

Tracing the Patriarchal Centre and its Impact on Gender: A Perspective

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Abstract

The endeavour of the present paper is to trace the roots of what we know as patriarchy in common usage or utterance. Is patriarchy essentially a term associated with oppression/repression, especially of women? Is it some invisible codified, institutionalised, uniform, homogenous set of values/beliefs/concepts; propagated by the father of the family/household, who is supposedly the head of it? Is the notion of patriarchy same across culture, race, religion, region, caste, and ethnicity; or is it different in nature? Is the notion of 'patriarchy' same across time? In a country like India, which has always been a confluence of several caste, class, religion, and ethnicity; how can we arrive at a uniform, homogenous definition of patriarchy? When did 'patriarchy' come into being? Is the term 'patriarchy' synonymous/coterminous with masculinity, which implies having 'male' characteristics and biological attributes, or, are they different? Also, is there somewhere a commonality of nature in the males in general all over the world, as being 'repressors' of women? In other words, do all the males across the world share some kind of solidarity or 'kinship' with each other in terms of having the privileged access to the hierarchical power relations? If we apply terms like 'patriarchy' and 'masculinity' synonymously/interchangeably, then are not we making a slight mistake somewhere; because, in spite of both the words being connected to the 'males,' or, 'male-centrism' in general; 'patriarchy' etymologically denotes the rule of the father ('pita'/'patriarch') who is definitely a male, but, it is not that all the males are biological fathers. Then can we use the term patriarchy to designate all the males? Are the women in the society only victims of patriarchy, or, are the males/men equally burdened by it psychologically? If the women of the society bear the brunt of patriarchal oppression, then would the degree of that oppression be same in case of an upper class, educated, employed woman, and, a poor, uneducated Dalit, or, a Muslim woman? Also, is patriarchal oppression mostly psychological/mental, or, is it physical as well? Can we refer to the incidents of wife-beating (by the husbands), eve-teasing, sexual harassment (of the females) at workplaces, gruesome rape incidents, molestations all as instances of patriarchal oppression, or, as something more? Can we actually call a rapist, or, a molester a patriarch, or, a pervert, a maniac, a devil rather? How do we look at the several instances of married women filing false dowry cases, or, misusing section 498A IPC to file a false domestic violence case against the husband and the in-laws, or, filing a maintenance case against the husband to squeeze money for harassment? Has the term patriarchy somewhere become non-functional in recent times when it has to operate around such terms like liberalisation, globalization, women-empowerment, feminism, equal rights etc? Has patriarchy today become an extinct term, that is only being circulated and practised only to foster and sustain several counter-discourses; or, has it still got an existence, a body? Does biology/anatomy determine the fate of an individual, or, the social construction? Or, how much does biology, and, how much does society?

Keywords: patriarchy, masculinity, oppression, homogeneity, privilege, margin, individual desire, hierarchy, biology, misuse etc.

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The endeavour of the present paper is to analyse what exactly is patriarchy, which is alternatively known as 'pitrasatta' (that is, a family system controlled, and, dominated by the father figure of the house) prevalent across the world more or less (as the common saying goes), and, more specifically in the South-Asian countries, especially India. Is it that 'patriarchy' is a set of codified, sanctified, uniform, homogenous set of rules/ideas/concepts/doctrines, prepared and propagated by the father figure of every family/household; to exert control over his wife and child/children, and, to pass on the property rights to his heir/successor? Is it a set of ideology to keep women subordinate in the social structure always, and, to serve the interest of men willy-nilly?:

Through the recalcitrance of women the established property and status order can be subverted. To prevent such a contingency women's sexual subordination was institutionalised in the brahmanical law codes and enforced by the power of the state. At the same time women's co-operation in the system was secured by various means: ideology, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges and veneration bestowed upon conforming and dependent women of the upper classes, and finally the use of force when required. (<https://www.epw.in>>pdf)

And, if that is so, then would the patriarchal rules be similar in case of the next male heir, or, from next to next male (Obviating obviously the possibility that there can be female heir also)? Or, would the patriarchal values differ across generations as not all the men would be similar in outlook and mentality. Also, time plays an important role in shaping a person's mentality. Not all the customs which were accepted a decade or twenty years ago would be relevant today in the same manner. Indeed, the 'change' in outlook should be taken into account appropriately. Also, going by this precise logic, different families then must have different 'patriarchal' structures, which makes it difficult for us to arrive at a monolithic understanding of 'patriarchy'. Does 'patriarchy' reside in the idea of having control over the wife's sexuality, and taking up punitive measures against the 'aberrant' woman, as has been mentioned in several ancient Indian texts like *Culapaduma Jataka*, *Gahapati Jataka*, *Kosiya Jataka*, *Arthasastra* (by Kautilya) etc?:

The power to use violence vests in the husband and it is recommended as the means to ensure control over the wife's sexuality, in particular, and in monitoring her behaviour more generally. But what if husbands do not succeed, even through the use of violence to bring women to heel? For such situations a third mechanism of control was envisaged in the ancient Indian patriarchal structure, with the king being vested with the authority to punish errant wives. The king functioned as the third level of

control over women through whom the coercive power of the patriarchal state was articulated and used to chastise those wives who flouted the ideological norms for women .. (<https://www.epw.in>>pdf)

Or, does Patriarchy consist in the idea of 'carefully guarding the wife,' as is propagated by Manu, because 'their essential nature will drive women into seeking satisfaction anywhere, anytime, and with anyone'?:

Through their passions for men, through their mutable temper, through their natural heartlessness, they become disloyal towards their husbands, however carefully they may be guarded.....Knowing their disposition, which the lord of creatures laid on them at creation (i e, their reproductive power, their sexuality, their essential nature) every man should most strenuously exert himself to guard them. (Manu IX. 15-16, <https://www.epw.in>>pdf)

Is it the reason that Maharshi Kanva prepared Sakuntala adequately before sending her to her 'husband's home'? Is it the required tutelage that every father should impart to his daughter, failing which she would be termed as 'untutored,' and unfit for a 'father-in-law's house'?:

Kanva. My child, when you have entered your husband's home,
Obey your elders; and be very kind
To rivals; never be perversely blind
And angry with your husband, even though he
Should prove less faithful than a man might be;
Be as courteous to servants as you may,
Not puffed with pride in this your happy day:
Thus does a maiden grow into a wife;
But self-willed women are the curse of life. (Kalidasa, *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*, 174)

Or, does 'patriarchy' mean not only the control of the husband over the wife, but also the control of the parents over their daughter, before she gets married, or, probably from the very moment she was born:

I went, therefore, to the shelf where the histories stand and took down one of the latest, Professor Trevelyan's *History of England*. Once more I looked up Women, found "position of" and turned to the pages indicated. "Wife-beating," I read, "was a recognised right of man, and was practiced without shame by high as well as low... Similarly," the historian goes on, "the daughter who refused to marry the gentleman of her parents' choice was liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice... Betrothal often took place while one or both of the parties was in the cradle, and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurses' charge." (*A Room of One's Own*, 46-47)

Also, what becomes prominent, is that the women are not only subjugated/dominated by patriarchy, the males are equally ruled over by the patriarchy/patriarchal discourses as, they carry

the duty of not only obeying it and conforming to its every dictum; but, also shoulders the responsibility of making his wife and children strictly conform to it as well, and, then, passing the same onto the next heir/s. Patriarchy expects both its men and women to behave, to go about in a certain way. Does patriarchy want women to be conforming, ever-obedient, compliant, submissive, docile, passive, patient creatures, whose duty is to take care of the household activities as opposed to the males/men who are expected to be assertive, strong, 'masculine,' aggressive, de-emotional worldly outsiders? Does this 'patriarchal' projection of the binaries like- man as 'rough,' 'strong,' 'masculine,' 'rugged,' and hence 'dominant' vis-à-vis a female as a 'docile,' 'innocent,' 'weak,' and hence 'subjugated' creature apply every time? In short, can we have such generalised notions regarding a man and a woman? Is not there a problem somewhere in the very thought of males/men as always 'attackers,' 'aggressive,' 'dominant' and the females/women as the 'weak,' 'meek,' 'protected creatures'?

Does patriarchy expect some 'shedding' of our natural individual emotional selves, irrespective of the sex? And, if we consider that women are the only victims of patriarchal oppression, then can the same model of repression/oppression/coercion be applied across culture, race, religion, caste, region and time alike, or, would they be essentially different? For instance, in the Indian context, would the subjugation/repression of a Hindu Bengali woman (staying in West Bengal) by the patriarchal rule be similar to that of a Muslim woman residing in Bihar or MP? Or, that of the repression of a Rajasthani woman staying in the rural area be similar to that of a Keralite woman of an urban area? Would the repression of a Dalit woman residing in a remote village of Maharashtra be similar to that of an educated, economically empowered UK lady's subjugation by patriarchal rules? Also, is the impact of patriarchy visible only inside home/family, or, is its impact visible outside the home as well; that is, in educational institutions, government offices, corporate sectors, religious institutions (temples, mosques, gurudwaras), parliament house, army, courtrooms, sports, hospitals, centres for scientific research, entertainment sectors etc? If it is visible, perceptible outside, then, can we safely assume it to be an extension of the patriarchal mindset, prevalent in home/family every time? Or, is it rather something else, an offshoot of masculinity, and, not patriarchy? Are patriarchy and masculinity same or different from each other? In short, how does one know what is 'patriarchal,' and what is not?

