



***Katastélletai* :- Marginalization of women in Greek mythology. (A Subaltern study)**

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ABSTRACT

Women have been marginalized and victimized since the beginning of civilization. With the passage of time, mankind advanced leaps and bounds in terms of knowledge, technology, and inventions. We have travelled forward in light years since The Beginning of civilization. But there are still a few aspects in which we refuses to make progress. Gender inequality takes the top spot in this list. Women in any sort of powerful position makes men uneasy. They tries to keep them suppressed in order to control them. So they made up all sorts of restriction on them in the form of social norms, customs, taboos, etc.

KEY WORDS:- Gender Inequality, victimized, civilization, Suppressed, Myths, Norms, Gods and Goddesses

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I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of womanhood abetted by overt patriarchal customs gives enforced denial and abnegation a divine appearance. A skewed discourse wrapped in trustworthy vocabulary effaces the possibilities of empowerment of women belonging to marginalised communities. Marginalisation results in confinement, seclusion and displacement and other crippling disadvantages, and brings forth various layers of social closure. Social closure is the process of subordination, in which one group usurps all opportunities by bringing another group to its knees. To quote Raymond Murphy: "Social closure is a process of subordination whereby one group monopolises advantages by closing off opportunities to another group of outsiders beneath it which it defines as inferior and ineligible." Max Weber used the term social closure to discuss how power is derived from the process of exclusion to restrict access of marginalised women to resources and opportunities.

A close observation of our folklore and mythologies will give the realization that marginalization of women is not limited to mortals. Men's instinctual fear towards women in power extends to immortals too. Thus they marginalize and suppress them to stop them from gaining power. From Greek mythology to Hindu mythology women are confined into presiding over miscellaneous territories, adorned with pompous titles.

"Katastélletai" is a Greek word which means suppressed. The purpose of this research direction was to bring the injustice suffered by the celebrated goddesses to the forefront, to be studied and observed as the origin of the social evil called 'marginalization of women'.

II. AN OUTLOOK ON MARGINALISATION OF WOMEN IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY.

Modern activism has deep roots in Greek mythology, where the immortal and mortal heroes constantly gets in conflict with the authority and wages war against monsters to get rid of the chaos and establish order. The same could be said in the case of the existing social evil called gender inequality. It also has its deep roots in Greek mythology. Over 2500 years ago, the Greek bards narrated stories called 'mythos' that sought to make sense of the world. Thus the society that formed later had their norms and customs based on the ideals presented in the mythos.

The Greek mythology states that in the beginning there was only chaos- a vortex of unending darkness. Out of this darkness came Gaia, the goddess who embodies earth and is the arena of life. Therefore we can say that, Gaia is the very first being, the divine beginning, and the origin of order. She is the supreme entity, from which the rest of life, both mortal and immortal came from. Even Uranus, her lover came from her, she gave him life. But as the mythos shows us, with Uranus began the downfall of women hood and the dominance of

man. Uranus was the starry sky, he became Gaia's lover and lay above her, clinging to her firmly. Uranus's unyielding and dominant attitude becomes evident with the birth of their children .

“.....Together Gaia and Uranus produced many children. But they were all hideous and malformed : the Hecatonchires who had a hundred hands, and cyclopes who had only one eye. Uranus would not let them out of Gaia's womb as they disgusted him. Then he fathered the beautiful Titans, twelve in number, but they made him insecure. And so, he clung to Gaia even more firmly, refusing to let any child leave the mother's womb.”(Olympus 9)

Uranus's unreasonable behavior had exasperated Gaia, which forced her to give a knife of flint to the Titans and told them to castrate their father. A challenge up to which , only Cronus stood up. Cronus castrated his father, and caused sky and earth to separate. It is said that with Cronus, time began. He would end things and start them anew. The period, when Titans ruled Gaia retained her freedom and power. But it didn't last long. When the Olympians came to throne ,after imprisoning the Titans in Tartarus they offended Gaia. Gaia's fearsome power is put for display when she creates Typhoon, the very embodiment of chaos. But Typhoon was defeated by Zeus, thus ending the stories about Gaia in Greek myths. “.....Gaia became quiet and distant and was eventually forgotten.” (Olympus 15)

Titan goddesses were worse off when compared to the Titan gods. Their roles were confined to being wife of the male gods or the mother of titans. The history of Gaia and Uranus is repeated in the story of Cronus and Rhea. Cronus swallows his children in fear of retribution, subjecting Rhea to the same kind of torture that Gaia went through. And Rhea driven by her maternal instinct and her annoyance towards the titan god saves her youngest son Zeus. The Titan sisters were always marginalized by their other half. Thus the reference about the titan goddesses is restricted to their marriage and children:-

“.....Titan brothers married Titan sisters.....Oceanus circled the earth, and with Tethys, he gave birth to the various rivers and streams of earth.” (Olympus 11)

“.....Zeus pursued and made love to Metis, the Titan goddess who concocted the potion that made Cronus vomit. But when he learned that the child she would bear him would overthrow him, Zeus swallowed Metis whole as soon as she became pregnant.”(Olympus 23)

The establishment of Olympus and the division of power amongst the siblings was another example of the suppression faced by women in Greek mythology. The brothers Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades were given authority over the sky, the sea and the underworld respectively while the sisters Hestia became the goddess of the hearth, Demeter became the goddess of life- giving grain and Hera became the goddess of the household. The roles to which women are still confined to in the modern society.

The sons and daughters of Zeus is treated differently too. All of his sons were given throne in Olympus or given the title of a hero while only two of his daughters were awarded the same , Athena and Artemis. The fact that both of them swore to never take a husband cannot be ignored, especially when Zeus swallowed Athena's mother in fear that her child will overthrow him and give birth to Athena himself.

III. CONCLUSION

Through this research one can conclude that the social dilemma that the modern women face is an after effect of the norms established by a society that observes and practices the mythos as their modus operandi. They extracted the roles assigned to the gods and goddesses as an example to be followed by the gender groups. Thus the gender stereotype came into being.

I believe that to break this stereotype one must destroy the ideas instilled in their beliefs and culture. To get rid of this parasite of gender inequality one must destroy it from its roots.

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