

THE OMNIPRESENT SYSTEM OF PATRIARCHY AND SEXISM

***Dr. M.S. Rathore **ku. Deepti kheroniya**

“There is a good principle, which has created order, light and man; and a bad principle which has created chaos, darkness and woman.”¹

These above lines clearly explain that the system of patriarchy is presented everywhere. Even in written properties man always shows his superiority over woman. Almost all the religions of the world give sanction to female subjugation by the male members of the society, thereby perpetuating the myth of female servitude. It is said that marriages are made in Heaven. So definitely it should be an equal deal but the conditions of married women is not concealed to anyone. The Manu Smriti which has been widely accepted in India as text laying down the rules of the social behaviour, declares-“Day and night women must be kept in subordination to the males of the family; in childhood to her father, in youth to her husband, in old age to her sons.....Even though the husband be destitute of virtue and seeks pleasures elsewhere, he must be worshipped as God.”²

The term patriarch means the male head of the family who rules over the family members and sexism is the prejudice or discrimination against people, especially women, because of their sex. We can't deny the existence of these terms not only in India but in all over the world. Men can be sympathetic to women but they can't or they are not capable to give equal rights to women actually. Though always it is said that men and women are equal. Still the male ego refuses to accept a secondary position in the society.

The terms 'feminine' and 'masculine' represent social constructs-patterns of sexuality and behaviour imposed by culture and social norms. In this usage feminine represents 'nurture' and female 'nature'. Femininity, thus is a social construct. As Simone de Beauvoir says: “One isn't born a woman but rather becomes a woman: it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature.....which is described as feminine.”³

To make women believe that there is such a thing as essence of femaleness called femininity serves the interests of patriarchy. Conscious of the evils origi-

nating from patriarchy modern women would not endorse the wisdom of the Tennysonian demarcation between man and woman in *The Princess*,^v

“Man for the field and woman for the hearth;
Man for the sword and for the needle she;
Man to command and woman to obey.

All else confusion.”⁴

One's gender is determined by the gender rules assigned to males and females in the society. One's sex identity is what one feels about one's body and by sexual orientation is meant individual desire and attraction.

The portrayal of man-woman in media and literature generally depicts the hero as a patriarch. While the hero is shown as sexually active, the heroine's role is passive. This sharply distinguished binary opposition between masculine and feminine proves to be a limited approach as it excludes anything that falls outside this rigid categorization.

A liberated man-woman relationship demands that both are self actualized individuals. The passivity is one of the conditions of being feminine. As Simone de Beauvoir remarks, “There is a unanimous agreement that getting a husband –or in some cases a ‘protector’- is for her (woman) the most important of undertakings.....she will free herself from the parental home, from her mother's hold, she will open up her future not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile, into the hands of new master....”⁵

The difference between male and female starts from the biological differences and the difference was given various social political and economic meanings in different societies and civilizations. Women are seen “closer to nature” whereas men are seen “closer to culture” more suited for public rules and political associations. Women have often been relegated to a secondary status in society often confined to roles in the home rather than able to acceded to powerful public position. Man and woman both are equal but still we have so many social evils which present women as the inferior and to man as the supe-

*Prof. S.M.S. (P.G.) College, Shivpuri(M.P.)

**Guest Lecturer in English, Govt. Madhav College Chanderi, Ashoknagar(M.P.)

rior. But the thing is that women are also the human beings, they also have the same rights which man has. As Dorothy Parker has written “I can not be just to books which treat of woman as woman.....My idea is that all of us men as well as women should be regarded as human beings.”⁶

Women are taught to protect their virginity and men are taught to lose it as soon as possible. It results in women being monogamous and men being polygamous. That is probably why women have learnt to cohabit with other women who share their husband’s bed. Perhaps that is why they didn’t protest at least in a masculine way to such an unequivocal injustice.

Throughout the history, women have been described as the tender, sensitive, vulnerable, delicate sex, in need of support and protection. There is no need to say that women can not express their aggression physically particularly when the ‘opponent’ is a male that is a physically stronger species. Surely all this is true from one angle, but it does not mean that she is devoid of any form of aggression.

Men are like rivers: the water is the same in each and alike in all; but every river is narrow here, is more rapid there, here slower, there broader, now clear, now cold, now dull, now warm. It is same with women. Every man carries in himself the germs of every human quality and sometimes one manifests itself, sometimes another and the men often becomes unlike himself, while still remaining the same man.

It is widely believed that while one’s sex is determined by anatomy the prevailing concept of gender- of the traits that constitute what is masculine and what is feminine- are largely cultural constructs that were generated by omnipresent patriarchal biases of all civilization. Patriarchy, we can say that is, “a system of social organization that valorizes the masculine gender over the feminine gender. Gender is not the issue, sexual difference is.” And, undoubtedly, our society is patriarchal where man wants to rule over woman by hook or by crook though he has given freedom to woman but it is only for showing off. In the words of Simone de Beauvoir, we may conclude that “.....having only an empty liberty in a world of which man remained in fact the sole master: she was free- but for nothing.”⁷

REFERENCES :

1. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), Trans & Ed. H.M.Parshley(London,Vintage,1997) p.112.
2. Quoted in Hunter College Women’s Studies Collective: *Women’s Realities, Women’s Choices: Introduction to Women’s studies*(New Delhi:Oxford University Press 1983.)p. 68
3. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*(1949),Trans & Ed. H.M. Parshley(London, Vintage,1997)p. 445
4. Alfred Tennyson, *The Princess*(1847).*The Works of Lord Alfred Tennyson,II* (London:Macmillan & co.,1984)p.78
5. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949),Trans & Ed. H.M.Parshley(London,Vintage,1997)p.352
6. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949),Trans & Ed. H.M.Parshley(London,Vintage,1997)p.14
7. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949),Trans & Ed. H.M.Parshley(London,Vintage,1997)p.128