**PAINTING PATRIARCHY ON HER**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The barbarous dragon meets its demise at the hands of mighty Prince Philip, who rushes over to where Princess Aurora lies asleep. He kisses her, for only *true love’s kiss* could save the sleeping beauty and lo and behold, Aurora and the entire kingdom finally awaken from their charmed slumber to live happily ever after. What is not so classy about the ever-popular Disney movie is the patriarchal gender roles inflicted on both men and women. We live in a world where patriarchal beliefs impact our daily behaviours, emotions, and attitudes to sustain gender, racial, and heterosexual privileges. For ages, patriarchy has encouraged women's dependency on males to the point of infantilization, with women firmly internalising sexist behaviours as a direct result of male domination and societal conditioning. By internalising such patriarchal ideals and norms in their sociocultural positions, it affects how they manage their identities. Therefore, through this paper I seek to interpret women subordination using empirical evidences that shed light on the lived experiences of victimization and how patriarchy trickles into the everyday lives of women in personal and public spaces. A sociocultural analysis as to how internalization of patriarchy transpires through the micro and macrolevel of socialization, particularly the involvement of family and socializing institutions in the deconstruction of gender stereotypes will also be undertaken, followed by a brief assessment on slut shaming- a social stigma labelled to women who are considered to have unconventional sexual behaviours to reclaim the word 'slut' as a source of power and agency for girls and women (Jessalynn, 2015). The paper will also discuss arguments and counter arguments indicative of patriarchal myths that have infiltrated women's identities in which women are both victims and perpetrators of chauvinism. By examining the effects of patriarchal preconceptions and how it conditions the way women perceives her own self-importance, the paper aspires to present a historical perspective of the multi-faceted obstacles to women empowerment. It concludes with the need for sustained efforts to increase the involvement of both men and women in removing socio-cultural barriers, stereotypical attitudes, and violence against women for creating a gender-balanced society.

*Keywords: Patriarchy, Gender, Slut Shaming, Philosophy, Women, Male supremacy*

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

1. **Patriarchy and social institutions**

According to Walby (1990), patriarchy is a social system within which the role of the male as the primary authority figure is central to societal well-being- characterized by males authority over women, children, and property. **Starting from the** micro-level institution of a family, mothers and grandmothers act as patriarchal agents who propagate sexist ideologies by way of gender segregation. We often see how the birth of a boy is celebrated and glorified as a blessing while that of a girl is treated as *liability*. As children, daughters are trained to be like Savitri and Sita, the ideal wife who are submissive and sacrificing homemakers whereas boys are taught to be self-reliant and powerful decision makers. Sons are given preferential treatment based on the flawed logic that daughters being married off shall not continue the family legacy. Growing up, the tale of shame becomes a girl’s identity. They are taught to be ashamed of a stained skirt, to silence menstruation cramps as a shameful pain. Life after marriage is no exception. Once the bride enters a new household, her in-laws immediately reduce her identity to that of 3 ‘Cs’ – *cleaning, catering and caring*. Failing to do so, she is labelled as over-ambitious, asked to take a break, or quit her professional life after having a baby. Thus, when women openly criticize and chastise other woman, they perpetuate stereotypes within households in cyclic fashion, often devaluing themselves through others by what is known as horizontal hostility. **Horizontal hostility** occurs when members of a targeted group believe, act on, or enforce the dominant system of discrimination and oppression (Diane 2014). At the macro-level of the society, the dominance of patriarchal norms which formulates all the regulations of society subsequently assigns male superiority as the natural order of things. Society easily attacks women for minor transgressions and pardon men for major ones as can be highlighted through the following media representations:

1. ***Rape culture****-* Rape culture is defined as an atmosphere in which rape is common and sexual violence is accepted and justified in the media and popular culture. Women are still held accountable for sexual abuse because sanskari society believes they "beg for it" by wearing improperly, drinking, or hanging out late. Women are urged to adjust their behaviour to prevent being assaulted, thus every woman who is raped is deemed the culprit of her own crime. As a result, by trivialising sexual assault ("Boys will be boys!"), society permits the abuser to commit interpersonal abuse or sexual assault while evading accountability.
2. ***Virginity-***Religious beliefs imposes on *yo*ung girls and women the expectations of virginity until marriage. Honor-based sexism may lead to violence or punishment- extreme reactions towards perceived breaches of family or religious honour surrounding women's attitudes or relationships A woman is unconditionally obliged to be a virgin until after marriage, discouraged to date or make independent choices and is urged to have perfect ignorance about everything to do with sex. Such strict control over women's behaviour is justified based on the underlying belief that modesty is synonymous with family honour or religious piety. Thus, women who appear to fail the "virginity tests" are rejected for marriage and labelled as "damaged goods" by society.
3. ***Marital sexual violence*–** Marital rape is a social offence that breaches a married woman's fundamental right to dignity. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, on the other hand, states that "a wife is duty-bound to have intercourse with her husband." This means that having sex whenever, whenever, and in whatever form is an implied provision of the marital contract, and the woman cannot violate such stipulations. When a woman marries a man, there is an implicit permission to have sexual intercourse, but the expression of love via physical intimacy is not the same as forced sex, which regrettably goes unpunished. Allowing the husband's emotional and physical dominance over woman perpetuates unequal power dynamics, which in turn preserves patriarchal societal structures.
4. **Patriarchal myths and male dominance**

