



PATRIARCHY AND THE IDENTITY OF WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

In many parts of the world, Women are dominated by men. In adding up to being treated as second-class people by men, women have faced unfairness, humiliation, exploitation, oppression, dominance, and violence. A quick overview of Indian women's cultural backgrounds over the years is required for an assessment of today's Indian women. The Indian woman belongs to a civilization with well-rooted customs. If she has a certain belief or behaves in a certain way, it is because of the pattern instilled in her by a rather stable social structure that has evolved over a thousand years. As a result, defining the cultural practices and portrayals of women and understanding the current situation of Indian women requires a thorough understanding of the country. Hence, this paper is an attempt to analyse the patriarchal nature and the identity of women in Indian society. Women in modern India have achieved significant advances in every field of life, but they continue to face deep-seated patriarchal mentalities.

KEYWORDS: Patriarchy, Women Subordination, Identity, Discrimination, Role.

INTRODUCTION

The most significant obstacle to women's advancement and development is patriarchy. The heart elements remain the same, in spite of the amount of dominance: males are in power. It's possible that the control's nature will change. It is crucial to understand and uncover the way of keeping women controlled and subservient.

In a male-dominated family, patriarchy is a term used to describe "rule of the father." It's a social and intellectual construct that holds men (the patriarchs) in higher regard than women.

According to Sylvia Walby, "Theorising Patriarchy" is "a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". Patriarchy is built on a hierarchical and imbalanced structure of power relations in which men control women's productivity, reproduction, and sexuality. By

imposing masculine and femininity character stereotypes in society, it maintains inequitable power relations between men and women.

Gender relations, which are vibrant and complicated, have altered over time, and patriarchy is not a constant. In order to work towards women's development in a methodical manner, women are kept under control and obedient. Because of variances in class, caste, religion, area, traditions, and socio-cultural customs, the form of women's domination and servitude varies from one civilization to the next.

Patriarchy within a caste or class also varies according to religious and regional differences. Similarly, women's subordination in wealthy countries differs from that of developing countries. While the extent of women's subordination varies, certain qualities, like controlling women's sexuality and reproductive potential are examples of such issues, are shared by all patriarchies regardless of class, caste, ethnicity, religion, or area.

A number of ideologies, social practises, and organisations, such as family, faith, caste, education, media, law, state, and society, have institutionalised and legitimised this control over time.

THE PATRIARCHAL NATURE OF THE INDIAN SOCIETY

The term 'patriarchy' directly translates to 'father's reign,' and it was first used in the 17th century, used to depict a type of 'male-dominated household,' such as the patriarch's massive home. This dominant male commanded women, younger males, children, slaves, and domestic employees. It's now more commonly used "to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways".

In both the communal and private arenas, patriarchy refers to male dominance. The word 'patriarchy' is commonly worn by feminists to characterise the power dynamic between men and women. As a result, patriarchy is much more than a name; feminists make use of it as an idea, and it, like all concepts, is a tool for better comprehending women's reality.

A substantial shift in the thinking has confounded Indian arguments on socialism and patriarchy. Not only were capitalism and its relationship to patriarchy the subject of scholarship and discussion. Women's need of servility and subjugation to men in all aspects of life is rigorously maintained by patriarchy, which argues that men are congenitally superior to women.

As a result, men hold all power and right in the home, community, and state. As a result of patriarchy, women have been denied their legal rights and opportunities. These patriarchal values restrict women's mobility and contradict them control over their own bodies and ownership.

Women's subordination refers to their lesser status, which includes a lack of access to resources and decision-making, as well as supremacy rule in most countries. As a result, the term "subordination" alludes to a woman's lessened in compared to men. Feelings of powerlessness, discrimination, and low self-esteem

and vacillation all contribute to women's subjugation. To conclude, women's subordination is a situation in which men hold the upper hand.

Debates over capitalism and women's subordination frequently devolved into discussions about modern state developments and roles. As a result, the patriarchal and as a potential challenger of patriarchy were theorised. There are numerous studies available that support this claim.

