

Role of Patriarchy: With reference to English Victorian, Hindu Brahmin and Pashtun societies

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Abstract:

In the present study the role of Patriarchy with especial reference to English Victorian society depicted in Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hindu Brahmin society portrayed in Bapsi Sidhwa's *Water* and Pashtun Society, has been analyzed. In this research paper the patterns of patriarchy, in the three societies; have been examined by applying qualitative textual analysis. Critics are of the view that the role of patriarchal characters in both novels and Pashtun society has been negative and dominant and religion has not been interpreted correctly by them. Patriarchy is one of the main issues of Radical feminism and this research paper has also been carried out with the viewpoint of radical feminist theory.

Key words: Patriarchy, religion, women subjugation, society.

Introduction:

This paper is aimed at the investigation of examples of women subjugation through patriarchy in Victorian society depicted by Thomas Hardy in the novel '*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*', in the Hindu Brahmin society before partition, portrayed by Bapsi Sidhwa in the novel '*Water*' and in Pashtun society. This aspect of patriarchy is intended to be explored in the three societies through qualitative textual analysis. Textual analysis is a close reading of the text as Mackee (2003) has also declared that textual analysis is beneficial and helpful in understanding of literary texts. The patriarchal aspects in the three societies have been examined with Radical Feminist perspective. Kate Millette, in her book "*Sexual Politics*" (1970), has explained that patriarchy is a prime hurdle in the way of women development. The worst characteristic of patriarchy is to subdue women with religion and the same has been stated by Klingorova and Havlicek (2015) '*Admitting the complexity of the issues, some religious norms and traditions can contribute to the formation of gender inequalities and to subordinate the role of women in society.*' (p. 1)

Discussion:

The role of patriarchy has been very crucial and important ever since the history of civilization has taken birth in the world. Religion provides a certain set of principles, according to which the members of societies live their lives, but most of the time the religious people interpret religion for suppression of women and welfare of male members of the society. Consequently this rigidity of religion along with the set social laws distorts the balance in a society and religion becomes patriarchal. In the present study the impacts of patriarchy with the especial reference of religion have been found out in the Victorian society, presented in the novel "*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*", the Hindu Brahmin society, presented in the novel "*Water*" and the Pashtun society.

Patriarchy in English Victorian society.

There was a great influence of Evangelicalism on Victorian age, as it is asserted by Talif and Sivandipour (2014) that because of the pressure of Evangelical Church of England, family life and higher moral values were given importance, and the Evangelicals insisted that men and women were not equal; according to this ideology women were confined to home. Sivandipour (2013) is of the opinion that Hardy has presented the depiction of Evangelical woman through

Tess, who throughout her life is unsuccessful to find rescue from the difficulties. Hooti (2011) with reference to Tess's catastrophe declares his view that religion is to blame for the patriarchal chaos in the society, since it compels women to be servile. Religion did not help Tess after she was raped by Alec. It was rather partial in considering her an immoral woman and forced her to become a slave of Alec once again. Religion also has been a superior ally of patriarchy, and Tess underwent a greater deal because of it. One Sunday morning Tess went to cathedral to join the Morning Hymn, and took a back seat. Throughout the services the people turned their heads and started murmuring.

'She knew what their whispers were about, grew sick at heart, and felt that she could come to church no more' (p. 107).

Her baby's ritual of baptism had not so far taken place; according to religion he was an illicit child. Tess had become impatient, when he was taking his last breath,

'Her darling was about to die, and no salvation' (P. 117)

In her nervousness, she believed that her baby after demise would be transferred to the lowest corner of hell for **being** lacking in baptism and legality. In her thoughts she saw her baby was given the sentence of the crime as she had been taught so in her village, as it is also stated by Atikcan (2009) that in Victorian era, the Sunday schools no more taught secular education on account of which society had become introvert, the benefit of which was taken by Alec in making Tess subdued. Tess sought an appropriate Christian funeral for her son. She learned from the priest that the baptizing of her baby was the similar as the service took place in the church but on the question of his Christian funeral the parson only responded,

'Ah---that's another matter,' (p. 122).

