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TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM IN MANJU KAPUR'S DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a critical re-reading of Difficult Daughters by Manju Kapur through the framework of transnational feminism, situating the narrative within the intersecting contexts of colonial modernity, nationalist discourse and gendered subjectivity in pre- and post-Partition India. The novel foregrounds the life of Virmati, whose struggle for education, autonomy and emotional fulfillment unfolds against the rigid expectations of a patriarchal Punjabi family and the socio-political upheavals of the Indian independence movement. Drawing on the theoretical insights of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, this study examines how Kapur destabilizes universalist and Eurocentric feminist assumptions by foregrounding the specificity of women's lived experiences shaped by colonial history, class, caste and cultural norms. The paper highlights how Virmati's subjectivity is constituted through multiple, overlapping structures of power, thereby exemplifying the concept of intersectionality and revealing the limitations of singular feminist narratives. Furthermore, the analysis explores how the novel interrogates the binaries of tradition and modernity, home and nation, and personal desire versus collective duty, illustrating the complexities of female agency in a transnational and postcolonial context. Ultimately, this paper argues that Difficult Daughters contributes to transnational feminist discourse by articulating a localized yet globally resonant critique of gender oppression, emphasizing the need for historically grounded, culturally specific and intersectional approaches to understanding women's struggles across borders.

Keywords: Transnational Feminism, Intersectionality, Female Agency, Postcolonial Identity, Patriarchy, Nationalism.

Introduction

Transnational feminism has emerged as a significant critical framework that challenges the homogenizing tendencies of mainstream Western feminist discourse by foregrounding the diverse, historically situated experiences of women across the globe. Rather than treating "woman" as a

universal category, transnational feminist scholars emphasize the ways in which gender intersects with structures of power such as colonialism, nationalism, capitalism, race, caste and religion. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues in her seminal essay "Under Western Eyes," Western feminist representations have often constructed a monolithic "Third World woman" as passive, oppressed and voiceless, thereby erasing the complexities and agency embedded in non-Western contexts (333–358). Transnational feminism, therefore, seeks to recover these silenced voices and to situate women's struggles within specific socio-political and cultural histories.

In this context, Difficult Daughters by Manju Kapur offers a rich narrative terrain for examining the intersections of gender, nation and identity in colonial and postcolonial India. Published in 1998, the novel is set against the backdrop of the Indian nationalist movement and the trauma of Partition, tracing the life of Virmati, a young woman who aspires to education and autonomy in a deeply patriarchal Punjabi household. Virmati's journey is marked by a series of personal and social conflicts, as she negotiates her desires for intellectual freedom and emotional fulfillment against the rigid expectations of family honor, marriage and gender roles. Her story is not merely an individual struggle but is intricately tied to the broader historical processes that shaped modern India.

The theoretical insights of Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality further illuminate Virmati's position within overlapping structures of oppression. Her marginalization cannot be understood solely in terms of gender; rather, it is produced through the convergence of familial authority, cultural norms and the socio-political dynamics of colonial rule. Similarly, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the subaltern raises important questions about voice and representation, particularly in relation to women whose choices are constrained by both indigenous patriarchy and colonial power structures. Kapur's narrative complicates these theoretical concerns by presenting Virmati not as a silent victim but as a subject who exercises agency, albeit within limiting and often contradictory conditions.

Moreover, the novel interrogates the relationship between nationalism and gender, a key concern in transnational feminist discourse. The Indian nationalist movement, while advocating freedom from colonial rule, often reinforced traditional gender roles by idealizing women as symbols of cultural purity and moral virtue. In Difficult Daughters, this tension is evident in the ways women's bodies and choices become sites of ideological contestation. Virmati's pursuit of higher education and her unconventional relationship with a married professor challenge both familial authority and nationalist ideals, thereby exposing the limitations of a liberation discourse that excludes women's autonomy.

Kapur also engages with the dialectic of tradition and modernity, revealing it to be neither binary nor stable. Education, often seen as a marker of modern progress, becomes a double-edged sword in Virmati's life; offering the promise of independence while simultaneously intensifying her alienation from familial structures. This ambivalence reflects the broader complexities of colonial modernity, where Western ideals of individualism intersect with indigenous cultural practices, producing hybrid and often conflicting identities.

