

SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACT OF PARTITION ON GENDER ROLES AND FAMILY DYNAMICS

Dr. Anu Singh

*Assistant Professor, Department of English,
Narottam Singh Padam Singh P.G. College, Magarhan, Mirzapur, U.P.*

ABSTRACT

*This study looks at Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* through the lens of how the Partition of India affected gender norms and family relations from a socio-cultural perspective. The research delves into the portrayal of women's experiences within a patriarchal framework via a qualitative, interpretive, and interdisciplinary technique that blends feminist literary analysis, historical-contextual approach, and textual analysis. Additionally, it delves into the topic of gender beliefs being passed down through the generations by using findings from the Gender Role Attitudes (GRA) study. The results show that the Partition is a pivotal historical event that limits women's freedom and reinforces patriarchal standards, therefore increasing gender inequality. Despite their emergence as opposition figures, women are shown as victims of social control and relocation. Virmati, who defies societal and familial norms in her quest for knowledge and self-discovery, is a model of this shift. Findings from GRA corroborate the study's emphasis on the importance of families in molding gender ideas by showing how strongly parental influence correlates with children's opinions. People argue and fight against inherited standards, therefore this shows that such influence is not absolute. Marriage and generational conflicts are two further ways the book shows the family as a place where tradition and modernity clash. The article concludes that *Difficult Daughters* successfully weaves together anecdotes and historical facts to show how revolutions in society and culture change the way women see themselves, their families, and their positions within them.*

Keywords: *Partition of India; Difficult Daughters; Gender Roles; Family Dynamics; Feminist; Literary Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Manju Kapur and Her Novels

The works of modern Indian author Manju Kapur often deal with themes of gender, identity, and the domestic lives of middle-class families. Her academic journey began in Amritsar, India, but she eventually made it to Halifax, Canada, to get an M.A. from Dalhousie University and then Delhi, India, to receive an M.Phil. Her subsequent work as an English professor at Delhi University had a profound impact on her taste in literature and her interest in exploring themes. Focusing on women's struggles under patriarchal frameworks, Kapur's literature is profoundly steeped in Indian socio-cultural situations.

In 1999, she was awarded the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book, Europe and South Asia for her 1998 first book, *Difficult Daughters*. Set during India's fight for independence, the story follows Virmati, a young Punjabi lady who marries a professor she falls in love with and their lives together unfold as his second wife. Love, revolt, and finding one's own identity are some of the issues that Kapur examines via Virmati's journey.

Custody (2011), which was nominated for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, is one of Kapur's other famous works. Her other important works include *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), and others. Throughout her works, Kapur persistently shows women navigating their societal and familial responsibilities, often connecting their individual battles with larger social and political shifts. The interconnected lives of the many female characters in *Difficult Daughters* represent the nation's fight for independence as a whole and the hardships that individuals face along the way.

Concept Of Gender Roles

The socially created standards and expectations that govern men's and women's proper conduct, duties, and characteristics are known as gender roles. Gender roles are "often unspoken rules that govern the attributes and behaviors that are valued and considered acceptable for men, women, and gender minorities," according to Heise et al. (2019). These jobs impact people's relationships, opportunities, and life choices in both the public and private realms.

Cultural traditions and social systems in India strongly enforce traditional gender norms. They are crucial in deciding who gets what in terms of education, who gets what in terms of power and resources, and who gets what in terms of job prospects and personal development. Children absorb these standards from their families, communities, and society at large from a young age. Social conventions and constraints often limit people's freedom to choose their gender role, even when some people do it voluntarily (Patel et al., 2021).

Furthermore, there is a continuum of gender roles, from the most conventional to the most egalitarian, and they are not fixed. Social arrangements and cultural practices, not biological variations, define these roles, according to Eagly and Wood's (1999) social structural theories. This exemplifies the point that gender roles are not static but may alter over time in reaction to societal and cultural shifts like increased literacy, more urbanization, and increased international trade.

