

1. A Critical Discussion on *A Married Woman*

Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* (2002) is a sincere confession of a woman about her personality cult in the personal allegory of a bad marriage. Patriarchy as a social system considers men to be higher to women and men have dominant role over resources and decision making. The novel set in the 1970s and 1980s revolves around Astha, a talented painter, and the only daughter of a senior bureaucrat and a mother who is a teacher by profession. Astha's life since beginning has been controlled by her mother, who has always imposed her decisions on her daughter. Like a typical mother, she focuses all her energy on molding Astha into an ideal wife, daughter-in-law and a perfect mother.

The protagonist of the novel Astha's situation can be interpreted from multiple perspectives. To find out the reason behind the failure of her marriage is the primary effort of this dissertation. It is also an effort to critique from Third world feminist perspective in the terms of how patriarchy influences marriage. The Hemant Family represents the patriarchal families of Indian society, where male domination is extreme and marriage is helping tool for men to rule over the female.

The research adopts the hypothesis that the existing difficult situation of the character Astha is due to the turmoil of her married life with Hemant. Naturally, to justify this point of hypothesis, the dissertation takes the help of feminism as its theoretical modality; especially Third world feminism. This dissertation's focus is towards the reading of character Astha who is suppressed by patriarchy. Patriarchy is a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationship based on the assertion that male supremacy oppresses women.

Kapur presents the individual male perception of a woman as 'a holy cow'. Characters are exposed from within because the novelist gets into the psyche of them and makes them visible even to the readers. As we read the novel, it seems as if we are going deep into the psychic world. In terms of *A Married Woman*, Hemant family is exposed to show how patriarchy function after a woman gets married. According to Kamala Bhasim "historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, and economic organization of a range of different cultures. In the majority of families, the man is the figure who financially supports a family, while the woman stays at home and cares for the children. In patriarchal social system, women are given that level of economic assistance which is compatible with their daily subsistence and living" (8). For her, patriarchy signifies many things including ideological and institutional. She claims "patriarchy is a social and ideological system which considers men to be superior to women, in which men have more control over resources and decision making. Patriarchy is historically constructed and its form, content and extent can be different in different contexts, and at different times. Like all social systems, patriarchy too has an ideology and structure which together ensure that men are heads of households, inheritors of family name and property. All societal institutions, moreover, are male-dominated" (9).

The protagonist of novel Astha's two short-lived affairs with Bunty and Rohan and finally gets married to Hemant, an MBA from the USA, with everything arranged by their parents. After her marriage she became domestic slave in her own husband's home, which proves that marriage is a form of patriarchy and women is chained and victimize.

The term marriage is generally refers to the bond of a woman and a man's hearts and a relationship with mutual respect, compassion and involvement. Marriage, especially for a Hindu woman, turns out to be a loss of autonomy, freedom and even happiness. Women have to abandon their will and dream for the completion of other's will and dreams. They feel controlled within marriage due to the domination of men. Marriage is significant social institution which affects the personal life of every individual. Marriage under the Hindu law is a sacrament, being based upon a sacred religious ceremony. For Hindu, marriage, rather than a mere contract, is a tie which once tied cannot be united. It is considered as a permanent union between a woman and man.

Marriage, to see legally, is a process by which the legal relationship of wife and husband is established through which husband gains some authority over his wife. Marriage becomes a continuum of sacrifice for women which create a pseudo-existence under the shadow of their husband. Marriage is the institutionalized and legitimate form of man and woman relationship. It is a marriage originally meant a transfer of ownership in a woman. She is transferred to be dominated by her husband from her father and brother.

In the same way, it is a transfer of a woman from one household to another house. After marriage, she is sent to household where she becomes a stranger and is placed in a lowly social position, vulnerable to the whims of many, possibly without emotional support. The outsider wife is experienced as an inferior. She is expected to work from dawn to late at night and threatened by the potential of having abusive husband or one who would bring a co-wife. The transition from one's role as a sister and daughter in one's parents household to the role of an outsider in a new community

and a daughter-in-law in the husband's household is at best a source of dread. Astha the protagonist of the novel transits from daughter to wife and she has very big hope on her husband, who is an MBA from the USA. But patriarchal system of India changed Hemant drastically and from liberal husband he becomes a dominated male.

Marriage as a form of patriarchy in most societies constitutes one of the primary transitions in a person's life. It is identified as a key moment in the reproduction. After marriage husband is granted a full authority over his wife and a wife should worship him as her master. Husband is supposed to be a god to his wife. Many Hindu women preserve the forms of worship of their husbands by touching their feet, washing their feet and taking their blessings. The husband is considered "superior" and a wife as his "subordinate". There exists the power relation between a husband and a wife. A wife is expected to suffer silently all her life at the feet of her master. Astha is never asked in economical affairs after the death of her father's her mother handled all her assets and properties to Astha's husband Hemant rather than to her who is eligible for the property and she single child of her parents. This is a proof of how patriarchy system of India enables women to give their consent to be ruled by men.

A Married Woman deals with women's issues in the present context. It is an honest and seductive story of love, passion and attachment set at the time of political and religious turmoil in India. A unhappy married woman Astha Driven by a powerful physical relationship with a much younger woman, the main character of the novel risks losing the acquisitions of her conventional marriage and safe family. The novel raises the controversial issue of homosexual relationship in a challenging way. After

all gay and lesbian relationships are not mere fancies. This is getting more and more visible in modern societies though we may or may not accept it.

The novel exposes the domestic relationship. Kapur remain very truthful in presenting the women and the challenges they face in their personal, professional, religious and socio-political levels. Manju Kapur presents in her novel the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self sacrificing women towards self assured assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium for self expression.

Astha a middle class girl of her parents, her father is having modern thoughts where as her mother is traditional type who believes in the vision of Shastra's, "if parent die without getting their daughter married, they will be condemned to perpetual rebirth?" (1). Manju Kapur describes many rituals of the marriage in a very symbolic way: "father waiting to do the Kanyadaan, the feel of her hand in the hand" (37). As if girl is a thing and now the girl is given to a man to use as he wants in his house.

Manju Kapur uses our traditions to highlight downtrodden condition of women at the time of Havan in marriage "hot air" and smoke "are the words indicate that marriage is a beginning of a harsh journey. Within a few months of marriage Astha's life is taking shades of dullness as she has to wait for long hour to be a part of Hemant's company. Astha joins school as a teacher; with this Astha's periphery stretches a little and she gets a chance of interaction with other people also outside the house. Astha is now absorbed in her job of teaching and jobs of family; though an emancipated; educated and modern women Astha is still grabbed in age old thoughts;

as a wife she takes pleasure in serving her husband; she enjoys sitting close to his feet and pulling out his socks when he comes back from office in the evening

Kapur points these details to give us a blow to think that when will we women leave this attitude? Women is suppressed by men it is true but when will she herself break this old age shackle and makes herself free from such mental slaving and conditioning? When will she negotiates with herself? When she differentiates between love and slavery? Hemant ruins her dreams as well as all happiness of her life; their life becomes dull and drier, "Hemant wasn't really listening Astha stopped talking about creative writing as he got up to lock the door." (51). Astha gives birth to a girl and her child provides emotional support to her; Astha's life is enriched by her; Astha feels a self realization through her child. Astha observes changes in Hemant's attitude towards herself; occasionally she tries conveying this to Hemant who finds nothing wrong in their relationship.