This paper, therefore, seeks to examine how Difficult Daughters not only reflects but also contributes to transnational feminist discourse by articulating a nuanced critique of gendered oppression within a specific historical and cultural context. By analyzing themes such as education, sexuality, caste and nationalism, the study highlights the ways in which Manju Kapur foregrounds the multiplicity of women's experiences and resists reductive feminist frameworks. Ultimately, the paper argues that Kapur's novel redefines female agency as a process of negotiation and contestation, thereby offering a localized yet globally relevant perspective on feminist struggle.

Postcolonial Gender Struggles and the Burden of Tradition

Postcolonial feminism, as a crucial strand within transnational feminist thought, interrogates the enduring impact of colonial histories on gender identities, social structures and cultural practices in formerly colonized societies. It resists the tendency to view patriarchy as a static or purely indigenous phenomenon by situating it within the broader dynamics of colonial intervention, nationalist reform and socio-economic transformation. In Difficult Daughters, Manju Kapur locates Virmati's struggle for autonomy within this complex socio-historical matrix, where colonial modernity and indigenous traditions intersect in often contradictory ways. The novel's setting during the late colonial period and the eve of Partition underscores how women's lives are shaped not only by familial expectations but also by the ideological currents of nationalism and reform.

The tension between modern education and traditional domestic roles in the novel reflects what Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid identify as the paradoxical positioning of women within colonial and nationalist discourses. As they argue, women were simultaneously constructed as custodians of cultural authenticity and as participants in social reform, thereby placing them within a dual and often conflicting framework (xii–xiv). This contradiction is vividly embodied in Virmati, whose pursuit of education represents both an entry into modernity and a challenge to entrenched patriarchal norms. Her intellectual aspirations disrupt the conventional life trajectory prescribed for women, in the forms of marriage, motherhood and domesticity, thus exposing the fragility of these seemingly "natural" roles. Virmati's declaration that she has "no intention of marrying just because her mother thought it was time" (Kapur 9) marks a significant moment of resistance against the normative structures of arranged marriage and familial authority. However, this resistance is neither linear nor unproblematic. Kapur carefully portrays how the family functions as a disciplinary institution, echoing broader social mechanisms of control. Through the figure of the mother, the novel reveals how patriarchal values are not only imposed by male authority but are also internalized and reproduced by women themselves. The mother's insistence on conformity reflects a deeply ingrained anxiety about social respectability, honour and the preservation of tradition, all of which are intensified within the context of colonial disruption and nationalist reassertion.

In this regard, Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of Western feminist discourse becomes particularly relevant. Mohanty challenges the construction of the "Third World woman" as a monolithic, oppressed subject devoid of agency, arguing instead for an analysis grounded in historical and cultural specificity (337). Virmati's character resists such reductive categorization. She is neither a passive victim nor a wholly liberated subject; rather, she embodies a complex interplay of resistance, negotiation and compromise. Her decision to pursue a relationship with a married professor, for instance, complicates conventional notions of feminist agency. While it may be read as an assertion of personal choice and emotional autonomy, it simultaneously entangles her within another patriarchal structure, thereby revealing the limitations and contradictions inherent in her quest for freedom. Kapur's nuanced portrayal of Virmati thus aligns with postcolonial feminist concerns about the ambivalence of agency in contexts shaped by intersecting systems of power. Agency, in this framework, is not an absolute or unidirectional force but a contingent and often paradoxical process. Virmati's choices are shaped by her desire for selfhood and intellectual fulfillment, yet they are also constrained by the very structures she seeks to transcend. This tension underscores the central argument of postcolonial feminism that women's struggles cannot be understood outside the specific historical, cultural and political conditions that produce them.
Furthermore, the novel reveals how the burden of tradition operates as both a constraint and a site of identity formation. Tradition, in Difficult Daughters, is not merely an oppressive force but also a source of continuity and belonging, making its rejection neither simple nor absolute. Virmati's oscillation between defiance and conformity reflects the psychological and emotional costs of

resisting deeply rooted social norms. In this sense, Kapur moves beyond a binary opposition between tradition and modernity, instead presenting them as interdependent and mutually constitutive forces. Ultimately, Difficult Daughters offers a compelling exploration of postcolonial gender struggles by illustrating how the legacy of colonialism, the pressures of nationalism and the persistence of patriarchal traditions converge in shaping women's lives. Through Virmati's journey, Kapur foregrounds the complexities of negotiating autonomy within a socio-cultural framework that is itself in transition. The novel thus reinforces the transnational feminist imperative to understand gender not as a universal category but as a historically contingent and culturally mediated experience.

