

Kasturi: An Archetype of Patriarchal Oppression in Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters

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Abstract

In a traditional society because of gender discrimination, women have to face struggle and sufferings in their lives. In a patriarchal environment, a boy gets authority right from the birth but a girl has to struggle and sacrifice right from her mother's womb until her death to assert her individualism. A woman in a patriarchal family has struggle and suffers a lot due to paternal conditioning and upbringing.

KEYWORDS: Patriarchy, Struggle, Suffering, Distress.

Introduction:

Through her novel *Difficult Daughters*, Manju Kapur pragmatically portrays the dictatorial environment of paternal society that forces women to accept subjugated status to her male counterpart which makes them to lead a suppressed and oppressed life. Honey Sethi and Seema Dhillon in their article, "The Womanly Observation by Manju Kapur" observe, "Women under the patriarchal pressure and control were subjected to much more brunt and social ostracism. They were discriminated and were biased.... The life women lived and struggled under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society were reflected in the novels of Manju Kapur" (Sethi and Dhillon 55). Manju Kapur has a very skilfully portrayed women's struggle to make their place in the society, existing gender discrimination, women's protest for freedom and equality, their rebellious attitude against being marginalized one, their psychological and social crisis and difficulties to cope up with it.

Manju Kapur's first novel *Difficult Daughters*, a saga of three generations explores women's struggle and sufferings in a traditional society. Bhagabat Nayak says on the theme of *Difficult Daughters*:

Difficult Daughters presents larger issues of patriarchy, which denies woman's voice and freedom set around at the time of partition. He further adds the novelist expresses her absorbing ideas of woman relationship, woman sexuality, love, infatuation, jealousy, marriage, gender roles, self-discovery, and other problems with intelligence and sympathy (Nayak 209).

Kasturi, mother of Virmati is portrayed as a victim of patriarchy. Born and brought up in an Arya Samaj family where tradition valued most, Kasturi had to learn all skills being a woman in a traditional society. She was sent to a missionary school but when her parents saw her praying before picture of Christ they became too angry to send her school again. Kasturi's mother taught her duties being a woman and how to please her in-laws. It is not fault of Kastur's mother or Kasturi. The force of patriarchy was too high to avoid easily. B. R. Agrawal comments, "Novelist seems to be questioning the traditional systems of child marriage, gender discrimination, women's education and other outmoded value systems which lie at the root of modern malaise - Hence there is a need to modify not change them" (246). Kasturi became a bride at the age fifteen when she herself was a child to be cared and protected. But because of child marriage tradition and the belief every girl is meant for marriage and household stuff, she could not escaped from it.

She gives birth to ten children and she is pregnant for the eleventh time when the novel opens and her health is deteriorating due to continuous childbirth. Manju kapur describes her situation in following lines:

How trapped could nature make a woman? She turned to God, so bountiful with his gifts, and prayed ferociously for the miracle of a miscarriage. Her sandhya started and ended with this plea that somehow she should drop the child she was carrying and never conceive again. (Kapur 7)

Kasturi's all efforts to abort a child end in a disappointment. When she gives birth to a daughter she becomes depressed and doesn't take any interest in her newly born daughter.

Kasturi is a silent sufferer in the joint family of Lala Diwan Chand. Most of the times she has to do things against her will. She is entrapped in patriarchal conditioning. Motherhood is one such trap. Every time she conceived, life became burden and body so difficult to carry. No one in her family concerns about her deteriorating health. Kasturi's mother-in-law considers childbirth as God's grace. She works day and night in the house and she is not allowed to take part in such activities that gives her chance to step out of the house.

Manju Kapur has portrayed Kasturi as a victim of patriarchal force. She is bound to patriarchy and her life becomes an epitome of struggle, sufferings, and compromises by leaving her aspirations in life. Kasturi is representative of all women in a paternal society who becomes a prey of male chauvinism. This research paper proves beneficial in understanding women's struggle, sufferings and distress due to orthodox and patriarchal conditioning.

Work Cited

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