

Patriarchy's Impact on Women's Identity in Indian Society

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ABSTRACT

Women are often underrepresented by men around the world. Women have experienced violence, unfairness, humiliation, exploitation, oppression, and being treated like second-class citizens by men in addition to other forms of oppression. An evaluation of Indian women today requires a brief review of the cultural origins of Indian women throughout history. The Indian woman is a member of a culture with deeply ingrained traditions.

She has been shaped by a rather stable social system that has developed for more than 1,000 years if she has an opinion or behaves in a particular way. As a result, a complete grasp of the nation is necessary to define cultural practises and depictions of women as well as comprehend the contemporary status of Indian women. Due to the patriarchal structure of Indian society and women's identity, this study aims to explore both factors. Modern Indian women have made enormous strides in every aspect of life yet still have to contend with ingrained patriarchal attitudes.

KEYWORDS: Identity, Patriarchal, Indian Women, social system, and cultural practises

INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy is the biggest barrier to the advancement and development of women. Regardless matter the degree of dominance, the core components are still male domination and power. It's possible that the control will change in nature. Understanding and exposing the methods used to control and subjugate women are vital.

The phrase "rule of the father" is referred to as patriarchy in families where men predominate. The patriarchy is a social and philosophical framework that elevates men above women.

A framework of social frameworks and behaviours in which men rule over, subjugate, and exploit women is described as "theorising patriarchy" by Sylvia Walby. Men dominate women's sexuality, productivity, and reproduction under the hierarchical and unbalanced power structures that underpin patriarchy. It keeps unequal power relations between men and women by enforcing masculine and feminine character norms in society.

Gender relations are dynamic and complex, and patriarchy has changed over time. Women are kept under control and submissive so that systematic progress toward their growth can be made. Women's dominance and servitude take different forms in different civilizations due to differences in class,

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caste, religion, region, traditions, and sociocultural conventions.

The patriarchy within a caste or class varies as well in accordance with cultural and theological variations. Women are subordinated differently in developed countries than they have been in wealthy ones. Although the degree of women's subjugation varies, all patriarchies, regardless of class, caste, nationality, religion, or region, share basic traits, such as regulating women's sexuality and reproductive capacity.

Over time, this control has been institutionalised and given legal justification by a variety of ideologies, social norms, and institutions, including family, faith, caste, education, media, law, state, and society.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study's goal is to examine patriarchy and identity issues in relation to Indian women. It tries to comprehend the social structures and cultural practises that have molded Indian women's identities across time and investigate the condition of Indian women now in the face of patriarchal norms. The goal of the study is to examine how patriarchy manifests itself in society and how it affects women's life through acts of violence, discrimination, subjugation, and uneven power relations. It also intends to draw attention to the advancements made by contemporary Indian women while highlighting the ongoing difficulties they confront as a result of deeply established patriarchal beliefs. By delving into these issues, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the experiences and realities of Indian women and advocate for gender equality and empowerment in Indian society.

THE INDIAN SOCIETY IS PATRIARCHAL BY NATURE

In the 17th century, the word "patriarchy," which means "father's reign," was initially used to describe a certain kind of "male-dominated household," such as the patriarch's enormous home. Women, younger men, kids, slaves, and domestic servants were all under the control of this powerful guy. Today, it is most frequently used "to refer to male dominance, to the power relationships by which men supremacy women, and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a variety of ways."

The term "patriarchy" refers to male authority in both public and private settings. Feminists frequently use the term "patriarchy" to describe the relationship between males and women in positions of authority.

Arguments about socialism and patriarchy in India have been rendered meaningless by a significant shift in mindset. The relationship between capitalism and patriarchy has also been studied and debated. Patriarchy, which maintains that men are inherently superior to women, vigorously upholds women's need for service and submission to men in all spheres of life.

Men, therefore, control all authority and rights in the family, neighbourhood, and state. Women have long been denied opportunities and legal rights as an outcome of patriarchy. These patriarchal ideals limit women's mobility and go against their ownership and control of their own bodies.