Intersectionality: Gender, Caste and Class in Virmati's Life

The concept of intersectionality, articulated by Kimberle Crenshaw, offers a crucial framework for understanding how multiple axes of identity such as gender, caste and class interact to produce layered and often contradictory experiences of oppression and privilege. Rather than isolating gender as a singular category, intersectionality foregrounds the simultaneity of social hierarchies and reveals how power operates through their interconnections. In Difficult Daughters, Manju Kapur constructs Virmati's subjectivity precisely at this intersection, demonstrating that her struggles cannot be reduced to patriarchal gender norms alone but must be understood within the broader matrix of caste privilege, class positioning and cultural expectations. Virmati's location as an upper-caste, educated, middle-class Punjabi woman affords her certain opportunities that remain inaccessible to many others. Her access to education, for instance, distinguishes her from women confined entirely to domestic spaces, enabling her to imagine a life beyond early marriage and household duties.

However, this privilege is deeply conditional. Education, in her case, is not valued as a means of self-realization but as a cultural asset that enhances familial prestige and improves matrimonial prospects. The moment it begins to challenge the normative structures of marriage and obedience, it is perceived as a threat. Thus, Virmati's class and caste privilege simultaneously empower and restrict her, illustrating the paradox at the heart of intersectional identity.

This paradox is further illuminated through the structure of the family, which operates as a key site for the reproduction of caste and gender hierarchies. Drawing on Sharmila Rege's notion of the "brahmanical patriarchal family," one can see how Virmati's household enforces strict codes of conduct that regulate women's sexuality, mobility and choices in order to preserve caste purity and social status (Rege 18). Marriage, within this framework, is not merely a personal union but a mechanism for maintaining caste endogamy and consolidating social capital. Virmati's transgression; her relationship with Harish, a married English professor, therefore disrupts not only gender norms but also the intricate network of caste-based expectations and familial honour. Her mother's anguished declaration, "You have blackened our face. Who will marry your sisters now?" (Kapur 113), underscores the collective nature of this transgression. A woman's actions are never viewed in isolation; rather, they are seen as reflective of the entire family's moral standing. This moment reveals how the burden of preserving honour is disproportionately placed upon women, whose bodies and choices become symbolic carriers of cultural and social legitimacy. Virmati's defiance, therefore, has repercussions that extend beyond her individual life, affecting the marital prospects and reputations of her sisters and kin. In this sense, Kapur exposes how intersectional structures of caste and patriarchy operate through kinship networks, reinforcing conformity through fear of social ostracism.

At the same time, the novel complicates a singular narrative of oppression by juxtaposing Virmati's life with that of her cousin Shakuntala. Living in the more cosmopolitan environment of Lahore,

Shakuntala inhabits a relatively liberal social space that allows for intellectual engagement and personal independence. Her association with progressive circles and her pursuit of a professional identity suggest how geography and class can expand the horizons of feminist possibility. Yet, this freedom is neither absolute nor unproblematic. Shakuntala's eventual decision to remain unmarried highlights the social cost of autonomy within a society that continues to define women primarily through marital roles. Her independence, while empowering, also entails a form of marginalization, indicating that even privileged women must negotiate significant constraints. Through this contrast, Kapur demonstrates that intersectionality is not merely about cumulative disadvantage but also about differentiated experiences shaped by context. While both Virmati and Shakuntala resist patriarchal expectations, the nature and extent of their resistance are mediated by their respective social locations. Virmati's rebellion is fraught with emotional turmoil and social backlash, whereas Shakuntala's relative privilege allows for a more controlled assertion of independence. However, neither escapes the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms, underscoring the persistence of gendered constraints across varying contexts.

