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**Patriarchy and Women Subalternity in Manjukapur's
"Difficult Daughters" And "A Married Woman"**

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ABSTRACT: *Indian women are subordinated in this patriarchal male dominated society. Women are being treated as a domestic slave since they are subordinated to their men. The paper brings out how the female characters are subordinated and explores the traumas suffered by the women characters in the male dominated patriarchal society in India, with reference to ManjuKapur's "Difficult Daughters" and "A Married Woman". As a feminist writer, ManjuKapur raises a strong protest against the male dominated Indian society. "Difficult Daughters" analyses the sufferings of the three generation women: Kasturi, Virmati and Ida. Kasturi, the elderly gives birth to eleven children leaving her health completely deteriorated. She follows the traditional norms and rules of the society, she lives in and accepts the patriarchal dominance and she cannot reject giving multiple births. Virmati, central character of the novel "Difficult Daughters" becomes the second mother to her siblings, is burdened with all the responsibilities of the household work. Harish, Virmati's husband, represented as the patriarchal society, oppresses Virmati compelling her to abort their baby. The third character Ida is prey to the burden of patriarchal expectation. Ida was forced to live to her father's expectation and after marriage compelled to live to her husband's expectation. Astha, the female protagonist of the novel, "A Married Woman" webs in between the modern feminist awakening and the ancient family responsibilities. Astha's trauma to decide between her desire for freedom and her obligations towards family sickens her. The unequal, unjust and oppressed role of women can be observed in all the female characters that undergo a loveless life throughout dominated and dictated by their husbands. The paper brings out the voice of women's frustrations, disappointments and alienation in this patriarchal world.*

Key words: *Patriarchy, Subalternity, Trauma, Disillusionment, Feminist, Male domination.*

Women are the victims in the hands of the Indian patriarch families. The status of women folk in India is presented before us as a never ending torture and their constant struggle against exploitation in the hands of male dominant environment. The woman is invariably pushed back into her expected gender roles as wife, cook, etc. She is abused as an unpaid laborer for cooking meals, cleaning greasy dishes, washing clothes and taking care of their children in addition to their husband and in-laws. They are never allowed to enquire about money or property and they are never included in any discussions. India believes in traditional values and it is deep rooted in the societal values. Still today, Indian society is organized around gender bias and it gives more importance and space to male dominance. Actually in his male dominated society, she is wife, mother, sister and home maker and is expected to serve, sacrifice, submit and tolerate each ill against her peacefully. The research paper explores the traumas encountered by the women characters in the male dominated patriarchal society in India, with reference to **ManjuKapur's "Difficult Daughters" and "A Married Woman"**. Both the novels are well balanced depiction of a country's inner development and the anguish of a woman's unrest to choose between her modern feminist awakening and the ancient family responsibilities. The paper analyses the frustrations and adjustments of women in the modern arranged marriages.

Manjukapur is a renowned Indo – Anglican fiction writer born in Amritsar in 1948. She educated in India and Canada and was a professor of English at Miranda House in New Delhi and did her post graduation in English at Dalhousie University, Canada. ManjuKapur's

preoccupation with the female revolt against deep – rooted family values and the institution of marriage is brought throughout her novels. The novels manifest women's struggle for emancipation from economic, political and social bondages. Manjukapur shot into fame with her debut novel "Difficult Daughters", which won her the prestigious Commonwealth Eurasia Region Award. The women in her novels seem to be the personification of new women who have been carrying the burden of inhibition since ages and want to break that tradition of silence now. In the traditional social milieu of her novels she shows the existence of mothers and daughters, where marriage is regarded as the ultimate goal and destiny from which these women cannot escape.

The women characters in Manjukapur's "Difficult Daughters" are divided into three generations who marry for different reasons and also hate their marriages for different issues. In case of Kasturi, marriage is a responsibility and for which she becomes the sufferer being exploited in a patriarchal society. In the case of Virmathi, it is for the sake of love and attachment towards a married man Harish which results in her alienation. For Ida it is to carry the line and it results her to remain single and childless. Manjukapur has successfully portrayed the conflict of tradition and modernity in her characters. Kasturi at the age of seven is caught red - handedly by her parents when she prays to a picture of Christ. It is when Kasturi attends her mission school and at the age of an innocent childhood time, her mother tore the picture into pieces and screams at her and also threatens her to get married. Kasturi is taught cooking and stitching continuously till her marriage is finalized with SurajPrakash. It is a happy marriage for Kasturi, for she follows the traditional norms and rules of the society, she lives in and accepts the patriarchal dominance that she could not reject giving multiple births. It is only after giving birth to eleven children Kasturi couldn't bear the pain of giving birth anymore. She turns to god and prays furiously for the miracle of a miscarriage and in all above she should never conceive again. Kasturi could not remember a time, when she is not tired and when her feet and her legs did not ache. The physical body structure of Kasturi changed drastically due to her continuous child bearing. Kasturi's pain is not only because of her continuous child birth, but she gets humiliates by others especially by her sister in – law, who makes fun right in front of her. Lot of measures taken to abort the eleventh child results only in vain as she has the child on a cold December night. Kasturi is brought upon the conventional principles of patriarchal society, where marriage is the ultimate destiny of a girl's life and marriage implied that a girl has to work tirelessly to please her in – laws. Kasturi adheres in her patriarchal male dominated society even though she faces much trauma and above all she insists her daughter Virmathi to follow the same as her. Kasturi is portrayed as a typical Indian woman who strongly follows the patriarchal norms.