Astha demands to give some time to their relationship he replies that he has no time for such games and courting will not be continued forever she knows, "she had lost argument before she had been able to define its parameters. There is nothing wrong with our relationship. Are you saying there is something wrong with me? You said it not I. But I am not happy, so how can you' She bit back words that might seem to indicate some insensitivity on his part. You think too much that is trouble" (66).

Astha's work gets appreciation in school; school is the only place where her work gets recognition; at home her work is taken for granted; nobody cares for her need and everybody at home has many expectations from her that she feels trapped in all one way relationships. Astha starts painting and writing to give outlet to her

suppressed emotions although writing "alleviated the heaviness within her, a heaviness she found hard to deal with" (79). Astha's relations are not very warm with her mother also: as she wants Astha's early marriage but Astha did not as she was responsible for the break-up of Astha's first love relationship also. These relations are still not healthy for her mother. Because she is very orthodox and always preferred to discuss all her money matters with Hemant instead of Astha.

Astha's second painting is sold by the man in twenty thousand, Astha feels rich and powerful; while shopping in Goa Astha likes an antique silver box which costs five thousand rupees, Hemant refuses to purchase that, " You must be out of your mind; said Hemant. The tone, the refusal both hurts her"(165). Astha meets Peeplika her lover's wife; they come closer to fulfill each other's loneliness. They have developed an emotional as well as physical relationship; a lesbian relationship. Perhaps it is a rebellious act; through such relations Astha consoles herself that she is important for someone at least; this relationship may be considered as revenge from family and society for ignoring her individuality; this is a reply to an unfaithful husband. Through the character Astha, Manju Kapur wants to show the urge of modern women to break the dependence syndrome of women. She is able to present beautifully her character Astha's negotiation with this male dominated society.

Astha the sensitive daughter of an enlightened father and orthodox mother has grown in a middle- class educated family in South Delhi and becomes a housewife, teacher, painter, and a lesbian in her status of a married woman she fights for her self- assertions. Unlike many unmarried girls she had her infatuations of adolescent love for Bunty, a boy of another colony and for Rohan who left for overseas for a better career. But her real story of love and marriage started with Hemant, the son of

a successful government official in Delhi. Soon after marriage, Astha gets disillusioned about human nature in general and politics of the country in particular. She is fed up with the politicians who, in the guise of democrats and socialists, attempt to organize different yatras for their vote banks under the pseudo- secular banner of national unity. On the other hand, these yatras have become inauspicious for the nation. Sharing her feelings "we should struggle with her, agonize together with her about her choices, and weep with her once she's made them" (38). Astha's family affairs are not good and nothing is right with her. Hemant doesn't prove a suitable boy nor does she become a desirable daughter-in-law in her in-law's house.

A social system in which structural differences in privilege, power, and authority are invested in masculinity and the cultural, economic, and social positions of men patriarchy remains a contested term. But whether one speaks of patriarchy or hegemonic masculinity, conceiving of gendered differences in power and authority as structural allows scope to both men and women for changes in social policy, for childcare provisions, for flexible working conditions, and working hours, and for policies that monitor the abuse of power and violence.

The Novel portrays women, Astha who is suffocated by the rules of the closed community of Indian middle class dedicated to preserving its old long century traditions as well as to isolating itself from the secularism of the contemporary Indian society. Astha remains devoted to her husband for ten years, but her marriage with Hemant remains incomplete.

Both Cranny and Francis define patriarchy in relation to masculine hegemony. The patriarchal system gives males full authority over females. Females are subjugated in every spheres of their life. They have to walk on the way created by

masculinity. In relation to this fact, Louis Tyson, in *Critical Theory Today*, avers, "Patriarchy is thus, by definition, sexist which means it promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men. This belief in the inborn inferiority of women is called biological essentialism"(85). Under a patriarchal regime, women are excluded from positions of power and authority. A woman should be authoritative towards her children in the home in order to provide a calm and supportive environment for her husband. As a married woman she becomes an enduring wife and sacrificing mother. Her temperamental incompatibility with her corporate thinking husband compels her to play the role of mother and father for her children. This denies herself fulfillment and leads to the collapse of the institution of marriage. Discontentment leads her to defiance and restlessness.

Astha's anxiety, discomfort, loneliness and isolation do not encourage her to give voice to her unhappiness over her troubled relationship; rather it prompts her to develop the feelings of guilt, negativity and lack of self-esteem in facing the challenges of her life. Restlessness drives her to enjoy absolute loneliness, a sort of entrapment by the family, its commitments, its subtle oppression and she yearns for freedom. In the midst of a family and its vast minefield of income, expenditure, rights, responsibilities, knowledge, discontent, restlessness and dependency, Astha enjoys the fate of the poorest. She is suffocated with the growing needs of her family and "always adjusting to everybody's needs" (227).

Astha understands a married woman's place in the family to be that of an unpaid servant or a slave and the thought of divorce brings social and economic death in her Indian status. She feels for herself that "A willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth" (231), which are the

necessary prerequisites of a married woman. She contemplates marriage a terrible decision as it puts her in a lot to enjoy bouts of rage, pain and indecision. Judging the male impression of woman she thinks that a married woman is an object of "mind fucking" (218). She does not think "marriage is just sex" (275). Rather Marriage provides interest, togetherness and respect. Being torn between her duty and responsibility, faith and fact, history and contemporaneity, public ethos and personal ethics she thinks "a tired woman cannot make good wives," (154). She struggles for an emotional freedom from the scourge of the nation.

In the Novel Astha develops psychosomatic symptoms of stress and depression balancing between existing and living. Astha's slow discovery of her differences with her husband, her change from a tender and hopeful bride to a battered wife and her meeting with Pipeelika Trivedi lead her to realize the other state of woman in their "familiar distress" (188). This leads her to an immoral, rather amoral, guilt consciousness of lesbian love rationalizing her outmoded morality. Being marginalized by the affluence of her family, vicious social atmosphere, sheer hysteria of communalism and quarrel of two communities for god over a small thing, she is disillusioned in the empirical study of man's nature and his framing of social values. There is the evolution of a romantic fantasy in her lesbophobic imagination for her definition and self reliance.

Astha's marriage to a Pan-American and Pan-Indian husband in her parents' choice is a miscalculation. Hemant's foreign education, banking profession and money minting addiction do not make Astha happy for a long time. Hemant's resignation from the banking job and joining in T.V. manufacturing business, Astha's joining as a teacher, her giving birth to Anuradha and Himanshu bring enough

change in her life. Her impression that "with good job comes independence" (4). Astha is proved wrong and she "seemed very pedestrian" (47). By giving birth to a son on the one hand, she proves herself not as a "socially inferior" and enjoys the gratitude of her family members for whom "The family is complete at last" (68). On the other hand, she expresses commitment to her profession which is not preferred by her husband.

