and the world of fiction. It is as if things are actual. However, the inconsistency of the incidents takes away the curtain of actuality that she attempts to put on her character. Authors usually transform the artificiality of the narrative in the reality of everyday life. In that way novelists effort is to create a world full of kitsch. Female novelists give:

"...insights" a wealth of understanding a reservoir of meanings and a basis of discussion. Through women writers' eyes we can see a different world... a significant and central place in women's lives.

(Dhawan 10-11)

In feminist writings, female's observation becomes the main concern. This literature searches to demythologize the myth that male is the universal representative of humanity and female is too small to be seen. In nineteenth century we see that female writers like Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Mrs. Gaskell, Dorothy Richardson, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Margaret Drabble expected some of the current day feminist issues in their writings. In twentieth century, a more aware effort has been created by the female novelists to voice for them and of the fields of observation connected to themselves. Later on they followed efforts to get their symbols, shape and syntax. Dorothy Richardson is perhaps the first to realize the requirement. In *Pilgrimage*, she attempts to make what she terms the "Feminist Prose". She says that there is a massive difference between male and female works. Helen Cixous also subscribes to the same opinion that a female does not write like a male because she speaks with the body and advises like Irigaray that the structural dissimilarity between man and woman genitals is the medium of the distinction between male's language and a woman's language. Virginia Woolf admitted that female's work is often loquacious – mere talk split over paper.

In the feminist writing, male's language has been faced by the construction of a distinct kind of language, one that is more emphasis on body. Critics have evaluated the language uttered by female and got some inherent dissimilarities for example the language of female is more hesitant, least fluent and sentences are left unfinished. Females are more silent and adopt a more socially oriented and meek pattern of demeanour than men. Marilyn French says:

Their style is indicative of their desire for sharing for communication for interaction and for harmony. Their sentence is in direct contrast to a male sentence that ends with snapping finality, barring all possibility of interaction. (French 58)

Kapur's textures of the novels are suffused with feminine Sensibility, the structures of the novels are also feminine in the sense. In fact all these techniques i.e. achieving their own subject matter, their own language, style are an effort on female's part to get a place for them. Sandra G M Gilbert states:

Woman must inevitably find that she has no home, nowhere", I look for myself through the centuries and don't see myself anywhere.

(Gilbert XVI)

The female writers have been constrained to follow the structure of the male discourse which is against their nature. Caroline Burke comments:

Women's narrative or an ideal feminine narrative should be plural, autocratic, diffused, and indefinable within the familiar rules of (masculine) logic.

(Burke 280).

It can be observed that the marginalized situation of female as daughter, sister, wife and mother has been poignantly depicted in the selected writings. Manju Kapur has provided a new dimension to the Indian Novel in English by shifting the attention from outer to inner actuality. Her artistic talent lies in the portrayal of the psychic status of the characters who often indulge in self-assessment and found themselves in the process. Thus plot, story and style are subordinated to the character delineation. The themes of marital affinities, rootlessness, anxiety and alienation successfully dealt with. She reveals a happy mingling of both the emotions and forms. In theme, she shows the different social problems spoiling the lives of her female protagonists.

Kapur delineates a very deep evaluation of the sufferings of the miserable women living under veil in a society of conservative patriarchal harassment – a society which seldom permits female to present her opinion in full-fledged way: a society which has constantly put numerous unbearable obstacles in the smooth path of her development; a society, which never hesitates in dominating women without any reason. Apart from gender distinction she has also revealed other topics of romantic, national and patriotic conditions. So far the styles of Manju Kapur is concerned she has obtained her own language style. She never shows her themes in a monotonous way; her writings deal with a very fine combination of style and theme.

Being a female novelist, Manju Kapur has followed a feminist style in her works as she herself allows that she represented female voice. About the influence on her writing style, she said that she developed her own style to suit her subject matter and temperament. Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* is a completely feminist text, which presents the issue of gender distinction and the struggle of Indian female under the oppressive mechanism of a closed community. There is an undercurrent feminine approach which provides grave touch to the story. The novel is divided into twenty seven chapters including the Epilogue. The narrative design of the novel is set around the time of partition. With the background setting in Punjab pre-independent India, between Amritsar and Lahore, the novel commences in a unconventional way with Ida's speech:

The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother. This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be, do not haunt me anymore. (Kapur 259)

This speech also makes the reader go to understand what propelled her to deliver a statement to this effect and why she did not wish to be like her mother and relate the answer to the wider range of male-oriented society.

