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Title of the Book: *Difficult Daughters*

Author: Manju Kapur

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Reviewed by:

Dr.V.Jaisre

Assistant Professor of English,

Bharathiar University

PG Extension Center (Erode Campus),

(CSI Erode Christian College Campus),

Erode - 638 001

Manju Kapur, born in 1948 at Amritsar in India, is one of the distinguished figures among the prolific women novelists that India has ever produced. All her novels credit as on date. Her literary output is rather meager because she started her career as a writer of fiction only when she reached the age of forty. In spite of that, she has not only achieved greatness as a writer but also attained perfection in her writing. Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters*, published in 1998 is about the life, sufferings and predicament of its protagonist Virmati. It is a story of her familial constraints, sorrow, love and compromise.

Every grown up daughter who remains unmarried, who is not allowed to be very social in her relationship with others outside her home, and whose aspirations for independence and individuality are curbed always becomes a difficult daughter to her mother. Virmati as an unmarried and grown up daughter in *Difficult Daughters* becomes a difficult daughter to her mother in her ways of deciding her own life. As an educated woman, she wants to establish a relationship that will make her enjoy her independence and individuality. Though this feeling is a dominating one in her, she is hesitant to take steps to achieve it because she has more concern for her younger sister. She is also afraid of putting into her thoughts into immediate action because of her family's traditional values. However, she can not but entertain such thoughts in her mind. Sometimes, she becomes vociferous in her expression of her unfulfilled desires to the discomfiture of her mother.

Being the eldest and remaining unmarried even after crossing her marriageable age in her family is her greatest predicament affecting her every nerve. This kind of dilemma stands as a stumbling block both to her progress of an independent individual and to catering to her personal needs and interests in her life. There is nothing wrong in her desire to achieve her independence and individuality to be herself. But in doing so, she should not have gone amiss in getting her desire fulfilled but she does. She remains safe and sound and morally strong as long as she is at home. The moment she comes out of her home for her educational advancement, after very great struggle with her mother for her permission to study, she becomes quite forgetful of the values of tradition and the name of her family. During her study in a college, she madly falls in love with her teacher cum married man in Prof. Harish Chandra.

Virmati has gone to the higher education to assert her individuality but not to enjoy the pleasures of life without any restraint. As a teacher, Prof. Harish Chandra should have been a great advisor of morality. He should have also informed her that she should not think of her teacher as her lover. Being a woman, she should think of him as a married man living with his wife and children and she should not spoil his marital happiness. If her teacher were an eligible bachelor, her falling in love with him would not create a great problem to both. As a married man, he should not have given chances for her to express her love. He should have avoided meeting her and talking to her as he has done in privacy. As a teacher and married man, he should have shown his attitudes and behaviour in such a way that Virmati should think of him like her father. But being amorous by nature, he acts contrary to his status as a teacher and responds to her love without any inhibition. His frailty is that he falls for any girl who impresses him erotically. This is what Virmati does and her act puts both the lovers in great predicament. His act is against his profession, against the norms of tradition and his marital and familial status. Had he not showed any desire in his words and deeds, Virmati would not have crossed her limit of tradition and morality. Both are to be blamed for the sticky situation in which the members of the families concerned are placed.

Manju Kapur realistically depicts women of three generations, the mother Kasturi, her daughter Virmati and Ida the daughter of Virmati. She only focuses on Virmati, the difficult daughter of the second generation through her daughter Ida of third generation. The mother Kasturi is a homemaker but Virmati never likes to be a home-maker but to be someone important in her independent way of life. But Ida does not want to be either of her grandma or her mother Virmati in her way of life. As a daughter, no woman is ready to follow the instructions of her own mother and choose her own way of life different from her mother or grand mother. She wishes to decide her own destiny by herself. Every woman has thinking that she should decide her own destiny by herself. When she puts her thinking into action in the patriarchal society, quite contrary to her thinking happens.

Virmati longs for her illicit love with Prof. Harish Chandra to end in her marriage so that she can come out of her predicament and establish a permanent status for her in the household of the Professor. She becomes selfish in this regard because she fails to think of Ganga the first legal wife of the Professor and her plight. As a woman, everyone should have thought of the wife of a married man before her love for him. Such kind of love blinds her eyes to see through the reality. Spoiling the life of a married woman by another woman in order to give concrete shape to her personal desire is not the way of her deciding her own destiny of her future. This is what Virmati as a woman does thinking that she decides her own course of life for her betterment. By doing so, she spoils not only the marital life of Ganga but also her life. She has to pass through her traumatic experiences in the house of her husband and she has to remain content with such a life because it is her own choice. She feels like homeless even at the home of her husband. She is a type because many modern young women marry married men.