

# Traditional Patriarchy: The Sole Reason for Miserable Plight of Women

Anushka Ojha

B.A.L.L.B., 2<sup>ND</sup> Year, New Law College,  
Bharati Vidyapeeth University  
E-mail: anushkaojha1212@gmail.com

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**Abstract**—When men lived in forests and governed by the rule of physical force, the male-driven society came into existence like any animal of the forest. The inherent trend continued and it was cultivated into the human behaviour and also in the society in numerous forms. From religious book to the cultural norms and values, our society reveals in all forms how women are the inferior to their counterparts. The Hindu mythology sometimes worships women in many forms called 'Devis' but when it comes to human dignity, it can't even respect her in earthly human forms. In the Islamic society, different types of restrictions are sternly imposed on women in all fields such as religious, social, cultural, spiritual etc. In every place, the women has been treated as a submissive gender who is needed to be protected from men by men and the insight of women to be the homemaker is somehow collected from the religious teachings and the rule of physical forces.

Like other parts of world in India also, the societal norms have always been against women and even she is deprived of some basic rights. One of the most important institutions is that of the marriage in which the way women's are treated is highly objectionable. The social thinking is revealed also in the movies, songs, art, literature etc. All of these things collectively worsens already critical situation of women in a society and country and as a result, women face the most number of crimes like rape, domestic violence, dowry, acid attack, female feticide and infanticide, forced prostitution and much more. Present study is an approach to develop a logical insight into this problem and underline the role of traditional patriarchy. It further analyses how patriarchy may have new role to mend the situation and make humanity better

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Physical Force, Women –empowerment

## INTRODUCTION

From time immemorial, when the men were not civilized and dwelled in caves and forests, the physical force was the only basis of survival. Gradually, when the men learnt to live together, groups and folks were created. From here, rules, discipline, kingship gradually developed. Men collected the tools for survival in jungle such as ; arms, fire, group, society, power and reasoning. From development of agriculture and creation of society men needed rule and mode of and tools for enforcement of these rules. From making of laws to law enforcement everywhere the physical force was at the Centre-

stage, this was because for their security against animals and for their food they had to fight, win, kill and survive i.e , survival of the fittest. Therefore, it was only the supremacy of physical force behind survival hence the rule of jungle ruled the kabilas this was the period when domestication developed [5,6,7] and division of labor on the basis of physical power must have come into existence in life. Most powerful man ruled kabila and as the family developed the physically powerful sex i.e, the male became head of the family. He created field for cultivation and controlled the income thereafter the property, by that time the weaker sex the women had little stereotype role in family and society, here the inner core of modern patriarchy became rule of culture which was nurtured by religions and is being followed by society till these days. However, there is no single event or reason which can be pointed out as the reason of origin of traditional patriarchy.

The type of patriarchy which was during ancient period has become more coercive and has gradually got legal, social, cultural and religious sanction. The tradition was strengthened and in different period when the war became way of life and the female were treated mere property to be captured, won and kept in captivity as enemy's property, the blunders and dearth of human psychological bent is revealed (ancient-medieval – post classical period). It has become rule of life. The female counterpart in Hindus, by dint of marriage says his spouse 'pati' i.e swami of her own. This primarily shows the inner psyche and the value system of the society. It has not become in a day and it is not true only for a particular belief system rather it is a human psychology all-pervading without exception of religion or region. The traditional patriarchy has created a psychological drift between the male and female members in a family where the female is supposed to decide all matters at the will of the male counterpart, even between brother and sister the brother has upper hand in controlling and guiding the daily household events. This society and system has become male driven, male dominated and discriminatory against women.

## HISTORY AND VARIOUS THEORIES

Patriarchy is derived from a Greek word *patriarkhēs* [14] which means "father or chief of a race" [10]. The sociologist Sylvia Walby defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women [8,9]. Almost every society around the globe is a patriarchal one. There are biological differences which categorizes us as male or female, different hormones are released and thus there are difference of behavior among them. When the society starts stereotyping and making norms and rules according to which a male and a female should behave then it starts creating gender and its roles. Men are physically more powerful than women because of which they started collecting resources for the family and women started making use of them and eventually a division of labor was created among these sexes and a particular way of behavior was expected from each one of them.

The world history is divided into pre-history, ancient history, post-classical history and modern history and there are different theories related to the emergence of patriarchy. Although according to most eminent philosophers and sociologists there is no single event or a proper and particular mark in the history which can say as to exactly when patriarchy was formed [15] but there are different theories related to the emergence of patriarchy. As the anthropological, archaeological, evolutionary physical evidence points out that there was a relative egalitarian society during prehistoric times. Until the end of Pleistocene era came near an occupational division for agriculture and domestication took place [7,11,]. There has been a conflict among different philosophers like Marx believed that the emergence of patriarchy was because of the concept of private property [4], while Lerner is against this theory [15]. The Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Plato have also given many philosophies clearly pointing out towards the existence and endorsement of a patriarchal society. In China there were strict rules for women under Confucianism.