Women's invisibility, as well as their place in the social, political, and economic systems, is plainly a result of the ideology that governs public policy concerning women. As a result, women are significantly absent from development debates.

WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

A woman is society's fundamental unit. She establishes a family, which in turn establishes a home, which in turn establishes a society, which in turn establishes a country. A country cannot flourish unless and until its women take leadership roles in development projects. The role of women in India is a heated topic that is hotly argued every day, as more women become aware of the inequities and biases they face.

Women are an untapped "resource" in the battle against poverty and violence all over the world, and despite the fact that their potential has been plainly demonstrated time and time again in tough conditions, men have all too frequently lost sight of it in times of stability. In Indian society, giving birth to a woman might be considered a curse.

In ancient India, women were venerated, and the birth of a girl was thought to herald the advent of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and riches. Women were referred to as "janani," or "progenitor," and "ardhanigini," or "half of the body." Women are also seen to be manifestations of Goddess Durga. Previously, women faced numerous challenges as a result of a male-dominated, patriarchal society system, the observance of old conventional beliefs, and so on. Women's responsibilities were limited to traditional tasks such as childbearing and child rearing.

Even in the modern world, where women's status has improved slightly, they still face challenges. They must balance their personal and professional obligations. Without the assistance of their husbands, they were able to work together. When women are tortured by their family members rather than receiving aid, their situation becomes more embarrassing. Sexual harassment by family members, relatives, neighbours, acquaintances, bosses, and others is more widespread at home and in the workplace.

They must endure a great deal in their daily lives in order to maintain their careers while also preserving their family bonds. When we think of social and economic modernisation, the role of women is one of the first things that come to mind. A society that does not value women's contributions is underutilizing half of its workforce. Greater gender equality would be expected to have a causal effect on growth. In India, we have a tendency to be complacent regarding women's roles. Women in leadership positions are common in India.

Andre Beteille stated, "The role of women in India now is better than even Japan, a country that is otherwise quite evolved." In India, the daughters of the ruling class do not face a glass ceiling, which is better than what we see in most other countries.

THE CHANGING STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

A quick overview of Indian women's cultural backgrounds over the years is required for an assessment of today's Indian women. The Indian woman belongs to a civilization with well rooted customs. The role of Indian women today can be better understood by looking at their cultural traditions and representations. Women's roles, status, and positions in Indian society have shifted dramatically, from what was once regarded to be a place of significant authority to one of significant subservience (Jain 1975).

Women in India have a unique cultural past. However, tracing this history isn't always easy because the best-preserved stories are usually those of the dominant tribes. Manu, a lawmaker who lived between 200 B.C. and 200 AD, significantly transformed the position of Indian women. His social standards and sanctions have left an indelible effect on Indian women's standing.

Based on the necessity to manage women's sexuality, he justified his regulations by claiming that women would become unfaithful to their husbands due to their passion for males, their temper, and their natural heartlessness, and thus had to be continually guarded (cited in Buhler 1964, 327-30).

Manu's regulations were particularly draconian when it came to women. Marriage could never be broken apart, and divorce was unimaginable and widows were never permitted to remarry. Upper caste women were kept at home and were not allowed to labour outside the home. Young ladies were compelled to marry, and widows were forced to perform sati, or self-immolation on their husband's funeral pyre.

Although Hinduism clearly had the other religions, like as Buddhism and Islam, have a significant impact on Indian culture and civilization of distinct beliefs on women's roles. Women were given an honourable place in social life during the period when Buddhism developed in India, despite the fact that they were still seen as lesser to men. They were free to go wherever they wanted, educate themselves, and even remain single.

In the eleventh century, with the onset of the Muslim invasion, the situation became even worse. Women were forcibly abducted; slaves were sold as slaves or married into Muslim families. Due to these circumstances, Hindu women's freedom was further restricted, and they were denied access to education. Polygamy and infanticide among girls were some of the other effects, as females came to be regarded as a financial burden to their parents.

During the Mughal Empire, female infanticide was common in many parts of society, as the birth of a female child considered unwelcome in both Hindu and Muslim households. Early marriage and dowry were also embraced by Muslims, although the polygamy system produced some issues, particularly in

families where widows had children by previous spouses. Except for the upper elite, Hindus were monogamous.

