



**Sudha Murty's *House of Cards*:
A Critique of The Patriarchal Hegemony**

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Abstract

The present paper aims at exploring patriarchal hegemony as a domineering system of Indian society in *House of Cards*. It is a critique of patriarchal hegemony which has been ruling over the minds of women in the form of social domain since long years. The prevailing impact of the patriarchal system has been manifested through the oppression of women characters in the select novel. It focuses on the feministic and eco-feministic concerns too. Sudha Murty being a feminist writer expresses her feminist concerns over the oppression of women in the Indian society in which they still have to struggle to create their identities and get equal rights. *House of Cards* censures patriarchal hegemony of the male characters who subjugate the female characters due to the influence of male-dominated system. Despite of well educated and responsible, the women characters are ignored and treated subordinate. It creates gloomy picture of Indian society where the educated women are still dominated and kept away from the financial and social matters like the women characters in *House of Cards*.

Key words: hegemony, feminism, eco-feminism, patriarchy, discrimination

Hegemony is term developed by Gramsci, an Italian Marxist who defined it as the "cultural, moral and ideological" leadership of a group over allied and subaltern groups'(Orellana). It seems to be applicable for all the dominant class in the society which rule over the poor and underprivileged section by certain ways. Hegemony is classified into different types due to its dynamic nature of dominance. "Hegemony is the dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimating norms and ideas" (Rosamond). Patriarchal hegemony is one of the forms of hegemony which is studied in the context of Indian male dominated society. It is dealt and criticized in most of the literary works of almost all languages in the world. Sudha Murty has tried to show the impact of

patriarchal hegemony in *House of Cards* in order to eradicate such system from the Indian society in the age of globalization and technology. India is well known as a male-dominated country where the women have always been oppressed and given subordinate positions in all fields. Gradually the women got aware of their rights due to education and the influence of many intellectual movements. They could raise their voices against the oppression and subordination conferred by the patriarchal hegemony in the modern and postmodern world. Yet the impact of patriarchal hegemony is still found in the behavioral attitude of the men who try to subjugate their wives and ignore their equal rights. Despite of having well education and intellectual ability, the women are forced to cope up with the

boundaries of the houses fixed by the patriarchy. *House of Cards* is a best literary piece of Feminism and Eco-feminism which is aimed at bringing the social reformation at the demise of patriarchal hegemony.

House of Cards is the best example of the embodiment of the female characters who raise the voice against the patriarchal hegemony of the male characters. Mridula, the female protagonist is subjugated by her husband despite of having a government job. Mridula is shown an independent woman of having a secured govt. job as a teacher. She is from a well to do family. She gets married with an impoverished doctor, Sanjay despite of his poverty and physical deformity. She tries to uplift him from rags to riches and helps him out in every difficulty. Unfortunately, she is hurt and ignored by her husband, Sanjay after opening a private nursing home. He starts earning money illegally and unethically. He falls victim to the malpractices of medical field which seems to be unlawful. Mridula stands by him like his shadow in every calamity but Sanjay becomes immoral and hedonist due to the influence of patriarchal hegemony. He begins neglecting Mridula who accompanies him in his difficult times. When he earns lots of money, he purchases everything that he wants. He thinks that material assets will give him the real happiness and satisfaction. Mridula does not like the ways Sanjay earns money and enjoys the materialistic assets. Sanjay is completely transformed after becoming an unlawful medical practitioner. He forgets that Mridula has accompanied him and sacrificed her own future for his upliftment.

Sanjay seems to have been influenced by the patriarchal hegemony which let him dominate his educated wife. Mridula works as a teacher in government school yet she is ignored by Sanjay because he earns money more than her. It shows the male tendency that he can not see his wife earning more money than him. He achieves the ladder of success by illegal way which gives him abundant of money and fame. But his behavioral attitude of patriarchal hegemony becomes the cause of the eradication of his conjugal relationship. The

influence of patriarchal hegemony can be seen through Sanjay's egoistic thoughts;

Mridula will complain that I didn't tell her. But why should I tell her everything? She'll say that everybody should earn his or her own money. But that's her theory, not mine. I am Dr. Sanjay, Bangalore's most successful doctor and I've made the money on my own. I don't have to explain it to anyone. I'm not responsible for Mridula being upset. She's not short of money either. I have the right to decide what to do with my money. (Murty 185).