As such, Difficult Daughters presents intersectionality as a dynamic and lived reality, where gender, caste and class intersect to produce complex subjectivities. Kapur resists simplistic binaries of oppression and empowerment, instead portraying female agency as contingent, negotiated and often contradictory. Virmati's life exemplifies how privilege does not eliminate subjugation but reshapes its contours, creating spaces of possibility that are simultaneously circumscribed. In doing so, the novel reinforces the transnational feminist emphasis on context-specific analysis, highlighting the need to understand women's experiences within the intricate interplay of social hierarchies that define their world.

Nationalism, Partition and the Female Body as Political Symbol

In Difficult Daughters, Manju Kapur intricately intertwines the personal struggles of Virmati with the socio-political upheavals of the Indian independence movement and the trauma of Partition, thereby demonstrating how women's lives become deeply entangled with national history. The novel situates female subjectivity within a moment of historical transition, where competing ideologies of nationalism, colonial modernity and patriarchy shape the contours of women's identities. Kapur's narrative reveals that while men actively participate in political movements and public debates, women are frequently relegated to symbolic and representational roles as preservers of cultural purity, embodiments of national honour and sacrificial custodians of tradition. In this sense, the nation becomes gendered, and women's bodies emerge as sites upon which ideological anxieties are inscribed.

The theoretical concerns raised by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her seminal question, "Can the subaltern speak?" become particularly relevant in understanding Virmati's position within the novel (Spivak 271). Virmati possesses education and the ability to articulate her desires; she studies, writes letters and attempts to assert her individuality. Yet, despite these avenues of expression, her voice remains constrained and mediated by patriarchal and nationalist discourses that define the limits of acceptable female behaviour. Her aspirations are repeatedly interpreted not as expressions of selfhood but as threats to familial honour and social stability. Kapur thus illustrates the paradox of female articulation in patriarchal societies: women may speak but their speech is often appropriated, silenced or reinterpreted through dominant ideological frameworks.

This silencing is closely tied to the symbolic function assigned to women during nationalist movements. As Tanika Sarkar observes, the female body frequently becomes a terrain for ideological control in periods of anti-colonial struggle, where notions of cultural authenticity and moral superiority are projected onto women (Sarkar 5). In Difficult Daughters, Virmati's body becomes a contested space regulated by family expectations, social morality and patriarchal

anxieties. Her sexuality is subjected to intense scrutiny and her relationship with Harish transgresses not only marital norms but also the moral codes that seek to preserve communal respectability. Her pregnancy outside wedlock marks her as socially deviant and renders her vulnerable to exclusion and shame. Virmati's painful acknowledgment, "I was neither a wife nor a widow, neither respectable nor fallen" (Kapur 156), captures the liminality of her existence. She occupies an in-between space that defies socially sanctioned categories of womanhood. This liminality mirrors the fractured and uncertain condition of the nation during Partition, when political boundaries, identities and communities were themselves in a state of violent reconfiguration. Kapur subtly parallels Virmati's fragmented personal identity with the dislocation and instability produced by Partition, suggesting that the crises of the nation and the crises of female subjectivity are deeply interconnected. Just as the nation struggles to define itself amidst rupture and displacement, Virmati struggles to locate a stable sense of self within conflicting social expectations.

At a broader level, Difficult Daughters interrogates the gendered dimensions of nationalism by exposing the contradictions embedded within anti-colonial discourse. While the nationalist movement seeks liberation from colonial oppression, it often fails to extend the same principle of freedom to women within the domestic sphere. The rhetoric of national emancipation coexists with the continued regulation of female autonomy, sexuality and mobility. Kapur's narrative therefore critiques the selective nature of nationalist modernity, revealing how women remain burdened with preserving cultural morality even amidst political transformation. Ultimately, the novel presents the female body as both a symbolic and contested political space, where the anxieties of nation, tradition and patriarchy converge. Through Virmati's experiences, Kapur demonstrates that women's struggles for autonomy are inseparable from the larger historical and ideological forces that shape their world. By linking personal suffering with national upheaval, Difficult Daughters contributes to transnational feminist discourse, foregrounding how the politics of gender, nation and identity intersect within postcolonial contexts.

