



Research Paper

Concept of Patriarchy: Origin, Evolution and Effects

Dr. Samanveer Maan

Assistant Professor, Dept. of English
D.A.V. College, Bathinda.

ABSTRACT:

Patriarchy is a social system in which man is the central figure in the family and society pushing woman to the periphery to adopt a secondary role in the family as well as in society. It is a system which allows men to exploit women. Its elements are observed in the ancient thought, different mythological beliefs, religious faith and general perceptions, for ages. Impacts of patriarchy are quite visible in different spheres of society. Women are deprived of their equal rights in history on economic front, in political circles and in social status, in all religions and in every part of the world.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Patriarchy is a social system in which man is the central figure in the family as well as in society and holds the primary power in social, economic, religious and political spheres, pushing the woman to the periphery to adopt a secondary role in the family as well as in society. It is a system of society in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line. Patriarchy is a compound Greek word, constituent of two component words - 'Patri' means father and 'Arche' means rule, thus patriarchy means "rule of father". Merriam Webster Dictionary defines patriarchy as a "social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line". Sysvia Walby in her book *Theorizing Patriarchy* defines patriarchy as, "A system of inter-related social structures which allow men to exploit women". She describes:

Women's household labour is expropriated by their husbands or cohabitantes. The woman may receive her maintenance in exchange for her labour, especially when she is not also engaged in waged labour. Housewives are the producing class, while husbands are the expropriating class.

While discussing the public patriarchal dimensions and economical exploitation of women by men, Gerda Lerner declares patriarchy as historical system:

The manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power.

ORIGIN OF PATRIARCHY

The origin of patriarchy is associated with the origin of mankind, its elements in their embryonic stage are observed in the ancient thought, different mythological beliefs, religious faith and general perceptions for ages.

In Greek mythology, Pandora, the first human woman on earth, moulded by Hephaestus, according to the instructions of Zeus, as a part of punishment of humanity for Prometheus, the thief of sacred fire. All the gods provided her seductive gifts to create her as a 'beautiful evil', which will torment the upcoming generations.

In Christianity Patriarchal is quite visible. The *Old Testament* of the *Bible* placed women in a secondary position. Woman is considered as a symbol of weakness for man. In the Book of Genesis of the Hebrew Bible – The Old Testament, God created Adam from dust and places him in the 'Garden of Eden'. God told him that he could till the ground and eat freely from all the trees in the garden, except the tree of knowledge about good and evil. Eve was created from one of the Adam's ribs to be Adam's companion. They were innocent and unembarrassed about their nudity. However, a serpent or devil deceived and misguided Eve to eat fruit from the forbidden tree. Eve gave some of the fruit to Adam and persuaded him to eat the forbidden fruit along with her. It gave them the

ability and additional knowledge of negative and destructive concepts such as shame and evil. For this, God cursed the Serpent and banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Since the first woman, Eve not only disobeyed herself but also persuaded 'Man', (Adam) for the sinful act, so Eve is considered the first one to be unfaithful.

In Islam, it is believed that Allah created Mohammad first, who created Adam and Hawha (first ever male and female), in Bahishat with all beautiful gardens, mountains and rivers. He asked both of them to eat any fruit available in the Bahishat garden but not to touch or taste the forbidden fruit. But one day, misguided by Shaitan, Hawha compelled Adam to bring and eat the forbidden fruit in her company. After eating the forbidden fruit, their bodies appeared. Allah was very much displeased at this sinful act and cursed them and exiled them from Bahishat. Till now it is considered that Hawha (khatoon) is responsible for that sinful act and is being looked down upon by man. In *Quran*, "men are superior to women on account of the qualities in which God has given them pre-eminence and also because they furnish dowry for women".

In Sikhism, The *Adi Granth* begins with, "Ik Onkar Sat Nam Karta Purakh" that indicates there is one and only one creator 'Karta' of this universe (Brahamand) and is in the male form. Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji also further pronounced in Japuji Sahib, "Ik Sansari Ik Bhandari Ik Laye Diwan" i.e. this universe is further managed by The Great Trimurti – Brahama, Vishnu, Mahesh and all of these three deities are again in the male form.