The character of Virmathi is seen as the flag bearer of the same type which she has received in the hands of her mother Kasturi. Virmathi's relationship with her mother is always problematic. Kasturi feels that Virmathi is sent to her as punishment that she has to bear her throughout her life. Kasturi often criticizes her for having dreams on her life, which were unconventional and improper for a girl to cherish in the patriarchal structure. Also she implores her to settle down with a domestic life like other girls of her age did. Virmathi has to do the daily chores and is often abused by her mother without any apparent reasons. Virmathi failed in her exams because of her excess domestic duties. Though failed in her exams and burdened by her domestic duties Virmathi's craving for higher education deeply enrooted inside her. Virmathi is often torn between family duties, the desire for pursuing higher education and her love with the married

professor Harish Chandra. One after another Kasturi gives birth to children and the whole burden of household work increases upon Virmathi, being the eldest daughter of the family.

Virmati falls in love with Harish, who pressurizes her not to marry, but to continue her education. Harish asks her to boldly represent herself before her family and her unwillingness to get married. Virmati is not bold enough to bring it out to her family, but with much hesitation talks to Kasturi, who gets angry and slaps her. Virmati in much trauma decides to commit suicide as she is not bold enough to bring out her opinion. Finally after much struggle she leaves Lahore for her higher education. Frequent visits by Harish make their love more strong. It is in this course of time, she gets pregnant and as the exams are nearing, she has no option than to abort. Mentally disturbed Virmati faces many obstacles and finally ends up in marrying Harish, which ends her relation with her mother and other family members. Harish keeps Virmati under his rule and she is expected to follow only his guidance. Virmati is not even given the choice of naming her daughter and it is only the decision of Harish. Virmati feels as if she is freed from one cage to get into another bigger one. Virmati dares to cross the patriarchal threshold, but she is again caught in another and all she has to do is just to adjust, compromise and adapt to the needs of the patriarchal family. Virmati becomes totally a loser as she gets herself alienated from her family and in addition that she also fails to get her own identity for which she is struggling. Virmathi who breaks the rule when asked by Kasturi, forces Ida to do the same. Virmathi shows her disappointment on Ida and tells her to live up to her father's expectation.

However, it is actually Virmati's difficult daughter Ida, who in her determination to live a life, despite all odds, represents the real situation of a modern woman struggling in the patriarchal society. Ida becomes the typical daughter of a difficult daughter Virmati, as she could not develop an understanding with her mother. She is not allowed to show any signs of intellectual decision making, but only to follow her father's orders. Ida protests against her mother, when she asks her not to disappoint her father. Ida thinks why she should please him when he doesn't show concern and love towards her. Harish, being the perfect example of a patriarchal male dominated society controls both Virmati and Ida to follow him and live as per his wish. Ida on the whole is shown off as a pretty, well dressed and well-mannered woman with exemplifying levels in all arts and studies. Ida right from her childhood is only ordered to do things. She is compelled or dragged to do things by her parents and not much care and affection is shown to her. Much to the disaster her marriage also ends up as a tragic one. The relationship between Ida and her husband Prabakar breaks up as she is forced to get her baby aborted. Ida is shattered when she loses her baby and she is unable to come out of her grief. It is very much shocking for Ida when Virmati also supports Prabakar in aborting her child. Ida knew very well that Virmati has a good opinion on her son – in – law, but she is not aware much about their troubled relationship. But Ida is the real sufferer in the hands of Prabakar. Ida is forced to abort her first baby to which she is not willing. This results in their divorce. Ida's life has nothing as she is husbandless and childless leading her to all sorts of trauma. Ida struggles to battle in the patriarchal society. Ida struggles against the badge of marginality which society imposes upon her and even from her young age, she is engulfed by melancholy, depression and despair.