Like every married woman, no doubt she has a liking for motherhood but she does not like the sex-subjugation of her in laws. She is surprised at the reaction of the family and society when they remain cypheric of Anuradha's birth but gets an overwhelming approval of motherhood after the birth of Himanshu. In her feminist assertion Astha does not appreciate superstition, sex-subjugation and pride and prejudices of having children just for their discriminated sex in the Indian perception. Being "caught up in the web of daily life," (84) she develops restlessness, anxiety and tension, "the disease of modern life" (76). She remembers her mother's words "woman is earth" (69). And that, duties, responsibilities and obligations help a married woman to understand the grandeur of Hinduism 'Vasudha ev Kutumbkum'. She does not believe that only a woman can bring purity and peace to the family. She becomes serious for man's ignorance at woman's suffering and asserts her rights with the knowledge that "Religion a choice as much as other things" (89).

Hence, the discourse of gender has an important role in generating and maintaining patriarchy. Gender discourse creates binary categories and represents them in a hierarchical pattern. At the top of hierarchy, men exist. Men belonging to the privileged class have access to power. Its major function is to naturalize the unequal gender relations. Its normative function supports patriarchal ideology.

Gender discourse introduces strategies including scientific research to support its claim. Even if the differences are challenged, a new set of differences are created.

In this way, patriarchy works in consonance with the other existing social institutions including family, marriage, religious practice, state's law, rituals, and festivals. All these institutions work to reproduce the interest of the patriarchal ideology at their centre. The novel depicts the suppression and subordination of females. Marriage and love do not bring happiness to the lives of the females in the Indian patriarchal society. The society has created the burden upon the life of the woman. The main task of the woman is to bring children in the earth. Hence, the females are left to take the loaded responsibilities and they have no way to improve their own personal status. Love and marriage in the Indian society are the hindrance to develop the personal career of female life. It is also a form of suppression.

Kapur's *A Married Woman* explores few facts which are enough to demystify the married life of a middle class Indian working woman through the character Astha she brings forth the realities, anxieties, the depression and the dangers associated with the half truth and old myths. Through the personal private lives of these characters exposes the tension spread in the two states of a mind. In the novel the protagonist Astha dares to cross the threshold of society by making lesbian relations and its reason is also explored very nicely. Marriage is actually totally different from what it appears in parties and films or described in mythology. Search of fantasy sometimes leads a person for some viable alternative: extra martial affairs and lesbian relations.

A Married Woman has received several criticisms since the time of its publication in 2002. Although different critics have analyzed the novel from several

perspectives, the theory of feminism is yet to be dealt with. In this connection Terry Castle has given the lesbian criticism of the novel. He says:

The lesbian relationship that develops between the two fills her life with fresh air, joy and vibrant health. No more migraines, no longer the feeling of being worthless. But Astha declines Pipee's proposal to start a lasting partnership with her on the ground that she has a family and she has children. In the end, Pipee leaves for the United States, purportedly for higher studies—to do her Ph.D. on communalism (76).

Thus, it is evident that Astha, the daughter of middle-class Indian parents, who are keen to find a suitable husband for her, gets married to Hemant, who has studied abroad and sets up a manufacturing factory for producing televisions. He does well, the marriage falls into the expected pattern, and Hemant and Astha have two children—a girl, Anuradha, and a boy, Himanshu. After the initial years of marriage, Astha begins to find marital life oppressive and feels suffocated in the routine of repetitive responsibilities as wife and mother.

Astha restlessness further increases because of her insensitive, indifferent and even infidel husband, who makes her lose herself worth; and her life becomes a metonymic extension of the 'migraines' which she begins to suffer frequently. Then she comes into contact with Pipeelika (whose name is pared down to Pipee, Pip and finally P as the intimacy grows), the widow of the history lecturer and theatre activist Aijaz.

Monique Wittig has given the realistic interpretation of the text. In this connection, he puts:

What truly distinguishes this work from other run-of-the-mill women oriented books is the almost realistic depiction of Astha's problems and emotions. The book is studded with a lot of incidents one can relate to. Like the way, Hemant does not involve Astha in any of the financial decisions, the way Astha's mother always blindly supports Hemant's decisions, the way Astha is not given a separate room for her painting just because the room belongs to her sister-in-law who visits the house twice or thrice in a year and the way Hemant does not understand her feelings at all and still Astha has to carry on the charade of a happy married life just for the sake of her children and her family. (1)

Similarly, Rand Rich analyses the novel from the perspective of cross culturalism. In this connection he puts:

In this section, I will start by discussing how the theme of slavery and its legacy is developed in his novel *A Married Woman* (2003). This will be followed by a comparison between *Revolution 2020* and four other novels by Kapur to demonstrate that all of his fictions have quite a few characteristics in common, both thematically and formally. What these four books have in common is the fact that they are marked by cross-culturalism. (41)

Likewise, Kowaleski studies the novel from the perspective of the technical aspects.

Kowaleski puts argument in the following way:

Remember the frequent shifting between a subjective first-person narrator and a cold third-person narrator in *A Married Woman* the multitude of voices that we find in the prologue and epilogue ...as a result, Kapur works is unique as Kapur always finds different ways of showing what slavery and its legacy do and have done. Nevertheless, a lot of similarities can be found between Kapur ‘‘ fictions. What immediately catches the eye is that almost none of the storylines are told in a chronological way (56).

Thus, for Kowaleski, Kapur’s ‘‘novels thus not only show the reader what many people have been through, they also make the reader feel and experience the thoughts and sentiments of these victims. As a result, reading Kapur’s works can be a very unsettling experience, but it proves to be effective, as his novels have a way of growing on us, staying with us long after we have closed the book’’ (59).

To critique these constructed patriarchal norms and values prevailing in the community of Indian middle class, this research borrows the ideas from Gaytri Chakravorty Spivak, Kamla Bishwesaran, Lila Gandhi, Talpode Mohante, Kitukat , Simone de Beauvoir, Lois Tyson, Kate Millett, Rosemarie Tong, Judith R. Baskin and other important feminists, who critique the patriarchal regime. Simone de Beauvoir establishes the principles of modern feminism in her *The Second Sex* (1949). It came as an encyclopedic in its coverage offering historical, biological and psychological perspective on women, a consideration of prevailing patriarchal myth about women, where Beauvoir claims that "what happened is that in the patriarchal regime man became master of woman; and the very powers that are frightening in

wild beasts or in unconquered elements became qualities valuable to the owner able to domesticate them" (186).