Gender Inequality and Its Consequences

While men and women alike aren't immune to the bigotry that results from rigidly enforced gender norms, women and girls bear the brunt of these disparities. Strict gender standards have devastating effects in many countries, like India, where they lead to underage marriage, a lack of educational opportunities, unplanned pregnancies, and an increased risk of health problems like HIV and others (Blum et al., 2017). These problems impede social and economic progress as a whole and have an impact on people's quality of life.

According to studies, gender norms are sometimes rigid even among preteens and young teenagers, with females often displaying more egalitarian views than boys (Patel et al., 2021). Still, women face an unfair share of cultural expectations, which limit their agency and the options available to them. Traditional values are often emphasized during periods of social or political unrest, as the Partition of India, in an effort to preserve societal order, which in turn reinforces these inequities.

This means that cultural, economic, and political institutions all contribute to the persistence of gender inequality, making it more than just a personal issue.

Family, Parenting, and Gender Role Attitudes

An individual's views and attitudes around gender roles are significantly influenced by their family. Research by Katz-Wise et al. (2010) found that people's gender ideologies have a major impact on how families work and how parents raise their children. According to Basu et al. (2017), parents in India, particularly women, play a crucial role in socializing their children by passing on gender norms and expectations.

Traditional gender roles are typically reflected in the division of labor within households, with males being linked with economic providing and women with domestic work and childcare. Gordon and Mickelson (2018) and Twenge et al. (2003) both point out that families might experience stress and conflict because to this uneven allocation. Both the marriage relationship and the way children see gender roles are impacted by these discrepancies.

Additionally, parenting might be negatively affected by conventional gender-role assumptions. When parents try to push their children to adhere to social standards, they may resort to harsher or more stringent parenting techniques (Gowda et al., 2019). Conservative men are less likely to be involved in their children's upbringing, according to the research (Bianchi et al., 2000).

Culture, family, and the environment all have a role in molding how youngsters think and act, according to research on the social construction of gender (Langer et al., 2019). Gender identities and expectations are formed from childhood and maintained throughout adulthood as a result of all of these factors.

Relevance to Difficult Daughters

Difficult Daughters powerfully reflects the aforementioned topics via its portrayal of the family as a site of both the transmission and contestation of gender norms. Manju Kapur shows how traditional values are carried down through generations via characters like Virmati and Kasturi, but they are also threatened by changing socio-cultural situations. Individuals manage difficult expectations within their families and society, while the story emphasizes the conflict between conformity and rebellion.

Kapur shows how cultural traditions and socio-political changes sculpt gender roles and family relations by placing human tales within the larger historical backdrop of the Partition. Because of

this, *Difficult Daughters* is an important book for students of contemporary Indian literature who are interested in gender, family, and history.

OBJECTIVE

1. To examine how the Partition of India sociocultural altered gender roles, notably patriarchal norms and women's identities and autonomy.
2. To Analyse Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*, focusing on generational conflict, gender roles, and balancing tradition and modernity in family relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perspectives on Gender Roles and Attitudes

Three separate theoretical frameworks that can shed light on gender were given by Risman (1998). The first tradition challenges the significance of biological or socially constructed gender norms by focusing on the gendered self. The second school of thinking considers how gender norms in society impact gendered behavior. The idea posits that gender roles influence how men and women behave, but that when men and women are structurally equivalent, they should behave similarly. The interactional method, the third tradition, places a premium on cultural norms and assumptions on the relevance of each particular situation.