Patriarchy is not an isolated topic rather it has manifestation of different ideologies. Feminism is an ideology which strives for equality among men and women. Many feminists believed that patriarchy is a system which is the real reason behind the vulnerable state of women. Shulamith Firestone, a radical-libertarian feminist, states patriarchy as a system of oppression of women. Lerner says, it is a socially constructed system which is seen as natural and invisible [14]. Some feminists believed that it is an unjust practice which is a harm to both women as well as men. Before the terminology of patriarchy many feminists used male chauvinism and sexism instead of it. The emergence of patriarchy was because of the psyche that physical power is supreme. As the male sex being physically more strong started having a hold on the resources eventually there were fight among the men to capture each other lands, and women was connected to honor and that's why to prove the supremacy not only lands but also wives and women of the

opponent was exploited and this thinking is still prevalent in the society.

There are biological theories also relating to patriarchy. Hormones are considered as the 'key to sexual universe' as it determines the sex in the womb and the characters, behaviors and appearance in the adolescent stages. Many biologists states that the presence of testosterone is the real reason behind men being aggressive [2, 6]. There is also a discussion about men hugely involved in crime. Most violent crimes are committed by men (For example, according to the FBI, 98.9% of rapes and 87.6% of murders in the United States were executed by men, 87.9% were robberies) [16]. An explanation has been put forward to this. For example, the most brutal criminals in the world had the most testosterone, compared with those who were serving conclusion for more harmless crimes [1]. Although, the sociologists reject all the biological theories which justifies patriarchy and believes that it is so much of a socially constructed issue rather than a natural or biological.

### Religion and Patriarchy

Belief system is important for human race to exist. The belief that something is superior to us makes us answer a lot of unanswered questions or it may also be said another way of contentment or surrender. Therefore the belief system gives rise to religion. Hinduism, one of the major world religion originating on the Indian subcontinent and comprising several and varied systems of philosophy, belief, and rituals[3]; has presented women in many forms. There are several religious mythological books of Hinduism like Ramayana and Mahabharata and in those women are portrayed as the weaker section and many parts of these books are objectionable. In Ramayana, Sita (the wife of Rama) was asked to give agnipariksha, i.e, to jump in fire to prove her 'purity' just because she was abducted. After that she was abandoned by her own husband because people questioned her purity. All of these incidents grossly outraged the modesty of a women. Just because she is a women she has to prove herself after all the wrong which has happened to her. In Mahabharata as well women are considered as a home maker. All these religious teachings points out towards a male driven society. Whole human belief system is filled with a biased division of labor. Our religion itself discriminated and divided the roles of women and men and have shown her as an inferior gender by many ways like considering the man a "pati parmashwar" ( husband is the god) and wife's duty is to look for her house and husband's is to fight and do the outside job. The system of traditional patriarchy has its roots and sanction in religion. Not only Hinduism but ever every religion is one way or the other drifted towards the so-called 'superior gender'. The Islamic religion is one of the most popular religion in the world, and it has very specific rules for almost every facet of life. One of the controversial beliefs of Muslims is regarding the role of women in society. There are various restrictive rules

governing the way women should dress and act [5]. There are many rules like:

1. The man of the house does have the legal right in shari'ah to restrict freedom of movement of the women of the house, as he determines necessary for their safety, security and protection.
2. A wife must neither receive male strangers nor accept gifts from them without her husband's approval.
3. Women are asked not to make a display of their figures, not to wear tight clothing that reveals their shape, nor to appear in such dress except to:
  - i) Their husbands,
  - ii) Their relatives living in the same house with whom a certain amount of informality is permissible,
  - iii) Their women, that is, in the strict sense, their maid-servants who are constantly in attendance on them, but in a more liberal sense, all believing women,
  - iv) Old or infirm men-servants, and
  - v) Infants or small children who have not yet got a sense of sex[12].

Many more rules and restrictions and the way women should behave are given in various Islamic teachings even a '*talaq*' is just especially the men's choice. The point is not proving any religion right or wrong it is the matter of concern and compulsion. Whether it's a choice of religion for the women? The choice to be what she want, behave the way she wants, wear whatever she desires is just the person's discretion nobody else's. Wearing a '*burqah*' may give a women modesty and wearing short clothes may give the modesty to other. The question lagging behind is as to the choice is the society's or the women's or the husband or religious people?

### **The sanctity of marriage as an institution**

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions sanctity of which is generally respected all over the world in one form or another. In India especially among Hindus it is still considered as a sacred bond with the practice of monogamy, chastity, the concept of marriage as an unbreakable bond – a bond made in heaven. The system of arrange marriage is still prevalent in India. In arrange marriages the parents select the partners for either parties but the society has made certain rules for it. No matter how much urbanization has taken place and the earthly tools of pleasure are amassed by people, the norms that a women should be presented as a show piece in front of the parents of the other gender is stuck in the minds. Women are asked several questions and the first to which is always does the women knows how to cook or not. Women are educated and working these days but the division of labor which society has created is very rigid. Now there is another kind of exploitation of women as they work outside as well as inside the house. Their shoulders are overburdened with a loads of work now. The

world has always been difficult and cruel for women and even in this so-called modern era people are not widening their thoughts enough. It can be seen as psychological inertia or preferential selectivism of social psychological stagnant trend against women.