Education as Emancipation and Control

In the novel, education emerges as a deeply ambivalent force, simultaneously offering the promise of liberation and functioning as an instrument of patriarchal regulation. Manju Kapur challenges the simplistic feminist assumption that education automatically guarantees empowerment by revealing how educational opportunities for women are often mediated through social expectations and patriarchal interests. For Virmati, education becomes both a means of intellectual awakening and a source of emotional conflict, exposing the contradictions embedded within colonial modernity and middle-class reformist ideologies. At one level, education enables Virmati to imagine a life beyond the confines of domesticity. Her exposure to literature, intellectual debate and urban academic spaces broadens her consciousness and nurtures her desire for individuality. Education allows her mobility, physical as well as psychological, by enabling her to leave the restrictive environment of her home and engage with ideas associated with modernity and selfhood. Through reading and learning, Virmati begins to question the inevitability of arranged marriage and the gendered expectations imposed upon her. Her academic aspirations therefore symbolize a form of resistance against the traditional patriarchal order that seeks to define women exclusively through marriage and motherhood.

However, Kapur carefully complicates this emancipatory narrative by demonstrating that education itself is deeply entangled with structures of discipline and social control. Virmati's family permits her education only insofar as it remains compatible with patriarchal norms. Her learning is valued not as a pathway to independence but as a marker of refinement capable of enhancing the family's prestige and improving her prospects within the marriage market. In this sense, education functions less as a radical challenge to patriarchy and more as a cultural accomplishment that can be

incorporated into existing social structures without fundamentally disrupting them. This contradiction becomes evident in the family's changing attitude toward Virmati's studies. As long as her education remains symbolic and ornamental, it is tolerated; the moment it begins to encourage autonomy and self-determination, it becomes threatening. Kapur thereby exposes the conditional nature of women's empowerment within patriarchal societies, where opportunities are often granted only within carefully regulated boundaries. Education is permitted, but independence is not. The institution of learning thus mirrors the broader social order, simultaneously producing aspirations for freedom while policing the limits of acceptable female behaviour.

The insights of Naila Kabeer are particularly relevant in this context. In The Power to Choose, Kabeer critiques neoliberal assumptions that equate access to education with genuine empowerment, arguing that choices can only be meaningful when individuals possess the social and material conditions necessary to exercise them freely (Kabeer 18–20). Virmati's experiences vividly illustrate this tension between formal opportunity and structural constraint. Although she acquires education and a degree of mobility, her choices remain circumscribed by familial authority, societal morality and patriarchal expectations. Her pursuit of education does not dismantle the systems that subordinate her; instead, it intensifies her awareness of those systems and deepens her emotional isolation within them. Indeed, the irony of Virmati's intellectual journey lies in the fact that her search for self-hood ultimately leads her into a relationship that undermines her social standing. Her emotional attachment to Harish, the married professor who encourages her education, reveals the vulnerability embedded within her quest for autonomy. Harish initially appears to represent intellectual companionship and progressive modernity, yet the relationship gradually reproduces the same patriarchal structures that Virmati seeks to escape. Rather than becoming an equal partner, she is relegated to the marginal position of a second wife, struggling for recognition within a hostile domestic environment.

Kapur's portrayal thus reveals the limits of education as a transformative force within patriarchal societies. Virmati's academic achievements fail to secure genuine independence because the social structures surrounding her remain fundamentally unchanged. Her intellectual identity is eventually overshadowed by domestic responsibilities and emotional subordination, demonstrating how patriarchy neutralizes female aspirations without overtly rejecting them. Education, therefore, becomes a paradoxical space: it awakens critical consciousness and nurtures resistance, yet it cannot by itself dismantle the deeply entrenched systems of caste, gender and familial control that govern women's lives. Virmati's tragedy does not lie in her desire for education but in the society's inability to accommodate an educated woman who seeks emotional and intellectual autonomy beyond prescribed domestic roles.

In this way, Difficult Daughters presents education as both emancipatory and disciplinary, revealing its dual capacity to empower and constrain. Through Virmati's experiences, Kapur demonstrates that access to education alone does not guarantee liberation unless accompanied by broader structural changes in societal attitudes, gender relations and cultural norms. In doing so, the novel contributes to transnational feminist discourse by challenging universalized narratives of empowerment and emphasizing the need to examine how institutions of modernity remain implicated in systems of patriarchal control.

