



## FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS & GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN MANJU KAPUR'S "DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS"

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### ABSTRACT

Manju Kapur very effectively delineates the characters of traditional women who are gender stereotypes and act as a formidable force of patriarchy. This research paper mainly concentrated on gender issues along with the themes of relationships, patriarchal structures and domination of women in Manju Kapoor's novel *Difficult Daughters* published in 1998. Kapur's debut novel *Difficult Daughters* is the story of the protagonist Virmati, whose life and fortunes are mainly concerned. The story is described through the eyes of Ida the daughter of Virmati. The story also focuses on the fateful life of childbearing women. They were not subject to medical or mental care. This was the ugly fate of our women in those days. A woman's role, in the level of creating the female gender, is based on the idea of the woman as a child bearer. The way they raise their children provide evidence that women as a tolerant, tender, calm and stable. They form extremely intimate relationships with their children and it is often said that ties with the mother are the strongest of all. One can find a critique of mother - daughter relationship, tracing it through three successive generations in the story. The novelist beautifully portrayed the story of Virmati, who is a courageous lady. Novel deliberates upon the problem of marginalization encountered by Indian women who fights to maintain their individuality and dignity. Women characters are depicted as shocking by the cultural and gender identities at the same time as measuring into the postmodern world of flowing identity where they discover to survive with different cultures. They tried to bring about a change in society in which women are accepted as equal partners in all respect to men in sharing of equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities. Feminism is an attempt at removing the small space, and insignificant positions women were given by the male members of society, including male writers.

**Key Words:** *Difficult Daughters*, Gender study, Family, Relationships

### Introduction

Manju Kapur is an Indian second generation novelist. She was born on 25th October 1948 in Amritsar, India. She explores the conditions of Indian women. She deals with the theme of feminism seriously and always advocates the solutions and remedies to elevate the suppressed state of Indian women. She has penned down various novels: *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2009) and *Custody* (2011). Her first novel *Difficult Daughters* received a great international acclaim. This novel was published in 1998. *Difficult Daughters* was awarded the commonwealth writers prize for the best first book (Eurasia) and was a number one bestseller in India.



Manju Kapur is one of the most famous Indian English novelists in the 90s. Kapur's writings reflect man-woman relationship, human desire, longing, body, gender discrimination, marginalization, rebellion and protest. The protagonists are caught in the continuous dichotomy between the personal needs and the institutional and social obligations and responsibilities in Kapur's novels.

Kapur's debut novel *Difficult Daughters* is the story of the protagonist Virmati, whose life and fortunes are mainly concerned. Virmati is the daughter of Suraj Prakash and Kasturi. The story is described through the eyes of Ida the daughter of Virmati. One can find a critique of mother - daughter relationship, tracing it through three successive generations in the story. The novelist beautifully portrayed the story of Virmati, who is a courageous lady.

The narrative pattern of the novel changes to Virmati's life. Virmati passes BT in her second attempt. Her mother hopes that she will concede to the family's decision and accordingly she will show her willingness for a suitable marriage. But Viru remains sticking to her own guns. She proposes for her own marriage with Professor Harish to his mother. But, Harish merely details out all sorts of his inability for the same. All his pleadings precisely convince her. She is disappointed. She states, "A woman without her home and family is a woman without moorings" (102). Utter disappointment makes her admit "... that all my education has achieved is the destruction of my family" (91).