### **The objectification verses empowerment of women**

The thinking of a society is also depicted from its choice of literature, arts, movies and songs. Most of the songs around the globe mostly objectifies women and the lyrics and movie scenes depicts women as a typical gold digger or a house wife or describes women's figure in a very gross manner with an absurd terminology. This trend is not new. In India from Ajanta – Ellora caves to Konark temple and from Abhyan-shankuntalam, Meghdutam to literature on Krisna – the love God, women have been portrayed in a specific way.

There are few places were empowerment of women has been shown. With changed scenario when women are empowered and enjoying career in every walk of life and enriching all sectors of science, economy, service, health, entrepreneurship, war and peace; it is intolerable and unjust to have selective derogatory approach. The feminist movement may be seen as one of the reactionary expression toward the traditional psyche against women. The modern society must learn the new perspectives and prospects emerging after the educational and economic empowerment of women. The new norms are gradually being defined but the overall effect is not satisfactory. It seems it will take long time to make women at equal footing to men.

### **Women – The vulnerable group**

The mind-set of the society is male driven and this male chauvinism gives rise to numerous crimes against women. There are various crimes committed against women which are really grievous and brutal in nature, such as rape, female feticide, domestic violence, dowry, honor killing, acid attack, female genital mutilation, trafficking, forced prostitution and the list goes on. A report suggests that almost 35% of women worldwide has faced physical or sexual abuse by partner or non- partner (excluding sexual harassment) once in their live. Dowry death is a major issue mostly found in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran, were brides are killed or mentally harassed enough to commit suicide for dowry. Indian National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reports that there were 8,331 dowry death cases registered in India in 2011 [13]. Female genital mutilation is a gross practice which is also neglected at large, small girls have to go through this intense process. In India, it is mostly found among *Dawoodi Bohra* sect of *Shia* school of Islam. The data suggests that almost 200 million women have undergone this gross violation of human rights in around 30 countries [18]. Rape is one of the most heinous crimes committed mostly against women which is highly unreported. A dark figure suggests that almost 91.6% rapes are unreported [11,13].

There are various heinous and grievous crimes which are committed against women and that too are increasing at a large rate. Somewhere all of these are the after effect of a society which believes in the admiration of physical force and the stern believe that women is an object which can be mistreated, used, bullied and harmed in every possible way. Not only India, but in almost every part of the world patriarchy is prevalent and so does the crimes against women.

## 9. CONCLUSION

The existence of different sexes by the nature was for the continuance of the homo-sapiens and it is prevalent in all other animals too for similar reason of survival. The difference was beautiful but it has taken a very disturbing shape. Both male and female were given different capabilities which made them beautiful in their own ways but the humans couldn't respect it enough. The brains of human are filled with the worship of physical power. From ancient history to religion everything thought us that there is a dominance of physical power and it should be the ultimate goal. The fact that men are physically more powerful made the society a male driven, patriarchal one. All the resources, lands, houses, were captured by men and so does women and the thinking of women as a property is still prevalent in the society. There are various theories also justifying as well as denying patriarchy as the cause of the miserable plight of women. The religions which are followed also points out towards a patriarchal society. The male chauvinism is seen everywhere, even the Indian society which considers marriage as the most sacred bond doesn't spare exploiting women. They are highly disrespected in this institution at every point. Even the movies, songs, literature, objectifies the presence of women at large. Not only this, looking at the worst case scenario women are one of the most vulnerable group and are prone to numerous heinous and grievous crimes. Again, the fact that all of these crimes are committed against a particular gender points out that there is a problem with the society at large. Patriarchy is one way or the other the sole reason for the miserable situation of women. But, all of these can be dealt in a harmless manner. At first, the psyche of people should be changed. Women shouldn't be the one answering and getting judged by the society only because of being women. Although, the women are getting empowered educationally and socially, but the pace is very slow and the result is not satisfactory. The deep rooted power centric traditional patriarchy should be vanished. It is not about just women it is for the betterment of the society and humanity at large. No, the paper never suggests a woman driven society. Matriarchy will be as poisonous as patriarchy is, what it suggests is equality, it suggests an egalitarian society. The only solution for the eradication of all sorts of problem faced by women can be solved with the incorporation of elements of mutual respect, cooperation, coexistence, human values in the traditional patriarchy. In other words, elimination of coercive teeth of this type of patriarchy and the emergence of an egalitarian society based on peaceful cooperative respectful relation seems to be the solution.

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