The concept of "traditional gender roles" has been brought up in relation to the hierarchies inside families, which were first examined by researchers studying consumer behavior in the 1950s (Gentry et al., 2003, p. 2). This "traditional" perspective is associated with what Parsons called "instrumental and expressive functions," whereby males pay the bills and women gladly continue the custom of taking care of the household's basic needs. It is possible that this "functional" perspective was historically limited. According to Connell (1987), the gender-division of "breadwinner" and "homemaker" has never been a reality for most of the working class, and the idea that women should be dependent on men would have appeared absurd given the similarities between village agriculture and commercial towns. According to, "the home" as a distinct part of life, a refuge for family and leisure, did not exist in Europe until the 18th century. A person's expected behavior within a given context is defined by their role (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Lindsey, 2011). According to Boehnke (2011), Kessler & McKenna (1978), and Lindsey (2011), individuals are expected to behave in a certain way according to their given sex. This is known as a gender role. Davis & Greenstein (2009), Legge & Misra (1998), and McHugh & Frieze (1997) all use the phrases GRA, sex-role attitudes, and gender ideology to explain how the public views the proper roles for men and women.

The two main types of GRA are the conventional and the egalitarian. For traditionalists, the traditional roles of men and women within the family are clearly defined, with men providing financial support and women staying at home to care for children. A more egalitarian GRA would have a much more balanced distribution of paid work and domestic duties (Davis & Pearce, 2007; Katz-Wise, Priess, & Hyde, 2010; Legge & Misra, 1998).

Past Experimental Research Approaches

To determine if gender ideology significantly impact the long-term susceptibility of mothers and fathers to Parent-Child Aggression (PCA), Gowda et al. (2019) performed a research. One hundred and fifty couples, each including a first-time mother and her male partner, were studied. There were two rounds of interviews with parents: one during the third trimester, and another at six months and eighteen months of age. There was an early disclosure of GRA and PCA risk by the parents (pp. 5-6). Parents, particularly those in the pre-childbearing years, may be at reduced risk of PCA if they adhere to less conventional gender norms, according to the findings.

The purpose of the survey by Kollmayer et al. (2018) was to collect data from Austrian parents with children aged three to six years old on their views on the age-appropriateness of various toys, as well as on the relationships between these views and gender-typing of toys, GRA, and demographic variables such as age, education level, and gender. According to the research, parents prefer toys that are either gender-neutral or of the same gender for their children, rather than toys that are cross-gender. Additionally, the study found that parents who are more egalitarian are more likely to let their children have a wider variety of hobbies and behaviors than conventional parents.

Researchers Patel et al. (2021) looked at teenagers from the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, ranging in age from ten to nineteen. This study's summary is based on data collected from 4,428 males and 7,607 females, ranging in age from ten to nineteen, who were all unmarried at the time of Wave 1 and questioned twice. The results indicated that GRA got more equitable between the sexes with time, with the exception of the study's elder group of males. Gender views may be shaped by a variety of personal, familial, social, and communal elements, as well as by participation in one's local community.

Few studies have examined the effects of gender roles on parenting and child development, despite the abundance of literature on these topics and its far-reaching consequences. In comparison to egalitarian principles, conventional gender norms seem to be more detrimental. It should be noted that according to the majority of research, women tend to exhibit more egalitarian ideals compared to men.

METHODOLOGY

Combining literary criticism with socio-cultural analysis, this study takes an interdisciplinary, interpretive, and qualitative approach. By comparing and contrasting *Difficult Daughters'* depiction of gender roles and family dynamics with research on Gender Role Attitudes (GRA), this study hopes to provide light on how historical events, especially the Partition of India, impact these themes.

This study primarily employs feminist literary criticism as its theoretical foundation. Feminist literature primarily examines patriarchal power systems, gender inequality, and women's portrayal. Virmati, the protagonist in *Difficult Daughters*, is a lady struggling to find her place in a rigid social hierarchy; her perspective is very pertinent because of this. The research uses this

perspective to analyze how *Difficult Daughters* presents ideal womanhood and the formation of femininity. It delves at the ways patriarchal standards limit women and how these limits impact their lives and decisions. Simultaneously, the examination centers on the agency, self-assertion, and resistance of women, namely via the figure of Virmati. Feminist theory shows that gender roles are socially manufactured rather than inherent or unchanging, and it goes on to show how crises like the Partition of India harden and strengthen these roles.