Manju Kapoor's novel *Difficult Daughters* is the story of a daughter trying to piece together her dead mother's past in order to understand why their relationship was always so troubled. The novel begins with Ida's statement "the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother (P 1) and ends with "Do not haunt me anymore" (P 259). The daughter herself doesn't approve of her mother's way of life although aware of her sorrow, pain and agony and now having written about it she has cleansed her memory. Ida, writing of the mother is critiquing her story. The novel is negative for Virmati as she grows up unable to rise above her sexuality. The beginning of the text introduces a negative model, an image of female attention which the text will strive to overcome. In *Difficult Daughters* one finds that it is basically Virmati's story during the 1930's but the landscape of the emotional and sexual life of the three women living at different times in history disrupts the linear time period. In short, the time period shift is within the text- the narrative moves from Virmati to Kasturi to Ida. Virmati, like so many other subcontinental women, is asked to accept a typical arranged marriage. She rebels against that destiny, to the lasting shame of her family, above all of her mother. Insisting on her right to be educated, she manages to leave home to study in Lahore. Nonetheless, she falls in love with an Amritsar teacher known as 'the professor', a married man who first appears in her life as her parents' tenant. After a number of vicissitudes, including a period as a school principal in a small Himalayan state, she finally marries the man she loves and returns to Amritsar to live with him. However, he refuses to leave his first wife, and the consequences for Virmati are harsh indeed: she ends up marginalized by her own family and despised by her husband's. Virmati's tale is told, from a present day perspective, by Ida, her only daughter, who seeks to reconstruct her late mother's life-story, against the background of the Independence movement of the 1940s and the subsequent trauma of partition. Virmati's mother Kasturi, eighth-class pass from an Arya Samaj school, spending the entire day either cooking in the kitchen or performing ritualistic havan or sandhya, could envisage no future for Virmati other than being a wife and a mother like herself. No wonder Virmati's training in this area begins at the early age of ten. She, being the eldest in the family of eleven children is made to play a second mother to her siblings.

#### **Thematic analysis-Gender Discrimination**

The novel *Difficult Daughters* clearly shows the gender discrimination between a man and a woman. Virmati is ostracized by the society as she enters into a marital relation with a married man. On the other hand Professor Harish is accepted by both the families. His mother, his wife or Virmati's family do not turn him out



of the house. Virmati was not allowed by her mother when her father dies, but Harish, who was the real cause for their daughter's distress was allowed.

Feminism in its various forms has registered a marked presence in recent critical theory and literary practice throughout the world. Consequently, the contemporary Indian women writers in English have also exhibited a keen interest in depicting different aspects of women's experience. The visible sympathies of these writers and their specific stance vis-a-vis women bring forth their feminist tendencies. Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998) traces the different stages of women's development in a particular socio-historical context that marks the significance of Indocentric feminist perspective. In the Indian context, feminism is often considered to be a legacy of equality of sexes inherited from the constitutional rights of women, social reformatory movements and spread of education. The typical nature of cultural traditions, historical background and the variety present in Indian life itself does not accept a uniform system of thought. The specific nature of the traditional cultural ethos and its long history in India does not conform to the western model of feminism. Therefore, in most of the novels by the contemporary Indian women writing in English we find that,

"They do not promulgate their ideas of change through gender hostility but through social rearrangements that cut across class and gender lines," for them, "Indo-centric methodology cannot use the western feminist base of binary male female gender hostility" (Lal 1995 : 28).

Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters* is written against the background of India's partition. The novel is the story of Virmati seen through the eyes of her daughter Ida, the narrator and a divorcee, from whom her mother's past has always been kept a secret. Virmati's urge for education had traces of her having an independent wish. She wanted to have her own space, her own identity. Virmati, who finds herself in a quandary because of her boring family duties and the desire to study, is caught up in the trap of an illicit affair which on the one hand, satiates her intellectual thirst while on the other, entangles her into a whirlpool of agonies. It is her urge to establish herself as an individual that entraps her in the nefarious ways of this world. Virmati fights and establishes her will to have higher education. She does not believe in arranged marriage particularly early marriage which she feels is big hurdle to education, therefore she prepares to dislodge the system and what may be its consequences.

She is victimized by circumstances. But she considers her suffering as fate. Virmati's desires to change her fate from being a mere wife and mother in a traditional family, but her love with the Professor makes her select the act of returning to a relationship that has already brought her nothing but untold suffering. Virmati's agony depicts her as an emotionally starved being. Professor's love satisfies her emotional needs and it makes her revolt against her marriage proposal, so that she could study further. All these decisions increase her suffering. Her continuous suffering helps her accept a part of her lot and she says "I feel strange, one pea alone in a whole long pod, no use to anybody. I have to get used to it, for this is my fate" (DD 92).