Beauvoir goes against the false assumptions created by male dominated society that is male's representation of female as essentially 'other.' Female characters Astha in the novel is presented as objects, limited, weak, mysterious, and inferior, whereas males as subjects, strong, rational, powerful, and intelligent. They are limited to the domestic sphere, where they are treated as non-human beings having no feelings, intelligence and so on. These basely constructed myths became the tool to domesticate women. Beauvoir goes against these binary creations and argues that such kind of mythical representation is the product of patriarchal society. This presents how the feminine gender is presented as socially excluded or as a docile object in the novel. Astha becomes unable to raise her voice which matches with Gyatri Chakravorty Spivak's claim that "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (83).

Moreover, Spivak claims that the subaltern becomes unable to raise the voice despite being in the position of raising the voice; in the above lines the female character is unable to raise the voice against the male rather she is longing the presence of another male to solve the problem. This clarifies two facets of identity associated with the females: on the one hand they are the inferior beings in comparison to the patriarchy, while on the other hand the females are the revenge tropes in the hands of the males only to be the escape goat, that proves the notion of marginalisation of female associated with the identity of the female characters in the novel.

Astha, in the novel, is portrayed very good, easy going, tolerant, ideal, pious and submissive. Her attitude and behavior towards others are very positive and never hurt anyone knowingly though she faces many challenges. Her status in the society as pious and devoted towards her husband but she is objectified as an excluded female by the society from the time of her marriage in spite of her purity/chastity. Besides, being a female gender she is in problematic situation. Her voices are not given priority; many questions are raised regarding her character; and are always underdogs by the patriarchal society when she is married to Hemant. That is why; Astha is presented as a subjugated woman.

Mary Wollstonecraft raises her voice in favor of women emancipation in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), which makes a significant contribution in the present research. She holds: Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings, and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which leads them shamefully to neglect the duties of life and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice (398). Wollstonecraft goes against the traditional education and the sentimental novel that teaches female to be submissive, sentimental, and emotional which restrict them to proper judgment and power of reason.

Wollstonecraft argues that the patriarchal society's norms and values turn women not only to adopt metaphysical notions but also leads them shamefully to neglect the duties of life adopting passions which restricts them to get proper education and trainings. Astha mother forced her to read 'Bhagwat Gita' and pray lord Krishna daily. The female role is already constructed in the hands of masculinity.

Likewise, Lois Tyson expresses her voice against the patriarchal construction of gender in the book *Critical Theory Today* (2006). Tyson puts on: Feminism therefore distinguishes between the word sex, which refers to our biological construction as female or male, and the word gender, which refers to our cultural programming as feminine or masculine. In other words, women are not born feminine, and men are not born masculine. Rather, these gender categories are constructed by society, which is why this view of gender is an example of what has come to be called social constructionism (86). Here, Tyson critiques the myth making tendency of males. No man and woman come in this earth with the qualities of masculine and feminine, but it is the patriarchal Indian society that teaches them to be accordingly.

In *A Married Woman*, women characters are 'pathetic and submissive' due to the constructed gender role. They have to perform the task made under the Indian norms. While performing the task, they are given; they come in the position of massive domination. The major female characters of the Novel have become the victim of the orthodox male-chauvinistic society.

Astha suffers a lot, and the main cause behind her pitiable condition is her husband. The inequalities that exist between male and female are not natural, but social, not pre-ordained but created by men so they can hold power over women. Religion, the family, education, the arts, knowledge systems are all social and cultural structures that enable to perpetuate the inequality. These structures are effective means of reinforcing male domination because they do not appear oppressive. They retain power because the structures convince the woman that she is destined to be subordinated.

One of the radical feminists Kate Millett takes patriarchal ideology as the main cause of women's subordination. She, in *Sexual Politics* (1970), claims: Patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women making certain that men always have the dominant, or masculine roles, and the women always have the subordinate, or feminine one . . . men do this through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men (96). Millett condemns patriarchal ideology as which always encourages women for traditional roles as wife, daughter and mother as ideal ones. In the Indian patriarchal civilization, women have been subjected to a specific kind of repression, and their mental and physical development has been channeled in a specific direction.

The male members in the Indian community are keen to preserve their orthodox system, which keeps women in the secondary position. The Indian society is built upon the patriarchal foundation that has made a male figure. It has superior and strong developed culture, which has carried out the masculine traits and has been emphasizing male interests and objectives. With social organization determined by Indian traditions, women's role and the status have been comprised to their detriment. It has seen women simply as passive victims rather than the co-maker of history and the agents.

As a result, women have been considered as the objects rather than the human beings, who have been forced to occupy a secondary position in the society. They have to remain dominated, invisible, and secondary of the male authority. Simone de Beauvoir argues that myth is in large part explained by its usefulness to man (999). Whatever roles are given to women, all are for men's comforts and benefits. Astha

has to work as her husband's desire. It is because of the gender discrimination, which puts female in the secondary category and male being in authority, works as he wishes. Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex*, raises the voice against this dichotomy. She opines that the male ideology makes women the second sex (995).

Beauvoir analyzes that the passivity of the women has been shaped by social institutions to fit the roles of women. She asserts that gender is not a biological essence something natural or innate but a social construct, a learned behavior, a product of language, culture and institutions. In the feminist world, she strongly objects to man's attitude of discriminating between sexes as self and other, men being former and women the latter. In the Novel, the suffering, domination, violence experienced by Astha is because of the prevailing religious orthodoxy. The Hinduism puts men in strong position and women in the position of inferior and subordination.

Regarding these constructed rules under Hindu religion, Rosemarie Tong, in *Feminist Thought* (1989), claims: Patriarchal society uses certain facts about male and female biology (chromosomes, anatomy, hormones) as the basis for constructing a set of masculine and feminine gender identities and behaviors that serve to empower men and disempower women. In the process of accomplishing this task, patriarchal society convinces itself its cultural constructions are somehow "natural" (51). In the Indian society, the male is the standard and the female is the subordinate. Female cannot get their identity under patriarchy. Women should always be under the rules of it. Being a female in the Indian patriarchal community, Astha's mother gave her property to Hemant instead of Astha. She says "Why not? He is a man, he knows about money. He will invest it for you and the children" (97).

The research, in such a context, aims to critique the hitherto existing reign of patriarchy and the biased notions regarding females in the Indian orthodox community. A Hindu-Indian woman is supposed to be confined within the domestic and household activities being passive and indifferent towards the outer space of the society. The myths of women as passive, weak, inferior, dependent, and domestic in the novel are dismantled by making use of feminist theorists especially Gaytri Chakravorti Spivak, Kamala Bishweshran, Lila Gandhi, Simone de Beauvoir, Mary Wollstonecraft, Rosemarie Tong, Lois Tyson, Judith R. Baskin, and Kate Millett. And other significant feminist critics are introduced, in course of this research, in order to assist the point of the marriage as an institute of social exploitation. These theorists argue that men's control over reproduction and sexuality of women's bodies is a major activity of patriarchy. For them, sexuality is not innate but reflected in political, cultural institutions and affects the condition of individual women's life.

The males being in power create myths about women, which later established as norms. Through the critical analysis of the female characters, who are treated like animals, this research aims at deconstructing the position of women as secondary and submissive, and establishes the Indian women across the subordinate position. Women are equal to men. They are not only the means of bearing children; they should be allowed equal rights as men.