To better understand the book, it is helpful to look at it through the lens of the Partition of India, a watershed political and social event that caused widespread upheaval and cultural disintegration. This approach allows the research to link fictional depictions to actual socio-cultural circumstances of the period and to establish connections between the novel's human storylines and larger historical facts. To the protagonists, the Partition is more than just a backdrop; it is a driving force that changes gender roles, family dynamics, and societal expectations, all of which have profound effects on their lives.

Character development, dialogue, and narrative devices are all examined in depth during a close reading. Particular focus is placed on Virmati, Kasturi, and Ida, whose lives illustrate various aspects of gender and familial relationships. The research also takes into account symbolic components and internal monologues that add to the story's significance. Gender identity, emotional conflict, and changing familial ties are the primary areas of attention within this method's examination of textual meaning construction.

In order to bolster the socio-cultural viewpoint, the research draws on findings from an empirical study based on Gender Role Attitudes (GRA) that included 114 parents and their children. While the research found a strong link between parental views on gender roles and their children's views on the same, it unexpectedly found no link between a person's gender and their ideology on the subject. The story is interpreted using these findings as a comparison framework, particularly in examining the connection between Virmati and Kasturi. As they engage, we see the generational transmission of gender roles in action, but we also see the potential for negotiation, resistance, and departure from conventional standards.

RESULTS

Impact of Partition on Gender Roles

In *Difficult Daughters*, the Partition of India is seen as a historical divide worsening gender inequity. Manju Kapur portrays women in crises as victims of abuse and displacement and guardians of family honor whose bodies and actions influence society. In the sake of safeguarding their daughters from Partition, families restrict women's mobility and freedom. This environment reinforces patriarchal beliefs. Kapur doesn't depict women as powerless victims. In the story, Virmati represents change and resistance. Virmati's attempts to transcend traditional expectations by getting an education and starting her own business may be transforming female awareness. Partition reinforces patriarchal power and prepares the ground for rethinking gender roles.

Family Influence on Gender Role Attitudes

Gender role attitude (GRA) studies have shown that in *Difficult Daughters*, the family is heavily involved in the process of creating and passing on gender norms. The results of GA research are very congruent with this. Kasturi, Virmati's mom, exemplifies the traditional view of women as subservient to men in authority, expected to stay at home and take care of the family. Her worldview is a product of long-held beliefs that a woman's worth is intrinsically related to the roles she plays at home as a mother and wife. But Virmati goes against the grain by wanting to be an educated woman and making her own decisions, particularly when it comes to marital issues. Gender norms are both transmitted and debated within the framework of the family structure, as this generational gap shows. Virmati negotiates and challenges the traditional ideals that Kasturi is trying to instill in her daughter at the same time. As a result, we can see that strict parental supervision is not always necessary. Kapur brilliantly paints a picture of the family as a fluid setting where gender roles are always being renegotiated and transformed.

Family Dynamics and Conflict

According to the book, the family is shown as a complicated setting that is fraught with emotional tension, ideological disagreement, and ongoing negotiation. One of the themes that Kapur investigates in her novel *Difficult Daughters* is the conflict that arises between modernity and tradition, as well as the struggle that exists between collective family honor and individual desire. The bond that exists between Kasturi and Virmati becomes the main center of this dispute, which serves as a representation of the larger generational difference. However, Virmati is representative of a contemporary, inquisitive mentality that wants personal independence and self-determination, in contrast to Kasturi, which is entrenched in traditional values and places a priority on social conventions and the reputation of the family. Marriage, in particular, manifests itself as a prominent motif that serves as a medium through which these conflicts are conveyed. The institution of marriage serves as a tool for the family to guarantee social order, stability, and conformance to the expectations of the culture. On the other hand, for Virmati, it turns out to be a very personal and often distressing experience that is characterized by inner struggle and resistance. Consequently, Kapur depicts the family not only as an institution that provides support, but rather as a place in which power relations are performed and fought, so drawing attention to the challenges that women encounter while attempting to establish their individuality.