Traditionalist philosophies of male dominance premise female inferiority on biological reasons, claiming that men as normative hunters control the major food supply in society. To rephrase it another way, these theories contend that patriarchy benefits women because it promotes males with higher physical strength to defend women. Such a prevailing worldview bestows higher regard for women accepting their peripheral status within the hierarchy as compared to being a free woman, which translates to benign sexism. “It is a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive in feeling (for the perceiver)” (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 491). As such, some women are content sticking to gender standards because it is the foundation of their value systems. However, scholarly work by Peter Farb (1978), Sally Slocum (1975), and Michelle Z. Rosaldo (1980) discredits traditionalist theories by identifying that in such a society, most of the group's nourishment came from hunting small animals and gathering local food, both of which were activities performed by women and children. Thus, patriarchal status quo cannot be justified using biological connotations but rather using psychodynamics. From a psychological standpoint, self-stereotyping is ascribedas the reason why women accept their peripheral status which reinforces male dominance (Brown, Turner 1981). It is the inclination to interpret stereotyped attributes as characteristics of one's ingroup or self. The patriarchal bargain is a deduction in contemporary feminist thought (Kandiyotti 1988). It alludes to a woman's decision to comply with patriarchy's demands to acquire a better degree of security and autonomy within the confines of their sex-based oppression. The benefit the author states is “power within the household and their anticipation of inheriting the authority of senior women such that the deprivation and hardship she experienced as a young bride is eventually superseded by the authority she will have over her own subservient daughters-in-law. This encourages a thorough internalisation of patriarchy by the women themselves.” Societal pre-conditioning and media discourse have also played its fair role in creating implicit biases regarding masculinity and femininity since “ideas of leadership, such as ambition and directness, are considered masculine. But those same qualities in women are often perceived in a totally different light” *(Decker, 2012)*. Conformity to such patriarchal rhetoric is not a decision made by a woman, but rather a subconscious compulsion that originates behind the veil of choice because of cultural preconditioning.

1. **Patriarchy and internalized sexism**

“Internalization is the process in which social norms and values established by the society are adopted as one’s own” (Ryan & Connell, 1989, p. 752). As we know, patriarchal structures places men in positions of power to reinforce the idea that women should adhere to specific roles and behaviours. This encompasses the regulation of women's sexuality and the imposition of standards for permissible or proper conduct. Slut shaming functions within this conceptual framework by monitoring and evaluating women whose sexual behaviour or expression deviates from established societal norms. When women stray from societal expectations in lieu of sexual activity, attire, or explicit sexual expression, they frequently encounter censure, mockery, or stigma. When women themselves engage in slutshaming, they weaken female solidarity by reinforcing patriarchal control over women's bodies and sexual expression. This hypocrisy becomes particularly evident when male sexual prowess is celebrated while simultaneously condemning female sexual liberation. Mothers are frequently observed telling their daughters to "adapt" and be "homely" in order to safeguard the continuity of their marriages, rather than pushing them to be ambitious and independent.These mothers may have experienced historical oppression, and when they themselves act as patriarchal agents, they perpetuate the same forms of oppression they once experienced, hoping to find some solace in their own trauma or approval from their male counterparts. Such is the system of patriarchy that rewards conformity to traditional gender rules. Historically, a woman's intrinsic value is derived by her biological ability to procreate rather than her intellectual capabilities or career pursuits. As a result, her sexuality—more especially, her chastity and her ability to procreate define who she is and her ultimate purpose. Feminist historian Gerda Lerner believes that male control over women's sexuality and reproductive functions is a fundamental cause and result of patriarchy. This is especially true in a society where power is passed down on grounds of biological inequalities, making control of women's sexual behaviour and objectification a necessary component of power.

(Source:<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8296320/>)

**CONCLUSION**

The system of patriarchy is an age-old sociological construct, yet the ideology thrives because patriarchal values are deeply intertwined with religious or traditional upbringing beliefs, making it challenging to challenge or change these norms without challenging the entire cultural or religious framework. Moreover, women continue to serve as gatekeepers of patriarchy, by correcting and teaching other women to behave like an ideal woman. Thus, the negative effects of culture, religiosity, and familial beliefs in the socio-economic and legal structures are the primary causes of women's subjugation, as this study has underlined. To dismantle such power structures involves embracing collective action and fostering solidarity by acknowledging the interconnectedness of all genders. We must educate communities that women are perfectly entitled to a life without being classified by her duties or relationships she maintains irrespective of existing social inequalities. This includes promoting comprehensive sex education that emphasizes consent, bodily autonomy, and respect. We need to empower young girls to be unconditionally unafraid of anyone or any circumstance as she is no longer an object to be obtained, controlled, nor used. The freedom to choose, to work, to dress, to speak out and to rebel must no longer remain something they need to be afraid of. Such deliberate efforts to promote inclusive perspectives can empower societies to progress towards an equitable world where everyone can contribute, regardless of their gender. Currently, organizations are utilising gender-accommodating or gender-transformative tactics to alter men's and women's attitudes towards gender parity, according to an assessment by the Public Health Foundation of India and ICRW in 2014. As we continue to prioritize and invest in these efforts, we move closer to realizing a world where patriarchy truly becomes a thing of the past. I conclude this paper with the famous quote of Malala Yousafzai (2007) which beautifully encapsulates the infinite potential of women to achieve transformative, resilient, and inclusive growth beyond the primitive shackles of society- “*There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a third power stronger than both, that of women.”*

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