Kapur was so moved by the love story of her parents, set in that era that she restored it bit by bit, before letting it sink into her memory; she pieced together the story through sepia photographs, talks with relatives, her own fragmented memory and sanded up with a journey to the locales of her mother's place to write *Difficult Daughters*. It is her quest for her own identity through reliving her mother's past. The Narrator, Ida, is a difficult daughter and she explores the life of her mother in the novel. As she admits in the end:

This book weaves a connection between my mother and me,  
each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart.  
Now live in it, mama, and leave me be.  
Do not haunt me anymore (DD 280)

Yet, in the end she finds herself building a mansion for her mother. It is the identity crisis that results in a conflict in the relationship between them. A daughter's search for her identity begins when she finds



similarities with her mother. And when she starts asserting herself, the conflict starts building up. Ida grows “struggling to be the model daughter”(DD 279) and under this pressure to perform better she is “Constantly looking for escape routes.”(DD 279) and becomes a rebel and finally she is “nothing, husbandless, childless” (DD 279). She blames her mother for the “Melancholy depression and despair”(DD 279) in her life. As the mother is the culture bearer and passes on the legacy of the patriarchal system to her daughter who may either accept it implicitly or may question it, but no matter how diverse their views, the daughter is unable to reject her completely. Through her journey into the past of her mother, she finds, she is like her mother, although she hates her mother and the novel begins by saying as “the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother”.(DD 1)

At the centre of the narrative, we are confronted with a woman who fights but falls by the wayside; but at its edges, as no doubt less representative but still symbolic figures, we encounter other women, whose relative success points the way to the future. Virmati’s daughter Ida, who belongs to the post independence generation, is strong and clearheaded. She breaks up her marriage as she is denied maternity by her husband. The forced abortion is also the termination of her marriage. Ida, by severing the marriage bond, frees herself from male domination and power and also from the conventional social structures which bind women. She has the strength that Virmati lacks. Thus, her rebellion is again a constructive one. Ida, an educated woman, divorced and childless, apparently leads a freer life than her mother in external terms; yet inside her she feels, even if not quite so acutely, some of the same anxieties as had plagued her mother:

‘No matter how I might rationalize otherwise, I feel my existence as a single woman reverberate desolately’ (P 3).

It is clear from the book’s pages that Ida, the narrator through whose voice Kapur speaks, has achieved more than her mother and that this is so even through the simple creative fact of ‘writing down’ her own family history. To quote Dora Sales again:

“In *Difficult Daughters* we do not listen to Virmati’s voice. She could not speak out, being certainly situated at the juncture of two oppressions; colonialism and patriarchy. What we have is her daughter’s reconstruction and representation” (P 356).

When we take a look around at the women in this novel, one may delve into family history and examine grandmothers and great grandmothers. Almost every woman has a story to tell under their cheerful I’m – only – an – insignificant – cog – in – the – wheel facade. Perhaps they wouldn’t think their lives worthy enough, but we have a lot to thank our foremothers for, from equal political participation to the right to education. Being the eldest of the children, Virmati spends her time as nurse / mother, while her mother, Kasturi, spends her life reproducing, Virmati goes to school and college. She has a liberal father, luckily, and sees education as an escape from the rigours of family life. Virmati sets upon a course of education that doesn’t radically change her way of thinking, but gives her the gumption to demand to make her own mistakes. The catch is that she marries a man with two children. Their love is found out. Harish emerges unscathed. Virmati on the other hand is ostracised, and kept imprisoned at home until she agrees to marry someone of her mother’s choosing. She refuses, holding firmly on to her love for Harish. As per wish, she is sent to higher study. Her lover marries her after five years as a socially accepted second wife. Education for girls was always seen as a path to immorality. As far as Virmati is concerned, education is an escape. But her family is convinced that it led to her moral degradation. Her falling in love made her a fallen woman. Manju Kapur successfully portrayed early twentieth-century Punjabi life and has effectively captured the relationships.

*Difficult Daughters* is not a pure third-person narrative. Virmati’s story is told mostly in the third person (with some recourse to the epistolary mode), but is framed by the first-person narration of a search. The search is that of Virmati’s daughter, Ida, as she seeks to reconstitute her mother’s history. Ida, an educated woman, divorced and childless, apparently leads a freer life than her mother’s in external terms; yet