Are the patriarchal narratives/discourses of 'outside' mostly based on the general selection of, or, preference for the males/men over the females/women; regarding certain sectors (job sectors that is)? Also, what are the rules/dictums that make a workplace 'patriarchal' in outlook, as every workplace has got its own sets of rules/codes of conduct regarding its functioning, which an employee has to obey willy nilly? Has 'patriarchy' somewhere become a catchword today to refer to anything impositional in nature, or, to refer to something that we do not have an easy access to? Where does the center/root of the patriarchy lie? How far are the roots of this patriarchy spread? Is patriarchy a static, fixed, pedagogic, haloed, divine/sacred institution which is sitting at a high pedestal somewhere blissfully, and, dictating terms for the numerous hapless women living across societies; or, has it rather turned into a fabled myth in today's time, when it has to deal with other several factors like liberalisation, democratisation, modernization, globalization, and, most importantly the feministic discourses? Why is it normally presumed that a male/man would automatically carry his 'patriarchal' thought when he steps out of home, and, goes to the outside world, and, he is not allowed to have any 'feminine' thought? And, how does one distinguish between 'patriarchal,' 'masculine,' and 'feminine' thought? Also, it can very much be possible that a female, who is a carrier of 'patriarchal' thought, can dominate another female, whether in home, or, outside. If patriarchy is a repressive apparatus for the women, then should not all the women be united in their protest against such apparatus?

Also, what becomes important then, a general outnumbering of the females/women in a particular space/place/workplace by the males/men, cannot be called as a basis of male-domination in general everywhere. For instance, if one professional sector/institute in a particular place/locality/city is male-majoritarian that does not mean that there cannot be majority of women in other sectors/institutes/spheres of another place/locality/city. One cannot, rather one should not have a generalised notion about all the sectors of all the places simultaneously. The important question that comes next, is patriarchy synonymous with the term 'masculinity,' as both are related to power and dominance? Is, 'pitratta' and 'purushtantra' same in meaning? Is being a father and being a male synonymous? While a father or a 'patriarch' is definitely a male, all males may not be biological fathers. Also, there are different shades to masculinity. Are not masculinity and femininity essentially social and cultural constructs, which are perpetuated through long legitimisation and ingrained practice? What is the difference between a male

femininity and female masculinity? Is it culpable if a woman shows assertiveness, and should be vilified accordingly? One may not miss the way the author Jack Halberstam links masculinity with patriarchy:

Masculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of the state and to uneven distributions of wealth. Masculinity seems to extend outward into patriarchy and inward into the family; masculinity represents the power of inheritance, the consequences of the traffic in women, and the promise of social privilege. But, obviously, many other lines of identification traverse the terrain of masculinity, dividing its power into complicated differentials of class, race, sexuality, and gender. If what we call "dominant masculinity" appears to be a naturalized relation between maleness and power, then it makes little sense to examine men for the contours of that masculinity's social construction. (*Female Masculinity*, 2)

But if masculinity is a step towards patriarchy, or, if patriarchy is an outward extension of masculinity, then how do we deal with the various other sides of masculinity, the alternative sites of the normative dominant heterosexual masculinity; like female masculinity, gay masculinity etc.? For, we cannot ignore the possibilities of these multiple alternative masculinities which provide an edge to manhood, and, liberates the codified normative biological male/man from the specificities of sexual and gender definitions. As has been aptly argued by Jack Halberstam in his book *Female Masculinity*:

I do not claim to have any definitive answer to this question, but I do have a few proposals about why masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects. I also venture to assert that although we seem to have a difficult time defining masculinity, as a society we have little trouble in recognizing it, and indeed we spend massive amounts of time and money ratifying and supporting the versions of masculinity that we enjoy and trust; many of these "heroic masculinities" depend absolutely on the subordination of alternatives. (*Female Masculinity*, 1)