This dissertation, however, aims to study the text from the perspective radical feminism. Some people regard the feminist interpretation of the text to be reductive. However, it is very significant to interpret this text from this perspective. This study explores the problem of woman after their marriage due to the patriarchal system of

India. Thus, they will help to excavate the oppression and marginalization of Indian women under the rigid Hindu religion which makes binary between the sexes.

The tentative chapter division of the thesis is as follows. The first chapter provides the bird's eye view to the research. It introduces hypothesis, literature review, and theoretical tools in the light of the text in question. Moreover, it provides an overall design of the research. The second chapter makes the textual analysis of *A Married Woman* keeping the theoretical insights into consideration. The third chapter concludes the research.

Chapter II: Female Resistance to Patriarchy in *A Married Woman*

Manju Kapur does not like to be referred to as a feminist, all her fictional works project the feminist ideas. Her preoccupation with feminism is projected in her novels. Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*; Astha in *A Married Woman*; Nisha in *Home*; Nina in *The Immigrant*; and Shagun and Ishita in *Custody* are all middle-class educated urban Indian women struggling to establish themselves with their own independent identities in the patriarchal setup of which they are part and parcel. Kapur's novel *A Married Woman* has a protagonist, who, despite an initially happy arranged marriage and satisfying life, drifts into a lack of marital and familial contentment; because of the patriarchal system of India where women lose their identity, freedom after their marriage.

The protagonist of this novel, Astha, lost her identity and respect in her home. She just becomes a puppet in her husband's hand, and involves herself in politics where she meets a woman, who ultimately becomes her lover. Feminism emerges as a concept that is based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society. It opposes women's subordination to men in the family and society.

Feminism is a global and revolutionary ideology that is political because it is concerned with the question of power. A feminist is one who is awakened and conscious about women's life and problems. The feminist apprehends certain features of social reality as intolerable as to be rejected if one is to transform the society for a better future. The concept of woman is of central importance in the formation of feminist theory. Themes explored in feminism and feminist theory

include patriarchy sexual objectification and oppression. In literary theory Feminism means challenging the patriarchal canons Feminist theory studies a structural inequality of women caused by systematic social injustice.

The study of feminist theories begins with the eighteenth century and continues to present times. Feminist theories try to form such biases and then negotiate them by sensitizing readers to their existence. Feminism is a political perception based on two fundamental premises. Gender difference is the foundation of a structural inequality between women and men by which women suffer systematic social injustice. The inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural construction of gender differences. Sex refers to the determining of identity on the basis of biological category while gender connotes the cultural meaning attached to sexual identity.

In other words gender is the product of cultural conditioning. Feminist theories range themselves against various structures and inter relationships of power- the state the Church law and the academy which they see as patriarchal. Socialism and feminism at the beginning of the nineteenth century emphasized the ways in which discrimination against women is manifested and how this can be resisted. For feminist the text is battleground where actual power relations between men and women are placed out.

The representation of women in literature was felt to be one of the most important forms of socialization. The women's movement of the 1960s was a renewal of an old tradition of thought and action. This movement was literary in the beginning in the sense that it realized the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature.

The women's movement became a major political issue in economics and culture. Literary critics influenced by the movement undertook a whole new project. Feminist critics assume that literary texts operate on the lines of power struggle between men and women. The text naturalizes the oppression of women. Feminist critics argue that literary texts reproduce social basis that see woman as only the other partner of male. Religion social conditions and cultural traditions perceive the woman as an adjunct to the male. This means that the women's identity is never separate but is subsumed under to male.

The woman is typecast as 'Mother Nature' thus reducing her to the perpetually giving all forgiving nature that never demands anything and is willing to suffer anything for her son. Sex is biological while gender is socially constructed. There is no necessary link between gender and biological sex. Masculinity and femininity are essentially coercive categories. In 1960s and 1970s feminism largely represented and was concerned with problems faced by Western middle class women while at the same time claiming to represent all women. Feminist activists emerged from diverse communities.

Many feminists argue that feminism is a grass root movement that seeks to cross boundaries on social class race culture and religion. In 1970 in feminist criticism the major effort went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy and women which perpetuated sexual inequality. In 1970 Elaine Showalter detects in the history of women's writing a feminine phase. In 1980 feminist criticism explored the nature of the female world and outlook.

In the novel *A Married Woman*, Astha is the only child of simple God fearing parents who are very protective and expect her to conform to traditions. Her father wishes her to have a successful career and so be independent. Astha's mother only thinks of her successful marriage. Astha's diet of mushy novels and thoughts of marriage makes her think that she should search for a boyfriend. Bunty and Rohan are the ones who come in her friend circle but their relationship leaves a sad yearning in Astha's heart.

Astha enters into an arranged marriage and accepts what her parents think right for her. She has a habit of submission and has a devotion to the family. She had seen how her mother had been devoted to the family and husband and she thinks that this is what she has to do in future. Astha becomes a school teacher obeying her husband's wishes. She looks after her husband and agrees whatever he says. Her husband does not give any importance to her job as it is just a time pass. Astha's husband is an "MBA foreign returned" and he craves for a male offspring. But when she says that the onus of bearing a male child rests on the man and not the woman her husband looks annoyed of having an educated woman for a wife. He is seen busy in crafting a successful business and future of his family and is less concerned for the wife. Somewhere along the way Hemant's attitude to Astha changed. She told herself it was only slightly but is oppressed.

The conflict grows in Astha. She suffers from recurring migraines and then a growing face problems distance from her husband. Astha has to fulfil the demands of growing children pressure at home silent disapproval of in-law and the attitude of an unresponsive and non understanding husband. Astha finds an escape in her writings and her sketching. Then she started writing poetry but the poems were not

appreciated by the husband. The conventions of the patriarchal society make her husband go by his wishes and Astha is not treated as an equal by him. Even in money matters he does not consult her. Whatever Astha questions him he simply crushes Astha's rights to speak.

A turning phase in Astha's life comes when there is the political upheaval of the Ram Janmabhoomi- Babri masjid Movement. She meets a social worker Aijaz who appreciates her talents as a writer and narrator. Astha is naturally drawn to him. But a blow comes on Astha when Aijaz's untimely death in a Hindu-Muslim riot brings other changes. She now participates in peaceful movements led by the secularists. She passively participates in all events concerning her.

Astha has the courage to participate in rallies against communalism. She also starts producing paintings that depict her messages of peace. These paintings have a quick sale and her husband also admires her. She still craves for a complete loving and giving relationship her need for romance which is still unfulfilled.

Astha was fed up with the ideal of Indian Womanhood. Her husband was changed into an adversary from a lover. Astha meets Pipeelika Khan who is a strong woman of the world. Pipee Initiates Astha into a secret lesbian relationship. It leaves her at once bewildered wonderstruck fulfilled and happy. She falls in love with Pipee Afterwards she felt strange making love to a woman and it also felt strange making love friend instead of an adversary. The conflict between her roles of wife mother and that of a lover continue making Astha feel guilty.