Mridula has provided the finance to Sanjay for starting his private nursing home. It is Mridula who take the burden of completing Sanjay's postgraduate degree. Yet he seems to be ungrateful to her. It clearly shows the influence of patriarchal hegemony which does not let him to accept the favor of his wife. He earns abundant of money through illegal and unethical ways. He ignores Mridula and her school job in which she gets less salary. His attitude towards her shows his dominating views of the patriarchal system.

Unlike Sanjay, Alex is introduced as a professional medical practitioner who cheats and ignores his wife, Anita who has always been loyal and responsible woman. She performs her all the responsibilities without fail like Mridula. But she too has to suffer. Alex is a practical man of immoral behavior. He considers Anita as subordinate to him due to the influence of patriarchal hegemony. Power and money makes him egoistic and immoral. The impact of patriarchal hegemony on Alex can be understood through Anita's views in a conversation with Mridula. "Mridula, do you know that when men get more money than they need, their wife starts looking ugly to them?They forget that they were nothing when their wife married them and that she has stayed loyal to them through their ups and downs" (Murty 148). Anita has told Mridula about her experience of being dominated by her husband.

The patriarchal hegemony has also been shown through the character of Sishir, Sanjay's son who is grown up by his father in the atmosphere of artificial values. He considers his father his ideal person due to material achievement and ignores his

mother as subordinate. Sishir likes Neha who is his friend and wants to go with her on date. But she rejects his invitation which hurts his ego. Neha does not like Sishir's egoistic attitude of having patriarchal hegemony. Because he told his friends about his choice of marriage that he would like to marry a girl who will adjust to any situation and remain subordinate to him. Neha strongly opposes to his views of showing patriarchy. Sishir gets very angry on the rejection of his invitation from Neha. His views will reveal the impact of patriarchal hegemony as pointed by the narrator through Sishir's view "How can anyone say no to me?" he thought. 'I'm handsome, rich, intelligent and have achieved lot. My father's a big man. He owns a nursing home. We have great prestige in society. What else does a girl want?'" (Murty 225-26). Here Sishir tries to dominate his view over Neha that he is superior to her in every respect. His patriarchal hegemony is strongly condemned by Neha who is much aware of her rights and self. She cannot tolerate being treated subordinate and exploited by the patriarchy. She raises her voice against the patriarchal system giving the true example of her own sister to Sishir.

Neha explores the nature of the patriarchal hegemony to Sishir. Neha plays minor role but seems to be very significant from the feministic perspectives. She makes three categories of men in the world. The first category of men shows the patriarchal hegemony which is troublesome to the women in the Indian society. Neha explores her views to Sishir about the patriarchal hegemony of male dominated society.

The majorities of them belong to the first category where a man leads and thinks he's superior and make his wife follow him. He's happy to look after her as long as she remains subordinate to him.... He makes decisions on her behalf. Most women accept this as a way of life and people who don't accept it or rebel against it have to suffer in society. (Murty 227).

Sishir is completely hurt due to Neha's defensive views against the women subordination. Sishir realizes his mistake after thinking over his immaturity to understand the condition of women

in the society. Neha and Mridula are well educated yet are expected to remain subordinate to men. It shows the dominance of male dominated society over the women in the age of technology. Sishir also realizes that his father has always dominated his mother and ignored her sacrifices. Mridula has performed her all duties as a responsible wife. But she could not get love and emotional attachment from her husband. She gets mentally disturbed and has to seek the psychological treatment from Dr. Rao. It shows the dominance of patriarchal hegemony upon Mridula who is treated as subordinate. As result of such dominance, Mridula has to decide to leave Sanjay and seek the true happiness in her village life where she used to get love and equal rights. Money and power brings bring the glimpse of hegemony amongst the men in the society which brews up to the patriarchal dominance over the women. Sudha Murty has tried to expose the hypocrisy of the male dominated society in which women are oppressed by the patriarchal system. An attempt has been made to break the shackles of the traditional patriarchal system which still seems to be existed in the form of ideas and beliefs.

Thus, the patriarchal hegemony is delineated and criticized through the textual and critical analysis of *House of Cards*. The male characters try to dominate the female characters which represent the realistic picture of the contemporary Indian society where the women have to suffer from the patriarchal hegemony of male-dominated society. They are kept aloof from their rights and equal opportunities. The oppression of women in different forms is caused by the impact of patriarchal hegemony which needs to be eroded from the Indian society. An egalitarian society needs to be formed where the women will not be treated inferior and their rights will be safeguarded without any discrimination. Sudha Murty has made an attempt to destroy the impact of the patriarchal hegemony through the empowering and stupendous power within the characters like Mridula and Neha who voice against their oppression from the patriarchal hegemony in *House of Cards*.

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