For, it is not that all the males/men would follow the sanctified normative heterosexual mode and code of masculinity, and, an aberration would be treated as 'gender transgression'. Moreover, if masculinity extends into 'patriarchy,' then, accordingly, we should have different 'patriarchal' shades, and their different modes of interaction with respective femininities. Is it necessary for a male to behave in an assertive way, or, be dominant with the women, so as to get recognition as a male in a 'patriarchal' society? Is heterosexuality a compulsory form which portrays the male/masculine figure always as the active 'desiring subject,' and, woman as the typically submissive, pliant 'desired object'? And, if this is the norm, then is not there any room left for

the desired female object to talk (like why the female has to be seen always as the 'object of desire,' or, the 'right intention' of the desiring male subject, or, the consent of the female in reciprocation etc)? Wherefrom does such social fixation come from? Does it come from 'patriarchy'? If it is coming through sociological constructs, then does not that very fact mean that gender is essentially a 'created' category, and hence fluid and multifarious, as Judith Butler observes in her book *Gender Trouble*?:

If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two... When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one. (*Gender Trouble*, 10)

And, naturally, masculinity and femininity are essentially socially and culturally created categories than actually existing ones, as Butler also observes in the same book:

If it is possible to speak of a "man" with a masculine attribute and to understand that attribute as a happy but accidental feature of that man, then it is also possible to speak of a "man" with a feminine attribute, whatever that is, but still to maintain the integrity of the gender. But once we dispense with the priority of "man" and "woman" as abiding substances, then it is no longer possible to subordinate dissonant gendered features as so many secondary and accidental characteristics of a gender ontology that is fundamentally intact. (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 32)

So, we need to protest against this gross stereotyping of gender, which somewhere forecloses the possibility of an essential gender fluidity, of a potential 'transformation'. Also, is not the whole process of always needing to be a male, or, a man, in a way a cumbersome thing itself, as per the social construct? Isn't it oppressing itself? For, every individual is essentially different from each other, whether it is a male, or, a female, and, also it is a fact that every individual has got the right to display/exhibit/manifest himself/herself in his/her own way, provided he/she is not intruding into other people's spheres/activities, or, harming others. So, mentality/disposition varies from person to person (irrespective of the biological sex), from age to age (that is, from childhood to senility), and, even from situation to situation. Also it depends on family values,

socio-cultural-linguistic ethnicities, and, it is perhaps not possible to have a uniform, homogenous notion of a male/man as manly, or, female/woman as womanly across the globe.

And, that is why perhaps if there is a patriarchal discourse in existence, it is equally oppressing for a male and a female; perhaps even more for a male, as has been indicated by Kamla Bhasin, the famous feminist, that, because of 'the patriarchal monitoring,' a man has to compulsorily forego his emotional human self, undergo an 'emotional castration,' and, don an appearance of 'fearlessness' so much, that he often time gets deprived of his 'emotional intelligence'. Is the 'emotional castration,' 'dehumanization,' and 'fearlessness' responsible somewhere for the same man committing a heinous crime like rape later on? Is he to be blamed then? Is it the veritable discourse about patriarchy, that promote the idea of economic self-sufficiency as compulsory norm for a man, who is seen as the chief 'bread-earner' of his household, as compared to a female/woman, who is not viewed so; considering the fact that she is a female/woman, and, hence can be married off to a suitable groom? Does patriarchy expect man to become only 'earning machines' and nothing else? Has masculinity got nothing more than promoting the idea of men being strong worldly outsiders, who are fit/ready for any task/challenge? Is a man capable of carrying out any mission because he is a man, or, 'mard'? What if a male of a family is not economically independent/self-sufficient, or, cannot be so, as is expected of him? What if a man is not tall, strong and stout enough? Should such males be deemed as 'unfit,' unacceptable by the normative patriarchal discourse/s and cast aside? Would their manhood come into question then?

To, increase the line of thought further, why cannot a man/male be dependent on others, at least for some time? Why is it that a male/man is not expected to show his weakness at any point of time, or, show his emotions outwardly, or, not allowed to cry? Why do we have to see such images of a small boy crying, and, his parents constantly telling him in that very age only, that he is not supposed to cry, and, man up instead? Why would he be prevented from crying, or, externalizing his emotions and feelings, at a later age, may be after his breakup with his girlfriend, or, after getting rejected in a love proposal? Is he not a human being? Is it not a burdensome thing itself that after marriage, an economically independent male/man is supposed to take care of his wife and children, as also his parents, where the concerned woman/female is seen by the society as the 'kanya'(daughter) who got married off to an earning and potential

suitor? Are such thinkings coming from an essentially patriarchal mindset? Is it that while talking about patriarchy and its oppression of the female, we often tend to ignore, how patriarchy burdens/overloads a male/man?

If so, then is that not harmful for a male? Is Amitabh Bachchan's famous dialogue from the movie 'Mard' ('Jo mard hota hai use dard nahin hota memsahab'; meaning "That who is a male, does not feel any pain, madam") universally applicable, that is, across culture, race, religion, and region; or is it a fabled myth only that is still being circulated and propagated around the corners, to inculcate us on the vacuous doctrines of maleness/masculinity, and, possibly patriarchy?