Astha questions the established norms to search for her identity. She had led a life of sacrifice and adjustment but it had failed. She had longed to have her husband who would appreciate her peaceful family but now she is a matured

woman. As she continues with her paintings she feels more confident she had ever been before. Astha's conflict between the oppressive patriarchal culture and her imagination and sensibility is brought out in the novel. Kapur negotiates different issues emerging out of a socio-political upheaval in her country. The novel presents the story of a woman about her personality cult in the personal allegory of a bad marriage. In a realistic way, she has described the Indian male perception of woman as a holy cow even though women are not very interested in history and those in power trying to twist and turn historical facts to serve their own purposes. As a writer of new generation in an atmosphere of the nation's socio-political flux, Kapur has recorded the truth in her fictive narrative, in order to change the Indian male perception, she describes the traumas of her female protagonists from which they suffer, and perish in for their triumph.

A Married Woman deals with women's issues in the present context. It is an honest and seductive story of love, passion and attachment set at the time of political and religious turmoil in India. Driven by a powerful physical relationship with a much younger woman, the main character of the novel risks losing the acquisitions of her conventional marriage and safe family. The novel raises the controversial issue of homosexual relationship in a challenging way. After all gay and lesbian relationships are not mere fancies. This is getting more and more visible in modern societies though we may or may not accept it.

As a married woman Astha, the protagonist, becomes an enduring wife and sacrificing mother. Her temperamental incompatibility with her corporate thinking husband compels her to play the role of "mother and father" for her children. This denies herself fulfillment and leads to the collapse of the institution of marriage.

Discontentment leads her to defiance and restlessness. Her anxiety, discomfort, loneliness and isolation do not encourage her to give voice to her unhappiness over her troubled relationship, rather it prompts her to develop the feelings of guilt, negativity and lack of self-esteem in facing the challenges of her life. Restlessness drives her to enjoy absolute loneliness, a sort of entrapment by the family, its commitments, its subtle oppression and she yearns for freedom.

In the midst of a family and its vast minefield of income, expenditure, rights, responsibilities, knowledge, discontent, restlessness and dependency, Astha enjoys the fate of the poorest. She is suffocated with the growing needs of her family and "always adjusting to everybody's needs" (227). Astha understands a married woman's place in the family to be that of an unpaid servant or a slave and the thought of divorce brings social and economic death in her Indian status.

Astha feels for herself that "a willing body at night, a willing pair of hands and feet in the day and an obedient mouth" (231) are the necessary prerequisites of a married woman. She contemplates marriage a terrible decision as it puts her in a lot to enjoy bouts of rage, pain and indecision. Judging the male impression of woman she thinks that a married woman is an object of "mind fucking". (218) she does not think "marriage is just sex" (275) rather it provides interest, togetherness and respect. Being torn between her duty and responsibility, faith and fact, public ethos and personal ethics she thinks "a tired woman cannot make good wives", (154) and struggles for an emotional freedom from the scourge of the nation.

The novel exposes the domestic relationship in which Kapur has remained very truthful in presenting the women and the challenges they face in their personal, professional, religious and socio-political levels. Manju Kapur presents in

her novel the changing image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of enduring, self sacrificing women towards self assured assertive and ambitious women making society aware of their demands and in this way providing a medium for self expression.

Simon de Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex* has destabilized the deep-rooted patriarchal construction of myths to human manifest in the works of literature and society. She has vehemently refused the notion of women essence prior to the individual existence the patriarchal has been based on the false essence of women. Such an essence for her is just a male contradiction to establish the patriarchal supremacy over women. Beauvoir believes that a female like a male is accidental and is thrown on the earth among the multiple choices. So, she says that women is not born she is a social construct constructed on the measurement of loss and gain by men.

Kapur describes this politics of genocide as an important fabric in India's unique experience of democracy. She is sincere and naive as a sociologist in exposing the bizarre paradox of rationality that underlines a sentiment of antipathy sheltered under political support and social approval. She resonates with her feminine assertion, hatred for violence, blood, death and ill-feeling in the name of God and religion, and her feminine assertions remain untouched by history, politics and human interpretations. This is a novel with a social purpose. It deals with three issues - reinterpretation of history, political ideologies and feminist views in the present context.

The purpose of the novelist seems to be uni-dimensional with the idea of love what can really drive a woman into such a relationship. In her interview with

Nivedita Mukherjee, Kapur says, it is an attempt to inject an element of artistic and emotional coherence. Actually a relationship with a woman does not threaten a marriage as much as a relationship with a man. The novel exposes the domestic terrain where woman explores the space in her domestic relationship. Kapur has remained very truthful in presenting the women and the challenges they face in their personal, professional, religious and socio-political levels. Taking into account the complexity of life, different histories, cultures and different structures of values needs to be tackled in relation to the socio-cultural situation. The impact of patriarchy on the Indian society varies ...and therefore ... stream of feminism grounded in reality.

Kapur the feminist refers to three forms of misogyny, sexism or discrimination against women, patriarchy or male supremacy at institutional and individual level, and phallocentrism or discrimination at the conceptual level. She desires to prove through her woman protagonist that "A woman should be aware, self-controlled, strong-willed, self-reliant and rational having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense". She seems to bring out the implicit fallacy in Aristotle's dictum, "Man is a social animal" (23), in the present socio-cultural context of India in which people fail to realize the futility of violence and the necessity of peaceful co-existence for all. This shows how the then society was biased and females are underestimated or subjugated to maintain males' superiority in comparison to females.

Similarly, Ranjit Guha also contributed his moving essay "Chandra's Death", which attempts to demonstrate the notion of women's subordination within

patriarchy. In the same manner, Kamala Visweswaran has carried on woman issues in the subsequent volumes. In this regard, she says, “Women are not accepted as proper subjects, but it does register and seek to contain their agency and that it is at the point of erasure where the emergence of the subaltern is possible” (124). These lines explore that women in patriarchy are always taken as subordination of males. In the society, females are not accepted as proper subjects; their voices are under dogged and are compelled to wait for the things done. So they seek for their agency through which they can explore their voices and that is possible which counters also Spivak’s notion. This is the evident from the following lines from the novel:

Her mother had delivered her into Hement's hands. If her mother was at fault, so was her father, for managing the money, and teaching his wife that this was normal behavior, so was her mother in law for bringing up Hement to never regard women as beings to be consulted in their own lives, so was the Swamiji for teaching that only in detachment lies happiness, which lesson can be read in as many different ways as there are people and attachment. (98)

Thus, it is proved that the novel *A Married Woman* presents the issue of Female subjugation in which the character Astha is dehumanized by the male Society and even by her husband Hement without any faults on the one hand and while on the other hand she is portrayed as strong, bold, determinant and the capable character.

