

Hegemonic Masculinity On Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*

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Abstract: *This article demonstrates the predominance of male characters, despite the female character Virmati trying to establish herself as an independent woman. All of their family members view male dominance as acceptable and legal. Even though women have demonstrated their talents in various disciplines and established that no field is exceptional for women, society nevertheless forces us all to believe that men are more powerful than women, superior, and in the driver's seat of the world. However, accepting or declaring that men and women are equal is challenging. Manju Kapur's novels portray patriarchy, extramarital affairs, oppression, and other issues. Manju Kapur gained recognition and notoriety for this book, named the finest debut in South Asia and Europe. The current research delves deeply into Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*' predominant portrayal of masculinity and savages, a persistent problem many women face without speaking up. The *Hegemonic Masculinity* by Raweyn Connell lends support to the same.*

Keywords: *Masculinity, Women, Dominant, Exceptional.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughter* sheds light on the three generations of women, Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida, but of each of these difficult daughters, Virmati's character propels the plot forward and is crucial to the book's success. The way Virmati is shown is distinctive. Prof. Harish, the protagonist of the story, is the character who drives Virmati's character forward. A hint of the hegemonic masculinity advocated by Raweyn Connell can be found in this book's treatment of masculinity and its power dynamics. The observance of hegemonic masculinity supports men's dominance in society and justifies the subordination of alternative male identities, women, and the general male population.

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the group of men who, at any particular time, assert dominance over other men and women. This group's capacity to assert this authority defines it, yet it is subject to change over time. The goal of the formation of hegemonic masculinity is to maintain male dominance. Therefore, it must be able to defend the patriarchy or the subjugation of women. Although institutional power and hegemonic masculinity are not the same, they interact. For instance, not all high-ranking government officials or CEOs are men who fit the definition of hegemonic masculinity, and not all-powerful men fit the definition, but their position at least gives them the appearance of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity can also create fictitious individuals, performers, and fabled figures.

The story of the protagonist Virmati, her mother Kasturi, and Virmati's daughter Ida is told in the novel *Difficult Daughters*, which increases the author Manju Kapur's notoriety. In this book, Ida tells the story of her parents, Prof. Harish and Virmati. The Virmati family is well-known and revered in their community. The eldest of 11 siblings and the elder daughter of Kasturi and Suraj Prakash is Virmati. Unfortunately, Virmati's mother gives birth to a child every year, making it seem like a yearly catastrophe. However, she cannot care for her children due to poor health. Virmati takes care of it and cares for her siblings just like a mother would. In this book, Manju Kapur introduces Prof. Harish, a tenant of the Suraj Prakash family who has a wife named Ganga, a son named Giridhar, and a mother named Kishori Devi. As an English professor, he plays a respected role in both society and his place of employment.

As the days pass, Harish's residence is visited by Virmati and the other kids. They become a member of the family. Harish adores Virmati, his pupil, for her beauty, intelligence, and enthusiasm for literature. He gradually wins

her over and makes her fall in love with him. Harish enjoys his career and reading and begins sharing his passions with Virmati. Since his wife is ignorant, Harish expects one more companion to enjoy and discuss books; as a result, he brings in Virmati to fill the space. Family and domestic responsibilities always pull women away from their upliftment. An identical incident also occurred in Virmati's life. At first, Virmati resists his request, but his wish is granted over time. She begins to respond to him as well. These two loves communicate through her younger sister, and their love develops into desire.

“Men do take advantage of women” (DD 181), stated by Swarnalatha, and she only forces Virmati to decide quickly regarding marriage. Harish did not seem to be involved in his plans for their marriage at all. Only Swarnalatha made Virmati aware that Harish was hesitant to propose to her. As a result of Swarnalatha being the one to identify Harish's evasiveness, Harish starts to hate her. On each occasion, Prof. Harish's dominance and victory are won by complimenting beautiful language and words and caressing him openly and covertly. “The Professor turned Virmati towards himself and cupped her face in his hands. He took off her glasses, then stroked her face with small, caressing gestures. He kissed her eyes, her nose, her soft, full mouth”. (DD 67) Before getting married, Virmati and Harish have sex in a familiar setting, and she gets pregnant. Before the wedding, Virmati has two miscarriages. “There is an eye in every leaf. And why is it that suddenly you do not care what everybody thinks”. (DD 186) By whatever methods and wherever it may be, he wants to quell his appetite. If Virmati meets any aloof guys, what would others think and say about her? Harish marries Virmati in the novel at the insistence of Virmati and his friend.