Ida is a divorcee and narrator of the fictitious tale. Though the chief narrator is the writer herself, but Ida is the storyteller. Virmati's tale is narrated in the third person with some recovery to the epistolary pattern, but is designed by the first person's narration of a search. This journey of search is that of Virmati's daughter, Ida, as she searches to reestablish her mother's history. In the fictitious tale, we do not find Virmati's voice. She cannot speak out, being definitely situated at the juncture of two dominations: patriarchy and colonialism. What we have is her daughter's recreation: Meanakshi Mukherjee states:

It is very different from the general run of novels dealing with feminist issues. It is about a woman who seeks freedom and finally achieves it, but it comes in a very shabby form. The choices she makes don't lead to a happy life. I found it an impressive novel. (Mukherjee 37)

In this way, constructing the plot of the fictitious tale, Virmati's extraordinary conscious existence is perceived from her daughter's point of view although it happens a multipoint of view, as the omniscient writer is beside her or rather we should state that author herself speaks through the narrator. The tale of Virmati is told along with the battle she fights between her responsibilities and faith towards her family and her affection as well as the attempts of that duration. The narrative of the fictitious tale delineates the historical struggles in Amritsar before the division of the country but staying at the periphery and it sustains a novel presenting with the feminist's issues. The narrative voice piles us an arrangement of records and evidences dealing the personal and social issues.

The novel starts with the funeral picture- the narrator observing the cremation of her mother at Manikarnika ghat at Varanasi. From this end the narrator moves to the commencement. The crucial concern of the novel is the troublesome conscious existence and the tragic death of Virmati, Ida reveals that she would not like to be a replica of her mother, as her mother did not follow her own mother. Alka Singh comments:

Virmati remains a vibrating presence all through Ida's life. (Singh 133)

Ida's understanding to the characters shows as if there is no strange character in the fictitious tale with whom the narrator is not aware of Maju Roy explains:

.....this is also realized by her familiarity with the characters' innermost thoughts and feelings, her knowledge of past and present and her presence in locations where characters meet in total privacy. In addition, what makes this novel compelling reading and distinguishes it from other tales of adulterous love and romantic intrigue is the sympathy and integrity with which the author and Ida reconstruct the past of Virmati. (Roy 62-70)

Thus the plot of the fictitious tale is weaved by novelist's narrative scheme and narrates the tale of Ida's mother Virmati. By providing complete respect to Virmati's desire, her deceased body has been consigned to flames. The tale moves ahead

when Ida departs to Amritsar to recognize her mother's roots from relatives who state about ignorance of past and enjoyment of present situations.

Virmati, the female protagonist in a very traditional way, helps her ever sick and pregnant mother in household business, observing her younger relatives and their literary activities everything moves on as usual but the advancement where her novel takes a turn is the postponement of her wedding with Indrajit, for some time. Her zeal for individuality, affection and her wish for further education make her to be infatuated towards Professor Harish, a married man. Here she gets herself divided between her responsibility towards her family and her quest for identity. She rejects her arranged marriage. The novel shows a new dramatic twist, when she tries a suicidal deed but is rescued. After a span of five years, Harish married her with a fixed hesitation, revealing his helplessness. She happens his second spouse, socially allowed, but rejected by her own family.

Her tale takes a new point when the division riots create Ganga, with family to move Kanpur, and Virmati finds an opportunity to come back to her own house and gives birth to her daughter, Ida, the storyteller. Thus she comes to accept the childhood of her mother and her typical motherhood connecting for her daughter's security. The fictitious tale without any literacy snobbery shows a daughter's reestablishment of her fractured and shattered past hanging on her mother's tale.

The fictitious tale is a traditional linear narrative. Kapur without any linguistic trickery and gimmickry deals with the post-modern novel in a traditional knit narrative structure. The climax of the novel happens at a crucial turn of Indian history of 1947. Partition was a dreadful incident in history of India. Numerous authors like Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal and Manohar Malgonkar based their novels on this incident. Many female novelists like Krishna Sobti, Ismat Chughtai, Amrita Pritam, Attia Hosain, Shauna Singh Baldwin were affected by this turbulent event and their novels present the female's experiences, thereby showing a gendered perspective of partition. For numerous authors partition is not an event but a process. These novelists observe partition long after the real vivisection of the nation. Women were the bad witnesser to violence and reserved its recollection in their bodies as presented by Shauna Singh Baldwin in her prize winning novel, *What the Body Remembers*. Manju Kapur mingles the tale of India's partition and the family partition. The theme of partition acts at two levels in the fictitious tale. Virmati makes lines of partition in her parental family as well as in the family of her spouse. She sorrowfully feels that independence and partition are closely generative.