In the novel Astha develops psychosomatic symptoms of stress and depression balancing between existing and living. Her slow discovery of her differences with her husband, her change from a tender and hopeful bride to a battered wife and her meeting with Pipeelika Trivedi lead her to realize the other

state of woman in their "familiar distress" (188) This leads her to an immoral, rather amoral, guilt consciousness of lesbian love rationalizing her outmoded morality. Being marginalized by the affluence of her family, vicious social atmosphere, sheer hysteria of communalism and quarrel of two communities for god over a small thing, she is disillusioned in the empirical study of man's nature and his framing of social values. There is the evolution of a romantic fantasy in her lesbophobic imagination for her definition and self reliance. Astha's marriage to a Pan-American and Pan-Indian husband in her parents' choice is a miscalculation.

Hemant's foreign education, banking profession and money minting addiction do not make Astha happy for a long time. Hemant's resignation from the banking job and joining in T.V. manufacturing business, Astha's joining as a teacher, her giving birth to Anuradha and Himanshu bring enough change in her life. Her impression that "with good job comes independence" (4) is proved wrong and she "seemed very pedestrian" (47). By giving birth to a son on the one hand, she proves herself not "socially inferior" and enjoys the gratitude of her family members for whom "the family is complete at last" (68) and on the other she expresses commitment to her profession.

Like every married woman, no doubt she has a liking for motherhood but she does not like the sex-subjugation of her in laws. She is surprised at the reaction of the family and society when they remain cypheric of Anuradha's birth but gets an overwhelming approval of motherhood after the birth of Himanshu. In her feminist assertion Astha does not appreciate superstition, sex-subjugation and pride and prejudices of having children just for their discriminated sex in the Indian perception. Being "caught up in the web of daily life" (84) she develops restlessness,

anxiety and tension, "the disease of modern life" (76), She remembers her mother's words "woman is earth", (69) and that, duties, responsibilities and obligations help a married woman to understand the grandeur of Hinduism. Vasudha ev Kutumbkum. She does not believe that only a woman can bring purity and peace to the family. She becomes serious for man's ignorance at woman's suffering and asserts her rights with the knowledge that "Religion a choice as much as other things" (89).

Astha, like Virmati in *Difficult Daughters*, desires to have a break from "dependence syndrome" and proceeds on the path of full human status that poses a threat to Hemant and his male superiority. She is, not a lesser mortal for her sex and like her male counterpart takes interest in political activism and fundamental issues of human life. Although she finds herself trapped between the pressures of the modern developing society and shackles of ancient biases she sets.

In *A Married Woman*, Astha reaches a state of ennui with her comfortable middle-class existence and yearns for more than the quotidian woman's role as helpmeet, sexual object, and poop cleaner. The different priorities of her husband and social pressures, however, she has never acted on her inner desires and aspirations, or even acknowledged them to herself. Her frustration with the way things are, enables her to overlook, in the author's manufactured cosmology, the better conditions she lives in, when compared to her parents, other middle-class Indians of the eighties and many women who can barely speak a word or suffer atrocities too horrific to mention. Astha complains little about society's greatest crime to limit an individual's passions merely because she is a woman.

Astha's convictions are put to the test when she finds not one, but two outlets for her passions. Following the death of a street theatre activist in a communal riot

in the troubled early nineties, when that other neo-ism, neo-Hinduism was on the rise, Astha connects with a social group. She makes a few paintings to be sold in an exhibition sponsored by the Manch, and begins to express her creativity through painting, filling her self-imposed emptiness with art. She also encounters a younger woman, the widow of the activist, who has an arguably more barren existence. The two connect at multiple levels, and are drawn to each other. The younger seduces the older, and after a while, it is, to use Al Stewart's lines, "just plucking/The fruits of the bed was enough/It grew to be less like fucking/and more like making love". Astha is enlivened by their romance, to the point that she begins to fantasize of an independent, unfettered existence, together with Peepalika. She steals time away to be with her lover, until her husband begins to suspect, not quite the truth, but at the very least, that his wife could have the unthinkable - an independent life. Things appear to be going swimmingly, but the generational gap, as it were, between Astha and Peepalika, makes the younger woman realize the implausibility of any lasting, permanent co-existence. She jumps at a chance to go abroad for a Ph.D. Astha presents finally with the fork in the road that she wishes for all her life 'independence' versus 'slave labour'.

One will not attempt to judge her choices, or even her actions. Let us consider instead the million other women, and indeed families, where there is a natural and easy co-existence and inter-dependence, and yet unfettered freedom, independent thought, and space enough to live two lives while still building something together. There is a need for the individual to recognize his or her own role in a relationship, vis-à-vis the contribution of the other. There is another danger of the enforced rebellion. Many people are content not to expand their horizons. They are not looking

for independence at the cost of losing a certain degree of contentment in the existing social structure. They are happy to be sheep, slaves, collaborators, or whichever epithet the True Believer might apply to them. This contentment comes from the innate desire for security. The choice is theirs, and yet, similar arguments were used in older movements to dissuade people from joining emancipation movements, free markets, or suffragists. The difference is that most of the big battles have been won today.

The Neo-classical movements have little to offer that does not already exist. These are not half-made revolutions. The shackles have already been broken. Progress for the sake of progress may mean a race over the precipice. Moreover, Leela Gandhi, in her book *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* mentions that "Spivak's essay is posed as an attempt to uncover the repressed or forgotten history. Once again the margins reveal the mute figure of gendered subalternity: As the female individualist, not quite/ not male, articulates herself in shifting relationship to what is at stake, the 'native female' as such (within discourse, as a signifier) is excluded from a share in this emerging norm" (90).

In this sense, Spivak also hypothesizes that woman in the role of the subaltern questioning the male constructed voice of women within the patriarchal. These strategies of presenting the women as subaltern clarify their position in the imperial as well as patriarchal society where women's voices and deeds always remained unheard/silenced. So, their positions appear to reflect the meaning of the subaltern at best. These are the reasons that show why the issues of subaltern females are so brilliantly discussed in subaltern studies. In the same way, the notion of third world feminism unveil the domination against females since century long and it also

questions the validity of women's inferiority through the logic that gender is a social construction shaped by patriarchal forces in society. In this connection, Maggi Humm claims:

Feminism incorporates diverse ideas which shares the major perceptions; that gender is a social construction which oppresses women's more than man that patriarchy shapes this construction and that women's experiential knowledge is based for non-sexist society. These assumptions informed gender subaltern double agenda. The task of critique gender stereotypes and task of construction without this second task of something called feminine gender praxis. (19)

She further argues that through the experiential knowledge females should subvert the gender stereotype, shaped by orthodox patriarchal society or by convention and secondly, must engage with the task of construction. In this sense, feminism is a political, cultural and economic movement aimed to establish equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism includes sociological theories and philosophical concern with the issues of gender difference. It is a movement that campaigns for women rights and interests.