Two Mughal rulers, Humayun and his son Akbar, reigned during this period, attempted but failed to ban the practise of sati. The eighteenth-century disturbance caused by the Mughal conquest, as well as the political turmoil that followed, exacerbated the degeneration of women's status, and by the time the British period began, the standing of Indian women was at its lowest point in its history.

For all respectable Hindus, child marriage was the norm, and the practise had even spread to some Muslim communities. Sati was extensively practised, and even the Sikhs did it, despite their Gurus' prohibitions. On Muslim ladies and certain Hindu women, purdah (veiling) was rigidly enforced.

Women's literacy was viewed as a danger, and polygamy was common. When the British seized power in the country, this was the situation. The subsequent 200-year British occupation of India had a profound impact on Indian society in general and women in particular.

Following independence, the identity of Indian women underwent radical transformations. Women's exploitation is much reduced as a result of cultural and structural changes, and women have equal opportunity in numerous sectors. The women have left the safe haven of their homes and are now fully armoured with their abilities on the battlefield of life. There is now no arena that Indian women have not conquered.

Female activists also banded to gather to protest concerns such as female infanticide, literacy, gender inequality, women's health, safety. Women's responsibilities have altered considerably, and they are now able to contribute positively to society. They have socially, politically, and economically entrenched themselves in almost every field. Women are no longer considered unfit or weak for military or other forms of defence service.

DIFFERENT ROLES OF MODERN WOMEN

The modern woman is so competent and self-sufficient that she can easily be assign to as a superwoman, handling multiple tasks by own self. Women are now fiercely ambitious, proving their worth not just at home, but also at work or in their chosen careers. Women are breaking barriers in India in many areas of life.

They are masses enrolling in universities and colleges. They are pursuing a wide range of professions, including engineering, medicine, teaching and politics. Despite improvements, the fact that, aside from being achievers, women are also expected to fulfil their duties as husbands or mothers, prioritising home over everything else is still a cause of concern.

Women are regarded as the primary carers for children and the senior in every country. International studies reveal that when changes in a society's economy and political structure occur, women take the lead

in supporting the family in adapting to new realities and challenges. They are probably to be the principal source of outside assistance and play a critical role in supporting (or hindering) advances in people's life.

The contribution of women to the change of a society from pre-literacy to literacy is unquestionable. Primary education is essential for a country's development and achievement of sustainability goals.

According to research, education has shown increase in agricultural output, to improve the status of girls and women, lower population growth rates, improve environmental protection, and greatly raise the level of living. In recent time period, the role of women in the urban and rural workforce has grown significantly.

CONCLUSION

As evidenced by the discussion above, women in our nation are sufferer of acquiescence (e.g., under male authority), misuse (e.g., unequal pay, poor earnings), and domination (e.g. violence). Son preference, dowry, harassment towards women (e.g., wife-battering, rape), unequal pay, unequal personal laws, religious oppression of women, and poor depictions of patriarchal practises apply to women in the media.

It is also said that patriarchal patterns are maintained of not just female's family system, but in every part of their lives, thanks to the interconnected forces of religion, tradition, and solitude. In the socio-economic realm, patriarchy, isolation or (purdah), and paternalistic attitudes exist and legal arenas are the primary causes of women's submission.

Patriarchy, on the contrary, is the primary source of these variables, whereas other elements are a result of patriarchy. Because the most serious issue with subordination is patriarchal power and influence, not religion or tradition.

Modern women have begun to take care of their social, emotional, cultural, religious, and financial requirements. In India, she has now become a weapon for societal transformation.

Although it is true that women now enjoy greater independence than they did in the past, this is not true in many ways because discrimination still exists in society. Despite the high status of today's modern Indian women, the overall picture of women's status in India is unsatisfactory. Last but not least, we must remember that a nation's progress cannot be achieved without the active participation of its mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters.

As a result, each and every man should consider making a revolutionary change in his attitude toward women and accepting women as equal participants in the country's progress.

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