Again, why is it that a male child is always encouraged to play the outdoor games (like football, cricket, kabaddi etc.), while a female child is encouraged to play with a doll? Also, when we grow up on such discourse/s, then, are not there women figures (in the form of mothers, aunts, maternal sisters, and paternal sisters) included/involved in this also so as to promote and foster them to us, to make us believe in them? Or, did these female/woman figures mentioned (mother, aunt, maternal sister etc) remain so oppressed and brainwashed by the discourses of patriarchy, that they already became inert/passive consent-generated recipients, to not only have obeyed them blindly, but also to have successfully passed down to their future generation successfully? Does not a man feel 'burdened' by the norms of the patriarchal society which expects him to have a stereotypical notion of a woman, and, prevents him to come out of it?

But, why is it then that the successful tutelage and lesson of domination/subordination successfully inculcated by patriarchy (regarding women especially) down the ages, is suddenly put to question? Why is this critiquing of patriarchal center? Why suddenly are there questions arising about a why a married woman needs to put on sindur/vermilion compulsorily (as a mark of her marriage)? Why should there be talks like sindur is a sign of her being 'sold' to a male, or, becoming a male's (husband's) property? Why should there not be questions raised about a woman's reluctance to change her maiden surname after marriage? Why should there be talk about the fact that a wife has to observe the Karva Chauth fast compulsorily for her husband? Why should there be talk about the necessity of a Muslim woman's putting on burqa for veiling her face in the presence of the males other than husband, father, or, father-in-law? After all, are not these practices sacrosanct and customized? Is it where discourses like 'Feminism' intervene?

Are 'patriarchy' and 'feminism' mutually exclusive terms; that one automatically cancels out the other?

Does feminism believe that only by raising certain questions about the right of women at certain levels, it can defeat patriarchy? If there are women involved in the 'patriarchal' discourses, then, can there not be males who are feminists? Also, can 'Feminism' cater to the demands of all sections of females in society? Is there somewhere a labelling attached with the term 'Feminism' or 'Feminist'; as the famous writer and director Aparna Sen mentioned in her interview with FICCI FLO Chennai in 2016-17, chairpersoned by Ms. Sudha Shivkumar; that there are certain markers of feministic traits in a woman; like 'being empowered,' 'doing things on one's own,' 'earning one's own living,' 'remaining single/unmarried,' 'living life by one's own choices' etc? Then are we not restricting 'Feminism' and its practices to certain limits? Are we not, in that case, neglecting the voices of several 'other' women who are not empowered (that is, unemployed), and, not able to earn their own living (housewives), and also married? Should feminism respect the individual 'choices' of women, whether they prefer to work after marriage, or, take care of the family and children by sitting at home? Are the feministic discourses centred on certain 'privileged' class of women who are the 'elect few'/ 'select few'/ 'choicest few'? Also, does one need to be vocal/assertive in order to be categorised as a feminist while the reticent ones certainly fail to be categorised as such? How does 'Feminism' deal with these labellings/markings?

Are there pluralities of 'Feminisms'; like the Western and the Indian, as has been indicated by the famous Bollywood actress and feminist Shabana Azmi in her exclusive interview in the DC South Asian Film Festival, 2019? Is it high time that we should collectively come out of the 'skewed notions of textbook ideas of Feminism' (like a woman ironing her husband's Kurta is debarred from being called a feminist); as has been pointed out by Azmi in the same interview? Does 'Feminism' need to include/involve the male and his thoughts as well to defeat 'patriarchy,' as many men are supportive towards the women's issues, and, some of them may be feminists as well at an individual level? Or, is 'Feminism' essentially meant for women? Why should there be eyebrows raised if a man calls himself a feminist, as has been mentioned by Farhan Akhtar, in his discussion on feminism? If 'rape' is a patriarchal incident, and, a male/man opposes its gruesomeness/bestiality, then does he fall short of meeting the standards of

patriarchy; as 'rape' cannot be considered human by any means? Similarly, if a wife takes care of the household activities of a male, does that man have to be susceptible to such talks by the feminist groups and activists like; he can know nothing about feminism, or, women's issues, and, that he is a patriarchal boss who compels his wife to do the household activities? Does patriarchy only feel threatened by the expression/assertion of sexuality of a few women, who venture to come out of the stereotypical image drawn for them, or, dare to cross the 'lakshman rekha' of interiority/domesticity assigned; for job/earning, or, for any other purpose, while other women are spared? Is patriarchy in real threat today because of these educated, economically independent women; who can, and want to think logically and rationally about what they want to do in life, like what Miss Benare did in the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* by Vijay Tendulkar?:

Mrs Kashikar: What else? That's what happens these days when you get everything without marrying. They just want comfort. They couldn't care less about responsibility! Let me tell you—in my time, even if a girl was snub-nosed, sallow, hunchbacked, or anything whatever, she—could—still—get—married! It's the sly new fashion of women earning that makes everything go wrong. That's how promiscuity has spread throughout our society. (Tendulkar, *Collected Plays in Translation*, 99-100)

What makes the quote specially interesting is that, it is coming from a woman, who got so 'patriarchally' brainwashed probably that she could not think of a woman's life outside marriage, and, believed that a woman's economic independence is 'perilous' for the society. How does 'Feminism' deal with these women? Is the courage shown by Matangini for the assertion her own freedom against her abusive husband Rajmohan, in the novel *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay a sign of her feministic outlook?:

'Shut up, you old hag,' cried out Rajmohan and flung away the empty pitcher. Then he turned round to his wife and said in a softer but scathing tone. 'Well, queen, where have you been?' The woman firmly whispered back, 'I had gone to fetch water.' She was standing like a statue exactly on the spot where her husband had asked her to stop.

'To fetch water! Taunted Rajmohan. 'But with whose permission did you go out?'

'With nobody's permission.'

Rajmohan could restrain himself no longer. 'With nobody's permission!' he shouted.

'Have I not forbidden you a thousand times?'

The woman replied in the same even tone, 'You have.'

'Then, wretched girl, why did you go?'

The woman proudly replied, 'I am your wife.' Her face reddened and her voice began to be choked. 'I had gone because I thought there was nothing in it.'
(*Rajmohan's Wife*, 12)

Why should the 'independence' of a woman be seen as a veritable threat to the society, as she is also a human being and deserves to be treated as such?:

Before our eyes, our beautiful dream of a society governed by tradition will crumble into dust. The accused has plotted to dynamite the very roots of our tradition, our pride in ourselves, our culture and our religion. It is the sacred and imperative duty of your Lordship and every wise and thoughtful citizen amongst us to destroy that plot at once. No allowance must be made because the accused is a woman. Woman bears the grave responsibility of building up the high values of society. '*Na stri swatantryamarhati.*' 'Woman is not fit for independence.'...That is the rule laid down for us by tradition. (*Collected Plays in Translation*, 115)

Should there have been more such Benares (of *Silence! The Court is in Session*) and Matanginis (of *Rajmohan's Wife*) in real life from the earlier times of women's oppression? Does 'patriarchy' want to stamp the 'male' foot, or, plant the 'male' authority upon women, or, instruct how to 'damn' one's own wife; as has been pointed out by Virginia Woolf in her book *To the Lighthouse*, through the behaviour of Mr Ramsay towards Mrs Ramsay:

There wasn't the slightest possible chance that they could go to the Lighthouse tomorrow, Mr Ramsay snapped out irascibly.

How did he know? She asked. The wind often changed.

The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him. He had ridden through the valley of death, been shattered and shivered; and now she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies. He stamped his foot on the stone step. "Damn you," he said. But what she said? Simply that it might be fine tomorrow. So it might. (*To The Lighthouse*, 30-31)

And, does 'patriarchy' expect the same subservience from women that Mrs Ramsay exhibited in return of the peremptoriness of Mr Ramsay, without caring for the least recognition/appreciation, due to her, for the immensity of labour provided by her to sustain the household:

There was nobody whom she revered as she revered him.

She was quite ready to take his word for it, she said. Only then they need to cut sandwiches—that was all. They came to her, naturally, since she was a woman, all day long with this and that; one wanting this, another that; the children were growing up; she often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions. Then he said, Damn you. He said, It must rain. He said, it won't rain; and instantly a heaven of security opened before her. There was nobody she revered more. She was not good enough to tie his shoestrings, she felt. (*To The Lighthouse*, 31)

Does patriarchy only expose the hideous/ghastly aspect of male supremacy which makes a male wield unrestricted control over his wife and children, which is not humanly supportable?:

Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr Ramsay excited in his children's breasts by his mere presence; standing, as now, lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought), but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgement. What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being... (*To The Lighthouse*, 6)

Can a woman of this patriarchal society have no right to live life according to her own choice?
Why should her behaviour be under scanner all the time?:

Mrs Kashikar: What better proof? Just look at the way she behaves. I don't like to say anything since she's one of us. Should there be no limit to how freely a woman can behave with a man? An unmarried woman? No matter how well she knows him? Look how loudly she laughs! How she sings, dances, cracks jokes! And wandering alone with how many men, day in and day out! (*Collected Plays in Translation*, 100)