Representation of Female Identity

Within the context of a patriarchal culture, the character of Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* exemplifies the complicated and sometimes conflicting process of the construction of a distinct female identity. Her path is characterized by feeling emotionally vulnerable, experiencing psychological upheaval, and engaging in a never-ending conflict between society obligation and personal desire. The portrayal of Virmati by Kapur is one in which she is neither completely obedient nor completely defiant; rather, she is in a condition of tension between compliance and resistance. Although her quest for selfhood is reflected in her desire for education and freedom, she often finds herself reverting to conventional roles due to the emotional entanglements she is

involved in and the pressures she faces from society. This dichotomy sheds light on the difficulties that women have while striving to establish their individuality within the confines of societal frameworks that are restricting. The complex image that Kapur provides highlights the fact that the road to autonomy is not a straight one, but rather one that is riddled with internal struggles and sacrifices. The story demonstrates, via the character of Virmati, that the formation of a woman's identity is the result of a complicated interaction between her own personal goals, the expectations of her family, and the limits of society.

Socio-Cultural Changes Post-Partition

The Partition acts as a catalyst for substantial socio-cultural alterations in *Difficult Daughters*, dramatically changing conventional family structures and gender roles. These dramatic changes are brought about by the novel. Families are forced to adjust to new and unfamiliar circumstances as a result of the widespread migration and displacement that occurred during this time period. This contributes to the progressive dissolution of the joint family structure. Both individuals and communities are impacted by this disturbance, which makes people feel as if they have lost their identities and become culturally disoriented. In the context of this shifting environment, women's roles are beginning to develop. Despite the fact that conventional expectations of domesticity and obedience continue to exist, new options for education and involvement in social activities are emerging. By demonstrating how women like Virmati begin to rethink their roles within society, Kapur depicts this moment of change. She does this by demonstrating how they strike a balance between inherited ideals and new possibilities. The book is a reflection of a society that is in a state of upheaval, where traditional conventions are being questioned and rethought. However, despite the fact that they continue to traverse the limits of tradition, women become active players in the process of forging new social realities when this context is considered

DISCUSSION

Historical events, gender roles, and family systems are all intricately linked, according to an examination of Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. The Partition of India serves as a catalyst for transformation and disruption at the same time; it strengthens patriarchal authority while also making room for opposition. During times of crisis, women face additional limitations in their positions, yet it is precisely this uncertainty that prompts people to challenge long-held conventions.

Furthermore, the research provides further evidence that one's family has a significant impact on their views on gender roles. The intergenerational transmission and contestation of gender concepts is mirrored in the connection between Virmati and Kasturi. The results of the Gender Role Attitudes (GRA) survey corroborate this, showing that parental impact is substantial but not overwhelming.

In addition, the story shows the family as a place where modernity and tradition are always at odds with one another. The emotional and psychological problems that women experience are brought to light when marriage, responsibility, and personal choice become important points of contention.

Virmati's story shows how women's identities are fluid and subject to ongoing negotiation in response to societal and cultural norms.

A gendered reading is crucial to comprehending Partition literature, since the topic as a whole highlights the fact that family relationships and gender roles are historically created and socially produced.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* explores the socio-cultural effects of the Partition of India on gender norms and family relations. The research shows that Partition enhances patriarchal control over women and generates circumstances for resistance and change. Through Virmati, women are shown as victims of relocation and societal constraint and as people seeking autonomy and self-definition. The approach emphasizes the family's influence on gender roles. Kasturi and Virmati show how traditional values are passed down and reinterpreted in the story. This illustrates that parental influence is strong but not total, as people negotiate and occasionally fight inherited standards. The story also depicts the family as a battleground between tradition and modernity. Marriage, obligation, and desire show how restricted societal norms shape female identity. Partition causes socio-cultural upheavals that disrupt family structures and women's roles, bringing slow but profound change. The work expertly integrates personal experiences with historical truths, underlining that gender roles and identities are socially and historically formed. Thus, gendered readings of Partition literature are necessary to comprehend the human effects of such revolutionary events.

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