In the novel "A Married Woman" the protagonist Astha in her continuous trauma and restlessness turns into a lesbian and becomes irresponsible with everything including her children and husband. Astha, coming from a middle class family, is the only daughter of her

parents. Astha is pushed into an arranged marriage where she plays the role of a typical Indian housewife. Astha feels complete in the role of an ideal wife. She has no problem as her husband loves her unconditionally and her corporal lust is satisfied everyday as she limits her world to the room where she enjoys the bliss of being confined and she waits for that throughout the day. She moulds herself to the need of her husband and family. Soon Astha gives birth to a baby girl. It is at the time of her second pregnancy which brings about a big difference in her life. Hemant is very sure that they should have only a son this time. It becomes a great struggle for Astha as she has to follow and go through various rituals as suggested by her mother to get a boy baby. Astha's happiness is short lived as she gets frustrated to take care of her children and in-laws continuously the whole day. After becoming a mother of two children, Astha experiences too much trauma as she is forced to do all the parental works all alone without any help from her soul mate which suddenly becomes a big shock to her. It is a burden for her longing for Hemant on the other side as he gets busy in his business that has made Astha waiting for long hours. Astha's behavioral change takes place mainly after her feeling of betrayed, when she finds her husband's infidelity. It's during this trauma she meets Ajjiaz, owner of a theatre workshop. A tender feeling arouses between them leading to a deep and strong relationship. The affair between them comes to a tragic end as Ajjiaz is murdered in the Babri – Masjid conflict.

Astha after the death of Ajjiaz is disturbed emotionally, mentally and physically. She doesn't want to be pushed around in the name of family and responsibilities. She tries to suppress her frustration and focus on her duties as a mother, wife and daughter-in-law. She is expected to do all the duties perfectly. Hemant's dominating attitude, superiority complex exercising over Astha, and lack of interest in her achievement completely freeze the channels of her bliss of marital life. Astha being an independently earning woman gets webbed in various occasions where she faces the problem of identity. Astha decides to go to Ayodhya to spend some time for herself. She goes against the wishes of her family and goes Ayodhya for a protest. It is during this stay she meets Pipeelika and comes to know that she is the wife of 'deceased' Ajjiaz and starts her friendship with her. They start to enjoy each other's companion and they start spending time together. Their companionship leads to a strong relationship as Astha starts keeping distance from her husband. Astha's frustration and irritation peeks up when she wants to fulfill the demands of growing-up children without the support of her in-laws and husband as they think it is only Astha's responsibility. The silent disapproval of her in-laws even in small issues pressurizes her at home. In addition to all these troubles the attitude of Hemant who shows no self respect or love towards her but completely misunderstands her. Too much of trauma leads Astha to develop migraine and high blood pressure. In the moment of chaos, Pipeelika urges Astha to leave her family and join her. Astha cannot resist Pipeelika's words as she finds Pipeelika as her true companion and her intimate soul mate of both emotional and physical relationship. This leads Astha on the verge of losing her family. Her anxiety, discomfort, loneliness and isolation do not resist her to give out voice to her unhappiness, over her troubled relationship, and rather it prompts her to develop a feeling of guilt, negativity and lack of self-esteem while facing these challenges of life.

The paper depicts how in Indian patriarchal society, the tradition is so strong that a woman cannot get her out of the bond and carve an own identity for her. Both the female characters come to a decision of compromise and they part to find their own ways, knowing the society will never allow them to have a happy future together. Astha represents herself as a woman

who wants to have her own space in the Indian culture who fights for her freedom and raises herself against the patriarchal male dominated society. Astha brings out the physical, psychological, emotional stress syndrome and suffocation of young Indian married women in their domestic life. Astha's struggle brings out how the protagonist's rebel against the hypocrisies of her conventional middle class family dealing with themes of alienation, loneliness and craving for love. In short a clear picture of the marriage stress and its incipient outcomes in the neutral Indian family is brought down in Astha's life. The female characters Kasturi, Virmati and Ida are seen to be struggling to cast off their web of patriarchal dominance. The protagonist Virmati, her mother Kasturi and her daughter Ida all of them emerge in their young age as difficult daughters and when they try to cope up with the society, they confront failure. These daughters in their journey of life face difficulties from others or by the circumstances they live in. Thus the women beneath the patriarchal demands and power are subjected to isolation.

The condition across all Hindu society is that, as a girl she is under her father's control, then after the marriage under her husband's control and finally after the loss of her husband, it is the turn of the son to take the control over his mother. These women just try to challenge the existing social – cultural – patriarchal system, but they cannot liberate themselves from oppressive patriarchal structure. The displacement they suffer and the suffocation they face in the traditional limits of marriage and family is clearly brought out in the life of these women characters. Though webbed with their desires, aspirations, emotions, feelings and dreams is pulled back by their inner conflicts rising out of their patriarchal conventions. The educated protagonists tries to assert their individuality and make an attempt to lead a liberal life which leads in trauma as we follow a tradition which implies an established method or practice, belief or custom, passed on to us by our ancestors. The difficulties faced by these women to initiate a journey towards peace for which for they have to undergo a lot of struggle because of the complexities of life which of course leave them only in a traumatic condition as they are forced to give importance to marriage and family duties. The portrayal of these relations clearly reflects the notions about the plight of wives in India. All the female figures groom of a happy marriage life, but receive only disappointments. Thus the women beneath the patriarchal demands and power are subjected to isolation. It is a struggle of individuality with family and society through which they are pushed into a dedicated attempt to shape an identity for themselves as capable women with flawless backgrounds.

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