Kapur has appropriately applied the flash-back technique to reveal the character of Virmati but her technique of flash-back within the flash-back enigmas and confuses the reader who is not able to identify the narrator and the person who is the center point of the speaker. On various occasions, it is juxtaposed where the reader is shuffled about the present, the past and the future in an un-systematic manner. The story is

written in simple and direct style but sometimes it happens hard to keep track of story threads. *Difficult Daughters* has undeniably a personal touch. Sumita Pal correctly concentrates on the autobiographical elements in the fictitious tale.

Like Virmati, Manju Kapur was born in Amritsar and teaches in college. Her family was victims of partition and was Arya Samajis like Virmati's family. Manju Kapur's father too was professor, like Virmati's husband. Manju Kapur admits that she herself had been a difficult daughter for the mother whose priority was marriage and she, in turn wants her daughters to have good jobs. (Pal 37)

Letter writing is another important technique used in this fictitious tale. Letters exchanged between characters, assist the narrative to go forward as well as reveal their inner thoughts. Virmati's self-analysis of two distinct letters, one by Harish and other by Indrajit, fetches a new point to her conscious existence. Her informative letter to Harish in which she falls him about her desire of committing suicide, protects her life. It is though exchange of letters again that both of them reveal their inner views to each other. Harish's letters to a great extent, present his selfish intention to grab Virmati to satisfy his wish. When Virmati scolds him of what has happened, he sends her a poem titled Love's Unity.

Love's Unity

How can I tell thee when in love thee best

In rapture or repose? How shall I say?

I only know I love thee every way, plumed for love' fight, folded in love's nest see,  
what is day but night bedewed with rest?

And what the night except the tried- our day?

And tis love's difference not loves's decay. So rounds my love, returning where  
begun,

And still beginning, never most nor least,

But fixed by various, all love's part in one (Kapur 98)

The professor sends this poem to alter her mind and pull her from reality to the world of imaginations. In the field of characterization, Kapur reveals the depth of her character's inner thoughts and evaluates their intentions very carefully. The story deals with Virmati's pains and split personality. Although Kapur provides her female protagonist a voice to some extent fades with her adjustment concerning her living with Ganga in the same house and in the end, on the subject of naming her only daughter. It appears she does not get anything from her life's observations. On the one hand she is powerful enough with a focused desire and she can resist all kinds of social exploitation while on the other hand, she is too submissive to kick out Harish from her conscious existence even after the loss of her virginity. Still, Virmati's struggle to find satisfaction cannot be demeaned because she succumbs. What matters most is to have created an effort, on her portion, to pop out the depressive shell and for Virmati

to have attempted to act the same in the pre-independence India is actually a great success. Gur Pyari Jandial argues in this connection:

It would be a mistake to devalue Virmati's struggle because she failed, for what mattered was to have made the attempt: what is necessary is to break the patriarchal mould, and for Virmati to have tried to do that in the forties was a great achievement. (Jandial 116)

Ganga has been placed comparatively a confined space to develop. Her name appears for the first time on page 86 but before this she is cited as 'she' the woman and 'her' as if she does not deserve a name. The novelist voices her happiness by applying rich and useful expression of colloquial Punjabi language and makes a cultural context of the plot. These Punjabi cultural phrases and accent provide the story an unmatched Punjabi colour. These words, to cite a few, are 'lease', 'kismet', 'gandi', 'baiji', 'gully', 'bas-bas', 'he bhagwan', 'bapre' 'four annas a seer', 'shaan', 'pehnje', 'praji' and so on.

Symbols are used very skillfully. It is through symbols that Virmati is reminded of her secondary position in the house. When Virmati was hanging her own clothes out to dry She gets Harish clothes hanging:

...right there is the middle of the line, between some small and some large female ones.

(Kapur 199)

This symbolizes Ganga's right over her husband and also her position in her life and home. And in the evening, Virmati gets her clothes 'hanging forlornly at the end' Kapur (199) symbolizing her isolated place in the house. Manju Kapur's second novel, *A Married Woman* deals with the satisfying observation at the scene of displacement often realized by women in the traditional institution of marriage. The plight of female characters at the individual level is referential to the alterations in value orders and moralities at the cultural, social and religious levels. The author not only explores the trauma of the oppressed women but also create it visible to all that women are now focused to struggle for their rights. Manju Kapur in her own individual feminist voice frankly emphasizes that to modern women are women of substance, not only sex objects in the patriarchal society. And above all she has declared her voice that women too are human beings. She supported importantly in reestablishing fiction from male-orientation to female orientation by presenting pangs of child- birth of female characters.

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