

Women and Patriarchy

Published on: June 24th, 2020

It is often said that if housewives in India started to get paid for their household work according to the market wage rate then India will get rich pretty soon. Women oppression and prejudice against them is mostly due to patriarchal structure. Patriarchy is a system where the male figure holds the power and women are generally excluded and sometimes oppressed as a result of that system. Sylvia Walby defines patriarchy 'as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.' Women mostly talk of this structure and the continuous exploitation that it has done to them.

The talks of patriarchy started with Tarabhai Shinde's work *Stree Purush Tulana*. It was published in the 19th Century. Her work was of 52 pages in Marathi. She uses logic and practical approach to prove her point. She gives the example of a prison. It is usually filled with men. For every two or three hundred men in prison, there are not even a hundred women. The reason being very practical again – women were not allowed to step out of their houses and were forced to remain in its four walls for the rest of their lives.

However, with changing times, the position of women has also changed, but the patriarchal structure has not. Even today, the women are told to stop working after reaching a certain age, because according to the very same patriarchal structure, they should have kids and settle down in life. Women's participation in diverse fields like sports, corporate world and most importantly politics is one of the most talked about issue, even at the global level. Women's suffrage is the right of women by law to vote in elections, national and local alike. From ancient times, women were excluded from right to vote. Republican Rome was no different in this regard. In 1832, women were continued to be denied all forms of voting rights. In 19th Century, this issue finally started to come up and became an issue. The struggle was immense in the United Kingdom and the United States. However, the first country to give voting right to women was New Zealand in 1893 followed by its neighbour, Australia in 1902. With this, came a new era where women were to give the fair share of rights they deserved.

The Companies Act, 2013 made it compulsory that a particular kind of company or companies need to have at least one woman director on the board. However, the result of this has not been what was expected, the most important reason being there are not much women in the industry who can cater to the needs of the management perfectly. Further, the women who join industry in their late 20s or 30s have to leave it because of family problems. This might be all because of the psychological upbringings a girl is exposed to since her birth. They are always told that no matter how successful they become in their professional life, at the end of the day, they have to look properly after their household, take care of the needs of her husband and help her children in their studies. The constant mocking a girl has to bear as to what her in-laws will think if she

cannot look after her household properly is another loop-hole in their upbringing. India has always been male-centric in this sense.

Talking of women representation in politics, in both the houses of Parliament, is also an issue that should be paid heed to. The Indian government has reserved seats in local government. But the results say otherwise. India ranks 149th in 2019 out of 193 in a list of elected women representatives in the Parliament. The issue of less women representation in both the houses of parliament and also in state and local levels of governance is purely based on the patriarchal society and mindset.

Another problem faced by women is in continuing their career after a break. Either their employers are reluctant or they are unable to maintain a work life balance. So, the advent of a woman in her workplace after a break from her career is not possible. On top of that is the dual responsibility of her family, as she is supposed to look after them properly as well. However, women still find it difficult to raise issues against unequal pay or for maternity leave. Thus, feminists have come up with the term public patriarchy which means oppressive factors are still in existence in small forms like these. Women are separated from power and property and are always advised to stay below their husbands or fathers in such terms. Overall, the trend on women's participation has an ascending course. Although, rigid and determined steps need to be taken to create such awareness to actualise effectively, that will leave behind a concrete foundation for women. The general public have to be made aware as to why a healthy representation and diversity is essential. Even the mainstream media has to be made responsible for making the people educated. Cinema, news channel comes in the picture. Since, people love to watch them a lot; they can be used to enlighten and influence the perception and mindset of the public towards this issue. Equal representation might not be the only issue to be focused on gender discourse but it is indeed an essential issue both socially and economically.

Most of the people in our country tend to overlook this matter, as if it is a petty and unimportant one. We first have to make sure that every citizen is aware of the condition women are facing now that they are held back by the duties towards their family. It is not new that women are always taught that no matter how successful they become in their life, they will always have the dual responsibility, one towards their work and the second and the most important towards their family. They are stuck to this domiciliary work responsibility for the rest of their lives. So, when a woman gets married, she feels the pressure from both sides. After a while, she might take a maternity leave or any such break from her professional career. When she thinks of making a comeback in the work place, she feels family pressure as well as work pressure. Finally, she is unable to make a proper work-life balance and succumbs to cater the needs of her family. The mere thought that women should have a dual role should always be taken away from the minds of people.

Many leaders have taken up this issue very closely and are working on it. In the human resource development, there is a whole chapter dedicated to Diversity and Inclusion. It states clearly why the involvement of women in the workplace is important. It makes the environment more friendly and innovative. People from different walks of life stay together and contribute to the organisation as a whole. This is the reason why most

business schools want to increase their share of women participation. This in turn benefits the various companies that hire directly from this business schools. Even the Human Resources heads of various companies consider Diversity and Inclusion as an integral part of their recruitment process.



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