And, are not there numerous under-prioritized, 'severely controlled' women judging 'patriarchal carriers' like Mrs Kashikars everywhere (at least in India); who cannot become flexible towards people of their sex even today, or, view the question of 'equality' for women in a negative way (as they cannot be benefitted from such discourses anyway, or, for other reasons); thereby encouraging and perpetuating the age-old malpractice of the typical 'sas-bahu' conflict (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflict) in almost every household, and, making the equality of women a failed mission; whereas the male become 'invisible' and blurred in the whole picture? Does not it become sarcastic that in the era of feminism and fighting against patriarchy, one section of women still trying to dominate the other section; thereby making feministic movements look ridiculous? How should a male/man react to this thing? Should he remain a dumb spectator and believe in the existence of an unseen 'patriarchal' discourse too? How do we look at the instances of certain women becoming vocal about their own rights, or, talking about the freedom/empowerment of women by participating in various activities; while at some other place another woman is getting beaten up by her husband and in-laws for dowry, or, another getting raped brutally at another place? The diversity and heterogeneity of women's issues (at least in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural country like India) pose a serious challenge to develop a proper counter discourse against patriarchy, and its different modes of oppression.

However, the facts regarding 'patriarchal oppression' of woman are quite humiliating, as is noted by Virginia Woolf:

But it is useless to ask these questions, because you would never have come into existence at all. Moreover, it is equally useless to ask what might have happened if Mrs Seton and her mother and her mother before her had amassed great wealth and laid it under the foundations of college and library, because, in the first place, to earn money was impossible for them, and in the second, had it been possible, the law denied them the right to possess what money they earned. It is only for the last forty-eight years that Mrs. Seton has had a penny of her own. For all the centuries before that it would have been her husband's property—a thought which, perhaps, may have had its share in keeping Mrs. Seton and her mothers off the Stock Exchange. Every penny I earn, they may have said, will be taken from me and disposed of according to my husband's wisdom—perhaps to found a scholarship or to endow a fellowship in Balliol or Kings, so that to earn money, even if I could earn money, is not a matter that interests me very greatly. I had better leave it to my husband. (*A Room of One's Own*, 28)

Is there something like 'toxic masculinity' or, 'deformed masculinity' which portrays the aberrant/erring side of masculinity? Does the character of Nana Phadnavis in the play *Ghashiram Kotwal* smack of 'toxic masculinity,' especially the way he views women?:

Nana: Oh, can we? Can we find her? How beautifully formed! What a lovely figure! Did you see? Erect! Young! Tender! Ah! Ho ho! We've seen so many, handled so many, but none like that one. None her equal. We wonder who she is. (Tendulkar, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, 24)

Or, is Nana a pervert, a distorted person rather, just as a rapist is? :

Nana: If she is not found, no one will keep his head! Our grandeur's gone if she's not had. We tell you, if she is found, then this Nine Court Nana will conquer Hindustan! What a bosom! Buds just blossoming...We'll squeeze them like this. (Tendulkar, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, 24)

Also, how does one look at the oppression of a father over his own daughter? Does the daughter remain a father's property until she gets married? Does a woman always need a custodian, a protector all the time; a father before her marriage, a husband later on; and, a son probably at an old age, thereby making her a dependent identity all the time? But, what if the father is oppressive/repressive towards his daughter, as Ghashiram is, in the play *Ghashiram Kotwal*, who decides to sell off his own daughter to Nana Phadnavis to attain his much desired and much-coveted position to be the Kotwal of Puna; then how should one respond to such oppression?:

Ghashiram: Sir, there is a way. People will not talk, my daughter will not be humiliated openly in Poona—if you make a clear arrangement.

Nana: How?
Ghashiram: People's mouths must be closed.
Nana: All right, but how?
Ghashiram: If I give you an answer, will you accept it? No excuses?
Nana: Tell me. But let me meet her.
Ghashiram: All right, Sir, to shut people's mouths, make me the Kotwal of Poona.
Nana (jolted). What! Kotwal! But the Kotwal guards the whole city of Poona.
Ghashiram: If you don't agree, forget it. I'm not itching for it.
Nana: Oh, but it will be very hard to do.
Ghashiram: What's hard for Nana? In Poona the sun rises whenever Nana tells it to.
Nana: Suggest something else.
Ghashiram: This is the only way. Otherwise the lovely Gauri will not come to this palace again.
Nana: No! Send her. I'll make you Kotwal. When will you send her?
Ghashiram: After I have the order, signed and sealed, in my hand!
Nana: Bastard. You've got me in a narrow pass.
Ghashiram: Yes, the narrow pass of my only daughter. (Tendulkar, *Ghashiram Kotwal*, 28- 29)

So, does that mean that a woman has to necessarily raise her voice/protest against her father as well as her husband, or, against other numerous other injustice meting males, at several points of her existence. For, she has every possible right to live with her full dignity. How should we react/response to a 15year old girl, being abused by her father and grandfather in Thanjavur district of Madurai, on 5th July, 2020; which resulted in her pregnancy? Can such an instance be called a case of 'patriarchal oppression,' or, should they be termed as 'parental exploitation'? Do such fathers, or, human beings deserve to remain alive? How do we react to the innumerable instances of female infanticide, or, genocide even today?