The term "subordination" alludes to a woman's lessened compared to men; consequently, the term

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"subordination" alludes to a situation in which men hold the upper hand. Feelings of powerlessness, discrimination, low self-esteem, and vacillation all contribute to women's subordination. Finally, women's subordination is a situation in which men hold the upper hand.

Discussions of contemporary state developments and roles frequently erupted into arguments regarding capitalism and women's subordination. This led to theories about patriarchy and a prospective rival. This statement is backed up by a wide range of studies.

The ideology that directs public policy concerning women is clearly the cause of women's invisibility and their place in the social, political, and economic institutions. Women, therefore, play a very small role in discussions about development.

WOMEN IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Society's basic building block is the female. She creates a household, which then creates a family, which creates a community, which creates a nation. If and until women are actively involved in development programmes, a nation cannot prosper. As more women become aware of the injustices and biases they experience, the role of women in India is becoming an increasingly contentious issue.

In spite of the fact that males have repeatedly overlooked women's potential in stable times, women are an underutilised "resource" in the fight against poverty and violence around the world.

Women were revered in ancient India, and the arrival of a girl was believed to portend the arrival of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity. Women were known as "janani," which means "progenitor," and "ardhanigini," which means "half of the body." Women are also thought to be forms of the goddess Durga. Because to a male-dominated, patriarchal social structure, the upholding of long-held ideas, and other factors, women previously faced severe difficulties. Women were only expected to take up traditional roles like childrearing and childbirth.

Women still confront difficulties today despite a minor improvement in their status. They must strike a balance between their commitments at home and at work. They managed to collaborate without the help of their husbands. It is shameful when women are subjected to torture by their family members without receiving assistance. It is more common to experience sexual harassment at home and at work from family members, relatives, neighbors, acquaintances, bosses, and other people.

They must put up with a lot in their daily lives in order to retain both their careers and their family ties. The role of women is one of the first things that recall our minds when we discuss social and economic modernization. In a society that does not recognise the contributions of women, the workforce is underutilised by 50%. One could anticipate that more gender parity will affect growth causally. In India, we frequently take women's positions for granted. In India, it's typical to see women in executive roles.

According to Andre Beteille, "the role of women in India now is better than even Japan, a country that is otherwise quite evolved." India is superior to most other nations because there is no glass ceiling for the daughters of the ruling class.

CHANGING WOMEN'S STATUS IN INDIA

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To analyse Indian women now, a brief historical review of their cultural roots is necessary. The Indian woman comes from a culture with deep-seated traditions. Analysing their cultural traditions and representations can help us understand the role of Indian women in modern society. In Indian society, women now hold positions of substantial subservience as opposed to the significant authority they once held (Jain 1975). Women's responsibilities, status, and positions have also changed considerably.

The history of women in India is distinctive. It's not always simple to reconstruct this history, though, as the dominating tribes' myths are sometimes the best preserved. Between 200 B.C. and 200 AD, the legislator Manu made important changes to how Indian women were treated. His societal norms and punishments have permanently altered the status of Indian women.

He defended his laws on the grounds that controlling women's sexuality was necessary because women were prone to being disloyal to their spouses due to their passion for men, their tempers, and their inherent heartlessness (quoted in Buhler 1964, 327-30).

Manu's laws were extremely strict when it came to women. Divorce was unthinkable, marriage could never be ended, and widows were never allowed to remarry. Women from higher castes were confined at home and prohibited from working outside the home. Young women were coerced into marriage, and widows were obliged to commit sati, or self-immolation, on the funeral pyre of their husbands.

Even while it is obvious that Hinduism has different views on women's responsibilities, other faiths, such as Buddhism and Islam, have had a considerable influence on Indian culture and civilisation. While Buddhism was growing in India at the time, women were still viewed as inferior to men but were granted a respectable place in society. They might travel, pursue their education, and even choose to remain single at will.

The situation worsened in the eleventh century with the arrival of the Muslim invasion. Slaves were sold as slaves, forced into marriage, and women were kidnapped. These conditions severely limited the freedom of Hindu women and prevented them from receiving an education. As females started to be seen as a financial burden to their parents, other repercussions included polygamy and infanticide among girls.

