



Literature

Elixir Literature 87 (2015) 35617-35619

Elixir
ISSN: 2229-712X

Dominant Mothers in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters

M. Geetha¹ and J. Sundarsingh²

¹Department of English, Dr. SNS Rajalakshmi College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

²Department of English, Karunya University, Coimbatore-641114.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 12 August 2015;

Received in revised form:

27 September 2015;

Accepted: 03 October 2015;

ABSTRACT

The present paper entitled "Dominant Mothers" concentrates on how motherhood become a dominant feelings and it made them to decide the destiny of their daughters. The portrayal of mothers as dominant ones in the novels of *Difficult Daughters* is realistic and also shows how mother characters voice their welfare oriented attitudinal behaviours towards their daughters.

© 2015 Elixir All rights reserved.

Keywords

Alienation,
Identification,
Traditional,
Patriarchy,
Domination.

Introduction

Manju Kapur's novels bring out the great concern and dominant nature of a mother in connection with her daughter's growth into womanhood and then wifehood. The mother characters like Kasturi and Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* voice their welfare oriented attitudinal behaviours towards their daughters. In the process, they are seen dominating over their well grown-up daughters as if they were still children. The daughters are also never in agreement with their mothers and do not like their dominance over them even after they can take care of themselves independently. The mothers used to propose the types of education and marriages as something good for their daughters' safety and independence, but the daughters would always dispose of their mothers' proposals with selfish motives. This is the conflict seen going on between a mother and her daughter and this conflict is unavoidable in all ages.

Relationship of a mother with her daughter, though it is something divine, is full of complex emotions. If one does not get what the other expects, the disappointments in expectations become responsible for the existence of feelings like anger, resentment, and hatred between them. Manju Kapur has endorsed this conflict as a universal one by talking about herself in the roles of a daughter as well as a mother and about two different attitudes to life in her two different identities:

I [Manju Kapur] was a difficult daughter myself. The conflict carries on through generations because mothers want their daughters to be safe. We {mothers} want them to make the right choices-'right' in the sense that they are socially acceptable. My mother wanted me to be happily married. I want my daughter to have good jobs. (qtd. in Bala and Chandra, 1999 p.107)

Her portrayal of mothers as dominant ones in all the novels is realistic to the score. She has not at all exaggerated in the depiction of the mothers' roles. She has brought to the mental picture of the readers what she has experienced both as a daughter and mother and what she has seen happening between a mother and a daughter in the traditional and modern Indian families.

Kasturi in *Difficult Daughters* was a traditional mother and her world was within her home and it was nothing but domesticity, marriage and childbearing. She never moved away from these womanly duties on any account and at any cost. She expected her two grown up daughters Virmati and Indumathi to be like her in settling into marital life as early as possible. She also brought to the knowledge of her elder daughter Virmati that it was her duty to get married and enter into marital life with her life partner as early as possible instead of pursuing education. Virmati was against her early marriage and she insisted on her pursuit of education for independence and individuality. Kasturi felt that her daughter's desire for education and not for early marriage was against her family tradition and so she did not like Virmati's rebellious attitude against her traditional brought up. She demonstrated her motherly dominance over her daughter, recollecting the mental make-up of her mother:

Study means developing the mind of the girl for the benefits of her entire family. I studied too, but my mother would have killed me if I had dared even to express my desire to dress anything other than the one bought for me by her" (DD. p.17).

Kasturi had been brought up with the thinking that no daughter should think of anything other than her domesticity, marriage, her wifehood, and motherhood because these were the things considered as the cult of true womanhood. Hence, Virmati should follow the soot steps of her mother. When Virmati was not ready to prefer her early marriage to education, Kasturi brought to her knowledge about the faithfulness of all traditional daughters and the importance of marriage for every girl:

When I was your age, the girls left their houses only after they had got married. [You must keep in mind that] a woman who is without her own home and family [that come only with her marriage] is a woman without moorings. (DD. p.111).

She also compelled her daughter to settle down into domestic life as all other girls of her age had done. She then informed Virmati with assertion of status superiority "Leave your studies, because it is going to make you so bad tempered

Tele:

E-mail addresses: geethamothi.38@gmail.com

© 2015 Elixir All rights reserved

that as an unmarried woman, you are forgetting what comes next” (DD. p.21). She expected Virmati’s positive reply because it would only augur well for the other children of the family.

Kasturi tried her level best to make her daughter to see reason. She implored her not be adamant in the refusal of her marriage and in her determination of the pursuit of education. When she found Virmati continuing to be steadfast in carrying out her personal interests, she showed her authority as a mother. She began questioning Virmati’s learning, which had deprived her of reasonable thinking. She started rebuking Virmati for entertaining unconventional dreams in her heart. She looked least bothered about her daughter’s desire for further education and she wanted to shape her daughter into another Kasturi of traditional bent of mind. She began to entertain the feeling that “what has been good for her [Kasturi] should also be good for her daughter. As she has been brought up in this way, she [Virmati] should share her lot.” (Beauvoir p.534).

Kasturi used her authority and commanded her daughter to conform to tradition and the wishes of her mother, “Remember, you are going to have your marriage next month. See, I do not take poison to make you do it” (p.60). Therefore, she arranged a marriage for Virmati with Inderjeet, a Canal engineer. Despite her warning, Virmati refused to concede to her mother’s proposal stubbornly. Kasturi’s act was nothing but the attitude of patriarchy:

Kasturi unwittingly becomes the voice of patriarchy in showing her dominant attitudes as a mother. She holds traditional ideals as indispensable values of life with which she has been brought up by patriarchy. When her daughter [Virmati] goes against conventional values to fulfill her personal desires, she takes her attitude as a rebellion against her own self. (Rishi p.92) However, her dominant attitude towards Virmati had a setback when Virmati attempted suicide. She did not know how to manage the situation and save the family name and honour. She acted according to the demand of the situation. She could not change her daughter to her way of life. Therefore she had to change herself and made her second daughter Indumathi marry Inderjeet, the bridegroom fixed for Virmati. As a mother Kasturi had failed in making Virmati accept her early marriage.