In Hinduism, though the condition of patriarchy is a bit different in Hinduism as females have been worshipped as Goddesses by people from the time immemorial. In mythological period, pre – Vedic and Vedic era and in the Purannas times, there are so many tales regarding the power and supremacy of females over males. In 93rd chapter of Markandeya Puranna when Devtas were defeated by Asuras (Rakhshas) and dethroned by them from Surgapuri, the King of Devtas, the Indra bowed before Devi Durga and cried for help to get back their kingdom of Surgapuri. Durga realizing the injustice done by the Rakhshas, gave assurance to Indra and other devtas and with the help of Kalika (Kali Mata), defeated the invincible Mehkhasur and returned the kingdom of Surgapuri to Devtas. The reference of this episode is present in the *Chandi di Vaar* written by Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji and we find Durga is a supreme power for Devtas as well as for Rakhshas. Such episodes of Hindu mythology indicate the power and supremacy of woman over man in Hindu religious beliefs and these idols were being worshipped, but it is a devotional version of religious idols and not a true picture of an Indian woman of flesh and blood.

In certain parts of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the patriarchy is all – powerful and the plight of woman is at the mercy of man. The Sita Mata, though worshipped by people till today but she was exiled by Lord Rama for twelve years, to prove her sanctity for no fault of her and she obeyed the orders, without uttering even a single word. In the Mahabharata, Draupadi was ordered by her husband Yudhishtira to obey Kaurvas, after he lost her in gambling, as a mere article of property and she was subjected to her derobing (cheerharan). Here, we see, man being the swami of woman, treats her just as an object or a slave and to obey him is her first and foremost sacred duty (parma dharma). The *Bhagavad Gita* places women, vaisyas and shudras in the same category and described all of them as being of sinful birth. Maharishi Manu, in his granth '*Manu Simriti*', has said that man has every right to beat a woman like an animal or like a silly person or low caste person to teach her a lesson, "Dhol, Ganwar, Shudrs, Pashu, Nari. Yeh Sab Taran Ke Adhikari". Satti Pratha is another tradition of Hindu religion responsible to push the Hindu women towards the patriarchy in which a woman had to plunge into the pyre of her husband.

The sum of these patriarchal perceptions encouraged man to think himself physically and mentally strong to assume the central place in family and society and has got every right to push the woman to a marginalized space.

Historical Imprints of Patriarchy

A well - known anthropologist Claude Levi - Strauss has said that just as there were the exchange of other objects during the settlement of Kabila wars there were also an exchange of women. Women were thought of more as commodities than as human beings. And thus the seeds of gender based inequality and man's dominance were sown in society.

Impact of Patriarchy in Different Sphere of Society:

Discrimination in History: In recorded history, the absence of women is quite conspicuous. The main reason for this is because almost all historians were influenced by patriarchal thoughts.

Discrimination on Economic ground: It is observed that inspite of working hard for the family, the household work is seen as personal work instead of productive work and women's role as producers, rearers of children and day to day activities of household are not considered to be an economic contribution. Women have no control over their own earnings. Whatever they earn, they have to submit to their husbands or other elders of the family (Santosh).

Impact of Patriarchy in Political status: Political system is also patriarchal since Aristotle's times as 'he' reasoned that males are superior to females. So, men rule over women. In the modern period as well, the participation of women in the formatic and structures of political institutions, is not considered meaningful. It was only in the 20th century that women in the world received the right to vote. This shows that women were excluded from the important decision making bodies of political institutions. In India the members of the drafting committee of the constitution were Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, A. K. Ayyar, N. G. Ayyar, Dr K. M. Munshi, M. Saadulla, B. L. Mittar, D. P. Khatan and N. M. Rao (Bhasin), are all men, inspite of the fact that a large number of women participated in the Indian National Movement and they were well educated and qualified too. The constitution of the USA was also drafted by the representative of twelve states and they were referred as founding fathers (Morison), obviously they were all men. Thus it is a hard reality that due to patriarchy women have faced discriminatory attitude in every part of the world. N. Krishna wami comments in this regards:

In all traditions women have always been considered inferior and incapable of any serious thinking, irrespective of religion, country, race, the period in which they live, more or less the same perception and sex stereotyping is seen in language and literature.

Hence woman's subordination and man's domination has been a world – wide phenomenon for ages that has deprived woman of her equal rights. Female foeticide, child marriages, domestic discrimination, less education, less job opportunities, little health care are the major factors in this field. The space given to women is generally secondary and their status is marginal. For ages patriarchy has reduced their existence to nothingness and their say in family matters as well as in society is considered meaningless.

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