And, certainly as a wife's hard-earned money should not be taken from her by her husband only because of the fact that he is her legal husband; in a similar way, a wife is not supposed to turn her independence/freedom into dictatorialness, or, should try to hoodwink the law/misuse the law by feigning innocence, and, acting as 'exploited,' while being the wrongdoer herself. Gender justice and gender equality should not be partial, one-sided. In that case, the real aim of gender equality would not be achieved. If independence turns into dictatorialness, and, if in turn, the males/men now have to bear the brunt of oppression, and exploitation (by the 'other sex'), then the scale of equality again gets shifted to one side, leaving everything in doldrums. As has been pointed out by Aparna Sen while having a conversation with the BFI YouTube channel about her film *The Rapist*, that "women and men are not essentially different, and, they are

human beings, and, when women have a lot of power, they too exert that power in ways that are not right." So, is the battle between sexes all about power? Are men and women eternal preys to that unending game of power from time immemorial? Why cannot there be a law to instruct the society that male and female, or, husband and wife (after marriage) should treat each other as equals, and not competitors, or, controllers of each other? Why cannot the families of both a boy and a girl provide this much necessary education? Why are there many brides' families today wanting to make a profitable pact/business out of the sacredness of wedlock, precisely by hoodwinking/misusing/manipulating the law (which is 'biased' towards the female generally); thereby forcing the bridegroom and his family members to commit suicide even? Would the reversal of the situation (from daughter-in-laws getting exploited in their father-in-law's house to the son-in-law's getting exploited by their wives and father-in-laws or mother-in-laws) bring justice and equality to the social structure?

Are there several 'masculine' threats to the 'physical' existence of a 'single woman' because she is single, and, not accompanied by a male/husband figure? Of course there are several instances of rape happening in several parts of India, and, the monstrosity of such an instance like the 'Nirbhaya Case' demands a thorough engagement with the existing patriarchal/male/masculine discourses in practice, but then these instances of bestiality shows an ill-formed/deformed masculinity which eludes all the practices of humanity. An atrocious act like rape can only be performed through possessing an essentially distorted mind, and, not a sane mind, and, it is a vulgar exhibition of one's physical power which is punishable under all circumstances. Do the item numbers of Bollywood (like 'Sheila Ki Jawani,' or, 'Munni Badnaam Hui,' or, 'Chikni Chameli,' 'Favicol Se'; performed by famous actresses) help to foster a certain objectification, commoditisation of women, thereby aiding the patriarchal discourses, while simultaneously, providing visual pleasure to the several rape perpetrators? Are lyrics like 'mein tandoori murgi hun yaar, gatra le saiyaan alcohol se' (Dabangg 2), or, 'hain tujhme poori bottle ka nasha' (Dabangg), or, 'todke tijoriyoko lut le jara' (Agnepath) smack of an essentially male market driven consumerist capitalistic ideology, where the woman turn into mere commodities? But then are they not primarily products of commercial sectors (entertainment industry) who aim for the saleability in public, and, profit making? Can we apply that ideology everywhere across India, or, should we?

Also now we have the concept of male models, and male item numbers, with a lot of emphasis given to the portrayal/depiction of male bodies. So, in the age of rapid consumerism and commodity-fetishisation, everyone/everything is quickly turning into an object to be consumed, to be sold; male-female alike. So, at the end, I would like to say that while there is a definite existence of patriarchal discourses in/around us, and, we are following them too, through our language, words, and psyche; whether consciously, or unconsciously; but somewhere we are still undecided about its original roots, and, about how far those roots are spread, and also, the proper method of countering it, both in theory and practice. As a matter of fact, patriarchy or patriarchal discourse is more complex, multi-layered, and intricate than it seems prima facie. It does not have a homogenous shape, and, so it cannot be countered by building up a homogenous counter ideology. But, certainly we have to wage a battle, not with patriarchy per se, but with any form of hierarchy, which, in the name of meting out order and justice in society, ends up dishing out several forms of inequalities.

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