Female infanticide was widespread during the Mughal Empire because both Hindu and Muslim households frowned upon the birth of female children. The polygamy system did cause some problems, especially in homes where widows had children by prior wives, but Muslims still supported early marriage and dowry. Hindus were monogamous, with the exception of the higher class.

During this time, two Mughal emperors, Humayun and his son Akbar, tried but failed to outlaw the practise of sati. The Mughal invasion in the eighteenth century, as well as the political unrest that followed, worsened the decline in women's position, and by the time the British era began, the status of Indian women had reached its lowest point in history.

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Child marriage was the standard for all honorable Hindus, and it had even crept into some Muslim communities. Even the Sikhs engaged in considerable sati, despite being forbidden by their Gurus. Purdah (veiling) was strictly imposed on Muslim women and a few Hindu women.

Women's literacy was considered a threat, and polygamy was widespread. This was the circumstance at the time the British assumed control of the nation. The succeeding 200-year British occupation of India had a major effect on Indian society in general and women in particular.

Indian women's identities suffered significant changes after independence. Cultural and structural reforms have significantly reduced the exploitation of women, and they now have equal opportunities in many fields. The ladies have left their houses, which had served as a safe haven for them, and are now well-prepared for the struggle of life with all of their skills at their disposal. Indian women have now won in every conceivable field.

Additionally, female activists came together to voice their opposition to issues including female infanticide, literacy, gender inequity, women's health, and safety. Women now have significantly different duties and can make excellent contributions to society. They have established strongholds in virtually every area of society, politics, and the economy. For military or other forms of defense service, women are no longer viewed as weak or unsuitable.

DISTINCTIVE ROLES OF MODERN WOMEN

Modern women are capable and resourceful to the point where they could conceivably be referred to be superwomen, managing numerous chores all on their own. Women today are fiercely ambitious and show their value not only at home but also at work or in their chosen careers. In many facets of Indian society, women are dismantling obstacles.

University and college enrollment is at an all-time high. They are pursuing careers in engineering, medicine, teaching, and politics, among many other fields. Despite advancements, it is nevertheless concerning that women are still expected to prioritise their homes over everything else in addition to being high achievers and good moms or wives.

In every nation, women are viewed as providing the majority of care for young children and the elderly. International studies have shown that as a society's economic and political structure changes, women assume a leadership role in helping the family adjust to new challenges and realities. They are likely to be the main source of outside aid and are crucial in promoting (or impeding) improvements in people's lives.

Unquestionably, women have contributed to the transformation of illiterate societies into literate ones. Primary education is crucial for a nation's growth and the accomplishment of sustainability objectives.

Research indicates that education increases agricultural output, elevates the status of women and girls, slows population growth, protects the environment better, and increases living standards significantly. The employment of women in both urban and rural areas has greatly increased in recent years.

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CONCLUSION

The explanation above shows that women in our country frequently experience acquiescence (such as yielding to male authority), misuse (such as unequal pay and low earnings), and dominance (such as violence). Women are subject to patriarchal practises such as son preference, dowry, harassment of women (such as rape and wife-beating), unequal wages, unfair personal laws, religious persecution of women, and inaccurate media representations of these practises.

According to another claim, the interrelated forces of religion, tradition, and solitude preserve patriarchal tendencies not only in the home system of women but also in every other aspect of their lives. The main factors that lead to women's subjugation in the socioeconomic sphere are patriarchy, seclusion (purdah), and paternalistic views.

Contrarily, patriarchy is the main cause of these variables, whilst other factors are a result of patriarchy. Because patriarchal authority and influence—rather than religion or tradition—represent the gravest problem with submission.

Modern women are starting to take care of their economic, social, emotional, cultural, and religious needs. She is now being used in India as a tool for societal change.

Even though women currently have more freedom compared to what they did in the past, prejudice still persists in society, thus this is not entirely true. Even though modern Indian women enjoy great status, the overall image of women's place in India is undesirable. Not least, we must keep in mind that a country cannot advance without the active involvement of its mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters.

Because of this, every guy should think about adopting a radically new perspective on women and welcoming them as equal contributors to the advancement of the nation.

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