No traditional mother would expect that her daughter would fall in love during her pursuit of education. Neither would she get her daughter married to a married man as his second wife. Kasturi as a mother was no exception. When she came to know of Virmati’s love for a married man Professor Harish Chandra, she could not accept Virmati’s act of foolishness. In anger, she grabbed Virmati by her hair and banged her head against the wall. While doing so, she showed her motherly anger saying, “May be this will knock some sense into you” (DD. p59). In spite of her attempts, Virmati remained adamant for further education at Lahore. She had lost her dominance over Virmati and she had to fulfill her daughter’s desire. She could not make Virmati marry the man she had selected. She could not go against the wishes of her daughter regarding education.

Kasturi accompanied Virmati when she went to Lahore for her further education. She wanted Virmati to mind her education and not to go astray. Therefore, she made some secret arrangement with the Principal to watch about her daughter’s behaviour during her stay there. In spite of all her efforts, she could not prevent Virmati from continuing her love affair with the married Professor, marrying him and becoming his second wife. Her anger knew no bounds and it found itself revealed in her action. She hurled abusive language at Virmati:

You have destroyed our family, you bad mash randi. You have blackened our face everywhere! For this I gave you birth. It is all because of your act that there is shame on me, shame on Bade Pitaji! But what do you care, brazen that you are. (DD. P.221)

She even tried to beat her daughter with chapels. After her register marriage with the Professor with the help of his friend, Virmati got alienated from her mother once for all.

Virmati as the eldest daughter had the experience of playing the role of a mother to her ten brothers and sisters even before the marriage. She was exposed to the rearing her ten siblings as their second mother since her mother was all the time in pregnancy. She was also made to carry all the motherly works like the running the entire house, feeding the other children and looking after their studies. She showed her domination in controlling her siblings as their second mother. But at the same time, she used to keep them neat and clean in their look and way of dressing. Her work in taking care of their neatness drew appreciation from the elders. But when she became a mother of Ida, she did not experience any difficulties in her relationship with her daughter.

As mothers, both Kasturi and Virmati were not different in their attitudes to their daughters while playing their assigned roles as mothers. Both stood as the epitome of motherhood, and they were acting only for the welfare of their daughters. They followed all the traditional conventions in deciding their daughters’ future:

The same restrictions, which Kasturi as a mother had imposed on Virmati, had been imposed on Ida when Virmati became her mother. While imposing restrictions, Kasturi had said to her daughter that she had done it for her good. The same words Virmati had repeated to Ida while imposing the restrictions. (DD. p. 279).

“Every mother is dominant and her dominance looks like saying, ‘As I am so you will be’ and she also seeks to ensure the continuance of her own repression [unabated]” (Carter, 1983 p.124). Moreover, Kasturi had to face in her daughter a rebellious attitude and so she had to be dominantly patriarchal.

Virmati was a dominant mother in the sense that she took all the decisions herself in connection with her daughter’s future. She did not ask Ida any of her opinions regarding her marriage. Ida did not also make her mother feel dominant over her because she readily accepted whatever her mother wanted her to do. She knew well that only when she refused anything, which her mother recommended, her mother would try to dominate her. She did not say no to anything her mother said and so there was no chance for dominance on the part of Virmati as a mother. Virmati selected Prabhakar as Ida’s husband and she wanted Ida to marry him.

Unlike Virmati in her status as a daughter, Ida did not go against the wishes of her mother. Ida knew that her mother thought of Prabhakar as a wonderful man, and so she had pleased her mother in accepting him as her husband. She had shared a special bond with her mother, which Virmati did not have with her mother Kasturi when she was a daughter. Ida identified herself with her mother when she had to abort her first child under the compulsion of her husband. There was no understanding between Kasturi and Virmati but there was one between Ida and her mother Virmati. As a daughter, Ida had a rich experience under her mother and she also realized the difficulty of a mother in a patriarchal home:

As a child, Virmati tried to have a craving for a little understanding from her mother Kasturi but with the passing of time, she learnt to accept the situation in which she was placed.

The mother daughter relationship [between Kasturi and Virmati] has marched from identification to alienation. Years after, when Ida, the daughter of Virmati, reestablished her relationship with her mother [Virmati], their relationship has marched from alienations to identification. (Choubey, 2003 p.110)

References

- Bala, Suman and Subash Chandra. "Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*: An absorbing Tale of Fact and Fiction." *50 Years of Indian Writing*. ed. P.K. Dhawan. New Delhi: IAES. 1999. Print.
- Beauvoir, de Simon. *The Second sex*. Great Britain: Vintage, 1997. Print.
- Choubey, Asha. "Mothers and Daughters: A Comparative Critique of *Fasting, Feasting* and *Difficult Daughters*." *Indian Writing in English*. ed. Rama Kundu. vol. 1. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003. 107-118. Print.
- Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in cultural History*. London: Virago, 1983. Print.
- Rishi, Jaideep. "Mother and Daughter Relationship0 in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*." *Indian Association for Studies in Contemporary Literature*. ed. Sheobhushan Shukla and Anu Shukla. New Delhi: Swarup and Sons, 2002. Print.
- Kapur, Manju . *Difficult Daughters*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 1992. Print.