Every night, after bringing Virmati, to his home as a second wife, he engages in physical gratification with Virmati, where he once mated with Ganga. Even though the first wife, Ganga, was through the most misery and mental anguish, he paid no attention to her sentiments. He uses Ganga for domestic duties and Virmati for intellectual and sexual pursuits. Harish is motivated to accomplish the objectives he has set. A teacher cannot be a role model if he fails to set an exceptional example in his own life. In his personal life, he dominates his wife. Virmati gives in, but he gets what he wants. About his marriage with Virmati, he disregards his first wife's feelings. In a similar vein, he is not troubled by the thought that he had a sexual relationship with her before they got married.

The Virmati family welcomes Harish's attendance at a family member's funeral but rejects Virmati. It demonstrates how society mistakenly accepts men, which is inappropriate for women. Prof. Harish lives his life to the fullest but is Virmati's only hope. She could not coexist with him because of her guilt over interfering with Ganga and her son's lives. Harish's meddling in Virmati's life causes a commotion in Virmati's traditional family and his own family, but Harish seems unconcerned about anything and is only motivated by his wants. His actions help to demonstrate his masculinity in Sunalini. K.K.'s research article states that, "In our society, man is the decision maker, women has no authority to take her own decision as Virmati cannot. (148)

The family's breadwinner is regarded as the most reputable member and foremost decision-maker, leading to hegemonic masculinity. Every time Virmati leaves her house to avoid Harish and focus on education, Harish chooses a different excuse, like attending a conference to meet Virmati. He communicates with her by his adoring poetic language, phrases, and hugging on each occasion. Harish impacts Virmati's heart and mind when he cannot see her, making her miss him by sending her frequent letters or bumping into her everywhere she goes. In this situation, Prof. Harish overtly and subtly maintains control and wins. His marriage to Virmati causes chaos for her and her family. The man that the family chose for Virmati marries the younger one of Virmati. The family members are deeply hurt by it and neglect her for various rituals. Virmati constantly wishes she could talk to every member of her family. She was not allowed to attend even his father's funeral by other family members.

Whenever Harish encounters her, he attempts to woo her with expensive attire, purchasing their favourite foods, etc. He satisfies his carnal desire despite her disregard for objects. His soothing remarks dominate her. Constantly, she concedes to him as a Willy Nilly. Prof. Harish yells to his mother, Kishori Devi, that these are all destinies. He conceals his guilt by blaming destiny, and through his authoritative words, he abandons Kishori Devi and Ganga and forces his family to accept his second marriage and second wife, Virmati. Dr Prabhakar's research article states that, “Professor behaves like a valid symbol of an Indian male, and he always tries to treat her as a sexual toy to quench his lust”. (2926)

As Ganga and Virmati's husband, Harish performs a significant role in their lives. However, Virmati cannot assuage her remorse over sharing the life of Ganga. Occasionally, she considers leaving Harish's life, but he always persuades her with his words. Muthamil M.S. and V. Kamala, in their research article states that “Women is not provided with the liberty to take their own decision, and she has to do everything according to their choice of the man. By these lines, we can understand the dominant nature of Prof. Harish”. (244)

Since infancy, Virmati has desired independence, and her role model is her relative Shakuntala; however, Harish steals her independence, “Virmati is sleepless, like Lady Macbeth; she had murdered sleep” (DD 162). Harish's self-centred attitude is the cause of her unsuccessful existence. The pitiful creature, virmati, constantly yields to him with her consciousness.

Kasturi's existence is comparable to an annual baby-producing machine. Her spouse treated her like a machine and exploited her. Ida's life is unsuccessful, just like that of her mother and grandmother, and she divorces her spouse when she reveals her mother's life. Males are the cause of the failure of these problematic Daughters, and they are dominant over female characters.

Ajaz Ahmad Bhar and Showkatm Ahmad Wani's research article they commented that "Male supremacy creates hurdles in their lives, and Virmati never decides to choose her love or education. But disappointed with her love, Virmati attempts suicide. Finally, they lock her in the godown". (32)

As *Difficult Daughters* is a 19th-century novel, all of the masculine characters portrayed by Manju Kapur are dominant in their families, workplaces, and other settings. The Father of Virmati is in charge of his entire family. Similarly, Harish governs his family members despite committing misdeeds in his personal life; the same is true in reality. Women are emerging in various ways and fields in many cities to demonstrate their equality with men.

Women continue to fight for acceptance of their equality with males. Assume that males are always dominant in society and family across all generations, despite women demonstrating their efficiency, talent, and equality to this society. The males responsible for the failure of these three women are not Prodigious.

2. CONCLUSION:

Being a woman is an ordeal and perennial to accept and latch on to in the present generation, and in previous generations, males are dominant in society and family as it is granted legally for them alone. Life and rule over women are in the hands of men in all generations. If women breach, it disturbs the family and family members, and family members become victims. Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughter's* hero Prof. Harish is not exceptional in this.

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