Memory, Silence and Intergenerational Feminism

The narrative structure of Difficult Daughters is deeply significant in understanding its feminist politics, for the novel is not merely the story of Virmati but also an exploration of memory, silence and intergenerational inheritance. Manju Kapur frames the narrative through the perspective of Virmati's daughter, who attempts to reconstruct her mother's hidden and fragmented past. This

narrative strategy foregrounds the silences surrounding female desire, rebellion and suffering within patriarchal societies. The novel begins with the striking confession: "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" (Kapur 3). This statement immediately establishes a relationship marked by distance, resentment and unresolved emotional tension, suggesting that the legacy of women's struggles is often transmitted through silence rather than open dialogue.

The generational conflict between mother and daughter reveals how feminist consciousness evolves across time, shaped by inherited memories, social expectations and the emotional residues of past struggles. Virmati's daughter initially perceives her mother as distant, dissatisfied and emotionally inaccessible, unable to fully comprehend the historical and psychological burdens that shaped her life. Yet, as the narrative unfolds, the daughter's investigation gradually transforms into an act of empathetic recovery. By piecing together Virmati's experiences, she begins to understand the constraints, contradictions and sacrifices embedded within her mother's choices. Kapur thus suggests that feminist understanding is often retrospective, emerging through acts of remembering and reinterpretation across generations. This recovery of the maternal voice aligns closely with the concerns of transnational feminism, which seeks to uncover histories and experiences marginalized within dominant patriarchal and nationalist narratives. The silences in Difficult Daughters are not merely personal absences but manifestations of larger socio-cultural structures that deny legitimacy to female desire and autonomy. Virmati's life story remains partially hidden because women's emotional and intellectual struggles are frequently excluded from official histories of the nation. The nationalist narrative celebrates political leaders, public movements and masculine heroism, while women's inner conflicts and personal sacrifices remain unacknowledged or relegated to the private sphere.

In this regard, the novel resonates with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concern with the erasure of subaltern voices. Although Virmati possesses education and agency, her experiences are continually overshadowed by patriarchal interpretations that reduce her identity to moral failure or domestic inadequacy. Her silence is therefore not simply voluntary but structurally produced. Kapur's narrative intervention becomes significant because it attempts to restore complexity and humanity to a woman whose life has been obscured by judgment and social stigma. Through the daughter's act of narration, the novel symbolically allows Virmati to "speak" beyond the confines imposed upon her during her lifetime. The process of remembering also reflects what Chandra Talpade Mohanty describes as the "politics of location," which emphasizes the importance of situating women's narratives within specific historical, cultural and political contexts (Mohanty 338). Virmati's story cannot be understood in abstraction from colonial India, nationalist ideology, caste structures and patriarchal family systems. By reconstructing her mother's life within these intersecting contexts, the narrator resists universalized representations of women's oppression and instead foregrounds the historical specificity of female experience. The novel thereby participates in a transnational feminist project that values localized histories while simultaneously revealing their broader global relevance.

At the same time, the novel underscores the emotional complexity of intergenerational feminism. The daughter's initial rejection of her mother reflects the psychological burden inherited by subsequent generations of women, who must negotiate both the failures and achievements of those who came before them. Virmati's life serves as both a warning and an inspiration; an example of the costs of resistance as well as the necessity of challenging oppressive structures. Kapur therefore avoids romanticizing feminist rebellion, instead portraying it as a painful and incomplete process whose consequences reverberate across generations.

Conclusion

Thus, this paper argues that Difficult Daughters by Manju Kapur offers a powerful exploration of the intersections between patriarchy, nationalism, caste, class and colonial modernity through the life of Virmati, a woman struggling for identity and autonomy in a restrictive social order. Through a transnational feminist lens, the novel reveals that women's oppression and agency are shaped by specific historical, cultural and political contexts rather than universal experiences. Virmati's pursuit of education, emotional fulfillment and independence highlights the contradictions of empowerment within patriarchal society, where freedom is often limited by familial expectations, social honour and nationalist ideology. Kapur also demonstrates how women's voices and experiences are marginalized within dominant historical narratives, making the act of remembering and narrating itself a form of feminist resistance. As such, Difficult Daughters challenges simplistic notions of liberation by presenting female agency as complex, negotiated and deeply intertwined with structures of power. The novel makes a significant contribution to transnational feminist discourse by emphasizing the need for culturally grounded and intersectional understandings of women's struggles in postcolonial societies.

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