In the novel *A Married Woman* Astha pushes her frustrations aside, and focuses on her duties as mother, wife and daughter. Her children, husband and increasingly-passionless marital sex take up her life. But the tensions continue to simmer, surfacing from time to time as paralyzing migraines. Then, she meets Pipeelika, the striking widow of a political Street Theatre actor. A rapport is quickly established between them, and her usually-controlling husband for once allows her to cultivate the friendship. Pipeelika keeps his wife busy, he thinks

smugly to himself, and she even seems to have fewer headaches nowadays. And besides, another woman couldn't possibly be a threat to his relationship. Hemant couldn't be more wrong; against all odds, the relationship grows and the two women become intense lovers. But Astha becomes caught in a terrible dilemma; should she stay with the tradition and safety of her home and children, or make a run for her freedom and an unthinkable love? Religious tensions between Hindu and Muslim mirror Astha's frustrations. Although her marriage seems far less violent than the political and religious situation, it is in reality no less oppressive or damaging.

Astha tells her husband that she is going on a pilgrimage to the Babri Masjid mosque at Ayodhya, and there she and Pipeelika steal a few days of peace together. But somehow Astha's destiny is as desperate and uncertain as the fate of the mosque, a building that has stood for centuries as a symbol of uneasy co-existence between Hindu and Muslim but is now, more than ever, under threat. For a large number of extremist Hindus see the mosque's existence as an affront to their national and religious pride and are intent on demolishing it, as well as any Muslims that get in the way.

In the same way, Manju Kapur in her novel also depicts the gripping political situation with the same fervor and graphic detail as she describes Astha's actions and inner turmoil. She has the same mental and moral power, yet she is not recognized as his equal. In such conditions, the question of searching her identity is justified. Actually in this male dominated society, she is wife, mother, sister and home maker. She is expected to serve, sacrifice, submit and tolerate each ill behaviour against her peacefully. Her individual self has very little recognition in

the patriarchal society and so self-effacement is her normal way of life. The illustration of Sita, Savitri and Gandhari are always expected to be followed by her. But the noticeable point is that these ideal women existed only in epics, they were princesses and queens and much far from the pains and sufferings in modern world in which modern woman has no identity of her own. She lives for others and breathe for others. And the situation becomes more deadly when we take it in Indian context where women must defer to her husband and make the marital home pleasant for him. Actually, Astha reaches on the turning point of her life when she meets Aijaz. Previously, she mutely succumbs to the will of her parents, but when Hemant discards her views on poetry and paintings, she turns into a protagonist and writes a poem:

The eventful release from pain
 In the tearing relentless separation
 From those in habit loved
 Can come so slowly
 It seems there will never be a day
 Of final peace and tranquillity. (180)

Here in this above lines Hemant sees her emotions in the poem as an attack on male-dominancy. But she gives up writing and continues rather sadly to draw, sketching with the soft pencils and coloured charcoal. Hemant makes her understand several times that she is married now and her responsibilities towards family are more than other responsibilities. Later on during a communal riot her friend Aijaz Khan dies and the protagonist Astha cannot stop her tears and sentiments: Hemant, watching her, immediately lost his temper. "Why are you

crying?’ he demanded. ‘What was he to you?’ Some murderers trap and burn a whole theatre group in a van and you ask me why I am crying.’ ‘This kind of thing happens all the time; I don’t see you wasting your tears’. ‘I can’t weep for the whole world, only when it means something to me. Maybe I am deficient, but I knew him, he was always working for everybody’s good, even the children loved him. And he has been burnt to death. Isn’t that reason enough?’ she sobbed rocking to and fro with rage and grief" (139).

The above line proves that the character Astha tries to outlet her feelings and sentiment towards her untimely demise of her friend's bereaved family but her husband forces her not to mourn which is not accepted by his wife, which gels with the notion that how a female resists a century long domination against them.

The novel *A Married Woman* of Manju Kapur voice well the sentiments of women and their self-introspections. The protagonists in Manju Kapur’s novels are caught in the continuous dichotomy between the personal needs and the institutional and social obligations and responsibilities. They challenge the male domination and patriarchal mechanisms of surveillance and control over women’s body. Mrs. Kapur seems aware of the fact that the women of India have indeed achieved their success in sixty years of independence, but if there is to be a true female independence, too much remains to be done. We see the emergence of new women in Manju Kapur’s heroines, who do not want to be rubber dolls for others to move as they will. Defying patriarchal notions that enforce women towards domesticity, they assert their individuality and aspire self reliance through education. They nurture the desire of being independent and leading lives of their own. They want to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond a husband and

children. They are not silent rebels but are bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented.

In this way, this dissertation explores the protagonist; Astha is suffered and victimized by the typical Indian society under Hinduism in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*. The Patriarchal rules and regulations maintained by the society are gendered biased, which leads to the suppression and objectification of women. In *A Married Woman*, Astha is objectified as socially excluded like other women in society despite her innocent behavior. Females are treated by the society nothing more than the child producing machines, which benefits male to fulfill their interests, but the females are in opposition to it which later on, is proved by the character Astha that marriage is a kind of suppression and subjugation against woman.

Moreover, her being used as escape goat, her incapability to cope up with the problem of her profession, her compulsion to stay with her husband for the sake of her children despite of being disregarded, her dehumanization by the patriarchy and even by her husband Hemant. These are the crucial issues to substantiate that how she is not let to perform her strength rather she is kept as docile object. It is because the patriarchal society that associates the female sex as naturally inferior, subversive and incompetent in its association of the role with the biological sex; the males being naturally superior and the females being naturally inferior. This type of outmoded thoughts causes her of being in the position of margin.

Chapter III: Astha as a Prototype of Female Gender

Borrowing the subject matter of the typical Indian middle class society Kapur constructs the character of the female Astha who, like other women, undergoes the experience of the evils of patriarchy.

The research brings in theoretical insights from the scholars like Spivak, Kamla Bishwesran, Lila Gandhi, Monique Wittig, Kitukat and Chakravorty for the analysis of the chosen text. These insights help us see how Astha is subjugated in the patriarchal society that associates the sex with the roles to be performed in the society: the males are powerful and the females are docile objects of the patriarchal subjugation. Her representation as a scapegoat, her incapability to cope up with the problem of profession, her compulsion to stay with the husband despite being disregarded.

Astha undergoes a series of domination, subjugation and marginalization. She is judged as the passive, meek, docile, and fragile and as an immature being which is the fashion of the patriarchy that associates the sex with the roles in the society. The domination upon the females begins when she gets married with Hemant. She becomes the scapegoat of the game of revenge between the males, and culminates to the apex when she is used and abused by her husband Hemant due to his complicity to the patriarchal society that associates the sex with the roles.

Thus, this dissertation explores the protagonist; Astha is suffered and victimized by the typical Indian society under Hinduism in Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman*. The Patriarchal rules and regulations maintained by the society are gendered biased, which leads to the suppression and objectification of women. In *A Married*

Woman, Astha is objectified as socially excluded like other women in society despite her innocent behavior. Females are treated by the society nothing more than the child producing machines, which benefits male to fulfill their interests, but the females are in opposition to it which later on, is proved by the character Astha that marriage is a kind of suppression and subjugation against woman. This is how Astha, like any other women in typical Indian patriarchal society, is denied her agency through her objectification. This kind of representation of the Astha shows her status as the marginalized female.

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