inside her she feels, even if not quite so acutely, some of the same anxieties as had plagued her mother: 'No matter how I might rationalize otherwise, I feel my existence as a single woman reverberate desolately' (3). It is clear from the book's pages that Ida, the narrator through whose voice Kapur speaks, has achieved more than her mother (and much more than her grandmother): and that this is so even through the simple creative fact of 'writing down' her own family history. To quote Dora Sales again (this time from an essay on the novel in English): 'In *Difficult Daughters* we do not listen to Virmati's voice. She could not speak out, being certainly situated at the juncture of two oppressions: colonialism and patriarchy. What we have is her daughter's reconstruction and representation'<sup>10</sup>. There is, then, a qualitative leap between the life-histories of (narrated) mother and (narrating) daughter. In addition, as another of Kapur's commentators, Gur Pyari Jandial, correctly points out, 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'. The women of India have indeed achieved their successes in half a century of Independence; but if there is to be a true female independence too, much remains to be done. The fight for autonomy remains an unfinished combat; and it is from that perspective that, in her second novel, *A Married Woman*, published five years later, that Manju Kapur, this time from an eminently contemporary viewpoint, returns to the narration of women's issues, deploying an approach that, as in *Difficult Daughters*, manages to be, simultaneously, both Indian and universal. And that, too, is 'a great achievement'.

Harish's patronizing and domineering attitude to her has completely enmeshed Virmati. Now it is the professor who has decided to send her to Lahore to do M.A. in philosophy, a subject which according to Virmati is dull, abstract and meaningless.

"She wished Harish had thought another subject suitable for her. She also wished it was not such an uphill task, being worthy of him" (237).

"A women's happiness lies in giving her husband happiness" (210). It is perhaps too much to expect a woman like her to combat against the hydra headed society. Seema Malik's sympathy for Virmati is not out of place when she says: "Though she dares to cross our patriarchal threshold, she is caught into another where her free spirit is curbed and all she does is adjust compromise and adapt." (5) No doubt, her daughter Ida refuses to be like her mother but the question that hovers our mind is whether Ida-divorce, childless and not committed to anything in particular-arid chhoti not intending to marry at all, waiting for a Government accommodation to house her mother and Grandmother are living a meaningful, purposeful and fulfilled life.

Identity crisis is considered a preposterous concept for women. A daughter's quest for identity begins with her identification with her mother. Daughter's search for self-realization is through their mothers. Ida in *Difficult Daughters* begins a journey into the history of her mother with a purpose to discover herself. What started as alienation ends up in complete identification. But not all daughters are as fortunate as Ida. Virmati herself could never belong to her mother. Her pleasures, her pains, her pathetic life as a mistress and then a second wife, all remained her private sorrows. She could never share them with her mother. Kasturi never attempts to understand her. There seems a barrier between them which Virmati fails to pull down. Ida tells the readers: "From time to time, Virmati glanced furtively at her mother and the wall she encountered forbade her from making the attentive gestures that might have made the journey bearable for both" (102). So many promising lives go down the drain due to maternal apathy. Virmati would not be a victim to a much married man like Harish. Authoritative and Autocratic attitude of the mother may influence the very personality of daughters as in case of Uma and it may make a pseudo-rebel out of an otherwise disciplined and motivated daughter as in the case of Virmati. Alka Singh in an article "Exploring Possibilities beyond Traditions, ManjuKapur's *Difficult Daughters*" says: "Virmati's sojourn is in three stages, the first when she deserts her family, religions and political authorities who appear as captors. The Freedom and unlimited possibilities drive



her to the powerful figure of her seducer. She thus awakens in a world of experience achieve wholeness and autonomy. She then makes the final journey back home to be united with the family and discovers that it is the mother with whom she wishes to be rejoined" (138). Sumita Pal in an article "The Mother-Daughter conflict in ManjuKapur's Difficult Daughters" says:

"Difficult Daughters is set around the time of partition but does not directly deal with partition and its trauma. It is a love story of Virmati, who in her own struggle for Independence creates lives of partition around her" (134). As she had been a difficult daughter for her mother, her daughter turns out to be a difficult one for her too. This novel is a powerful tale of self-affirmation, man-woman relationship, family ties and above all the universal mother-daughter conflict.

R.K. Dhawan in an article "ManjuKapur's Difficult Daughters: A Saga of Conflict and Crisis" says: "A number of novels were written on the theme of partition, the destruction it brought and the flight of the refugees. They faithfully record the reign of violence that characterized the period and provide a sad, telling commentary on the breakdown of human values. A strain of despair and disillusionment is predominant in these novels" (14). The novelist herself asserts: "Conflict between daughters and mothers is inevitable and I suppose I was a difficult daughter. The conflict carries through generations because mothers want their daughters to be safe?" (107).

#### FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

The novel presents the paradigm of two mother-daughter relationships where the daughters differ from their mothers and never want to be like them but in the end, they cannot but identify with their mothers. The novel *Home* presents Nisha, the protagonist as bold, educated and balanced. Her feminist sensibility has been suppressed to a great extent by patriarchy. Manju Kapur takes the readers through a brisk and strangely captivating account of three generations. It explores the complex terrain of Indian family and reveals many issues that are deep rooted within the family. Nisha's marriage and later her motherhood assert the fact that a woman's intellectual emancipation does not negate her biological stature of nurturing relationships. Kapur is not argumentatively vocal in pleading the fate of the contemporary woman rather she sympathetically paints a woman's struggle to find an identity. Striking a balance between a natural co-existence on one hand and unfettered freedom and space on the other, Kapur's eloquent narration of women's issues is both Indian and universal.

The research is thus focused in this marked interest in the alliances between genealogy and history and the ways in which recent Indian fiction in English has deployed its apparatus with a view to contesting the workings of traditional historiography based on narrative linearity. At the same time, it also aims to explore how some of these novels interrogate the practices of an Indian nationalism that reveals a deep post-independence reliance on West inspired myths of the nation. For the purpose of focus and detail, this study will deal with two novels that bear striking parallelisms in the ways in which they symbolically address national history as a mirror to family relationships. Such similarities are undeniable in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* even though some occasional references will also be made in passing to other contemporary Indian English novels that are relevant to the essay's central thesis: to show how this fiction, while it definitely transgresses traditional historiography and the narratives and myths of nationalism, also presents flaws in its critique of historiographic discourse, such as the inability to readjust the marginal role reserved to women in India's political agenda and the lack of a wider social perspective that allows to reinscribe the subaltern as an agent in the alternative histories that these novels offer.

Kapur also deals with the role of woman as daughter, wife and mother; she is a trend settler and she has brought the women protagonists from the shackled suffering women to daring and amazing women. She has given woman a new image of boldness. Kapur's heroines negotiate for their independence and find a respectable place in society. The heroine is mentally advanced in the real sense of the word, whether she is





Virmati(DD) Astha (A married Woman), Nisha (Home), Nina(the Immigrant), or Shagun (Custodian). The female protagonists are the new women who hail from the middle class, but challenge the existing socio-cultural patriarchal system. In the social milieu, they are educated, modern, intelligent, bold and assertive. Even though they try to transcend the social hierarchy by demolishing it, they often undergo serious psychological traumas in the absence of an alternative, planned feminist ideology that may give them freedom, security and peace of mind.

In her quest for identity, Virmati is the central character of the novel, rebels against tradition. She is impelled by the inner need to feel loved as an individual. The title of the novel *Difficult Daughters* is an indication to the message that a woman, who tries to search of an identity, is branded as a difficult daughters by the family and the society as well the story tells how she is torn between family duty and illicit love. Virmati falls in love with the professor who develops an intimate relationship with Virmati. She has fight against the power of the mother as well as the oppressive forces of patriarchy symbolized by the mother figures. In the patriarchal Indian society, marriage is means of deliverance from being socially condemned and it relieves a woman from the sense of insecurity and uncertainly. The older generation marriage is no reason to rebel, it was accepted as part of life's pleasure and was a phase of imitating certain dharma's associate with social and religious institutions. Of course love was not the prerequisite or desired basis for marriage.

It is true that she is the mother that Kapur writes of but certainly she forms the core of the personality that Kapur so lovingly presents. *Difficult Daughters* begins with a daughter going back to Amritsar carrying her mother's ashes to meet her maternal family. The narrative then alternates between the past and the present with the mother and daughter speaking to each other through places and events. Traced within this paradigm are both the history of the mother's extraordinary life and the turbulence of the years preceding the independence of our country. Amritsar is those times was a vastly different place from what it is today because it isn't today. Towns such as Amritsar had what was called a 'genry', which counted eminent educator, teachers, lawyers and landed families among their class. To such a family belongs Virmati. Her grandfather is a prominent landowner and ardent Arya Samaj, Committed to the education of women. Because, it is he who helps Virmati to stand upon her point. His sons run a successful jewellery establishment and have a large brood of children. Virmati is the eldest of 11 children and divides her time between helping her anaemic mother cope with the housework and studying. It doesn't mean that she did it with wholeheartedly. Virmati's interest in studies is incomprehensible to her family which considers her accomplished enough to handle life, equipped as she is to deal with stitching, cooking and reading and writing. The narrative, then, alternates between the past and the present, revealing bit by bit, Virmati's life from the information Ida collects from her mother's friends, brothers, sisters and acquaintances. She concludes by saying, "This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be. Do not haunt me anymore.

Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* has to be a mother, to all her ten siblings. The mother Kasturi is involved in the sole job of procreation leaving the young ones for Virmati to tend upon. The absence or lack of mother's sympathetic shoulders at home forces these daughters to look for sympathy outside which in turn leads to deception. At times Virmati yearned for affection, for some sign that was special. However, when she put her head next to the youngest baby, feeding in the mother's arms, Kasturi would get irritated and push her away. "Have you seen to their food-milk-clothes-studies?" The poor girl does her best to appease her mother and at the same time pursue her studies. The world may not love a lover, but it certainly adores a mother, simultaneously a daughter may adore her mother. The world is full of love, affection, selfless devotion and all that is soft and sweet and noble in human nature. Between a mother and a child, trust and love exist. This should be especially true of a mother – daughter relationship. "What will happen to you after I am gone?" is her favourite lament about Ida. Because, she is nothing, husbandless and childless. She feels herself hovering



like a pencil notation on the margins of society. Daughters are not all that dependant, admiring lot and mother are not all that doting, sacrificing one. Their relationship is shaped by the circumstances that were dominating. Because it is that the long chain of conditioning of women starts from their mothers. Mothers, being women, were themselves conditioned by their mothers first and the society at large into the norms of the patriarchal society.

### Conclusion

The theme of *Difficult Daughters* is the search for control over one's destiny. Virmati seeks human relations that will permit her to practice the degree of control over her life which, as an educated woman, she deserves. The novel deals with how she is torn between her family duties, the desire for education and elicits love. Virmati is the protagonist of the novel. She is born into a strict and high minded household in Amritsar. She is the eldest child in her Family. She becomes the second mother of her ten other siblings. She devotes herself fully in taking care of her younger siblings. She is a liberal minded girl who works very hard for her family and she never finds time for her own. The love and care which she expected from her family and especially her mother, is never allotted to her. Because of her family problems she could not concentrate on her studies.

Mother-daughter relationship is unique and determines the future development of a woman. It is a relationship which requires separation and fusion at the same time for the proper development of the daughter's personality. It is this relationship that helps the daughter overcome the ambivalences and to gain confidence to go out into the world, to face the world as an individual. The very course of a daughter's life changes due to the mother's attitude. Daughters are difficult only when life becomes difficult for them. Though like all relationships, this one is also bilateral and is based on interdependence; the dependence of the daughter is greater than that of the mother. Authoritative and autocratic attitude of the mother may mar the very personality of daughter and it may make a pseudo-rebel out of an otherwise disciplined and motivated daughter as in the case of Virmati.

*Difficult Daughters* is the story of a freedom struggle. While India fights for freedom from the British Raj, Virmati fights for the freedom to live life on her terms. Like so many other Indian girls, she wants to decide what to study and where, whom to marry and when. In the end, it appears that she might have achieved all that but it ceases to be important. For in the throes of the struggle, she loses a part of herself. She is torn in two halves, one of which is the side she is fighting against. All this when India attains freedom. But at the cost of partition at the cost of losing half of its soul. At the cost of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives, lost in the fire of communal hatred. India's hollow victory is mirrored in Virmati's. In all this the professor (fond of everything English) wields considerable influence, although in a catalytic sort of way. Just as British did in the tragedy of Partition.

Summing up the discussion, it must be pointed out that partition has left such deep scars that even decades of redress and remedy provided by politicians, society, religion or judicial system have also not been able to heal. People were left with no other option but to accept their fate as there was no one else to blame but themselves and no plausible solution in sight as the end of the last chapter of the book suggests: "The deed was done, they would just have to go on living." (277).

It's the right time for every individual irrespective of sex to treat both the male and female child are indistinguishable. A family can be at cloud nine if there is no gender discrimination.

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