Church had been biased to her small and guiltless baby; the parson declined to let her bury her baby in the Christian way. Although she begged him but he persevered; Tess abruptly cried,

'.....and I 'll never come to your church no more!''(p. 122)

She inquired him that he should not have spoken to her as a saint talked a sinner, but he should have spoken to her as an ordinary human being to another ordinary human being. At last, the infant was escorted to the graveyard and buried at the price of a shilling and some alcoholic drink to the sexton,

'.....in that shabby corner of God's allotment where He lets the nettles grow, and where all unbaptised infants, notorious drunkards, suicides, and others of the conjecturally damned are laid'(p. 122).

Woman's high merit of character had immense influence on the psyche of men in the novel 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles', and this impact was of patriarchal society. Angel's father read to him some verses from the Bible in which the worth of a righteous woman was explained in these words,

'Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.'(P. 336).

Definitely the ideal of the similar righteous woman was there in the mind of Angel as well, and he could not accept Tess as a wife. How to soothe the sorrows and pains of the raped and offended women were not explained in the sacred Scriptures, but it rather laid whole emphasis on the responsibilities of the virtuous ones.

In this way the declaration of Koc (2009) is disproved when he disagrees that the disastrous ending of Tess is not because of religion but because of those authorities that are away from the understanding of characters.

patriarchy in Hindu Brahmin society.

In the novel *Water* the male governed social order had taken shelter beneath the powerful and massive shield of religious conviction, as it is well explained by Faiyaz (2015) that in the novel *Water* the society has been shown severe and harsh, which raises questions on the subject of patriarchy. And this severity and harshness of society, exposed in *Water* has roots in religion. Somnath affirmed his sacred faith concerning a woman that her position as a human being could only be accepted when she is a married woman or her husband is her sole identity. Sheela (2015) discusses that while revealing the mercilessness of society, Sidhwa is not opposing the respectability of Hinduism; she is only against the plight of women in the name of religion. **‘Only then does she become a sumungali, an auspicious woman, and a saubhagyavati, a fortunate woman’ (p. 6).**

The conventional religious thoughts of the Brahmin men were in fact an evasion of enchaining women and Somnath was an evident driving force of such a mentality, who with the reference of a sacred book added,

‘A woman’s body is a site for conflict between demonic stri-savavahava, which is her lustful aspect and her stri-dharma, which is her womanly duty’ (p. 6).

Sheela (2015) further discusses that patriarchy was an active aspect of Brahmin tradition, practiced by Hindu people for centuries and had taken the get up of religion. The fraudulent and sinful Madhu also used religion for her own advantage and thus was representing the male authorized law of religion. She said to Chuiya,

‘Our holy books say, “A wife is part of her husband while he is alive” (P. 36).

Widows could not eat all variety of food; according to religion they had to eat limitedly, so that their sexuality could not arouse for it was threat for the society. When Gulabi wanted to give Chuiya the half eaten puri, Madhumatti cried harshly,

‘Are you mad?’ “Giving a widow forbidden food!” (p. 122).

When Shakuntala’s husband passed away, she was religiously confirmed to be as dirty as dirt. Tresses was removed from her head,

‘ to remove the sin and pollution residing in her head and to mark her as the sexual being a widow was meant to be’ (p. 129).

The entire pack of women residing in ashram had endured on account of religion, because religion did not permit these women to spend their lives respectably with liberty even after the demise of their husbands. Mercanti (2011) says that the novel ‘*Water*’ expresses disapproval of the religious conventions of making widows desperate. It was religion which forced Somnath to allow his daughter to be taken to ashram although his daughter cried to him. Patriarchy beneath the influential guard of religion brought about the tragedy of Kalyani when she was fed up of living a dishonest and filthy life only for making money for Madhumati and drowned herself into the river.

Salam (2011) discusses that Sidhwa has clarified the severe agony of the Brahmin widows, who because of religion were forced to spend a life of shame and misery. The rights of females were exploited and blemished by the Brahmin religious custom, and these customs were implemented effortlessly and effectively by the society. Chuiya’s husband expired naturally but religion declared her responsible that on account of the sins she had committed in her preceding life, she lost her husband. Religion had placed a stern rule for such women to reside in the ashram for cleansing themselves of the offenses.

Patriarchy in the Pashtun society.

Pashtuns traditionally are tied to an unwritten set of beliefs and laws, known as ‘Pashtunwali’. It’s a tribal code, and is being practiced by Pashtuns in their everyday life along

with the Islamic principles for centuries. But some critics are of the opinion that this ancestral system of Pashtuns along with the Islamic law plays patriarchal role in the oppression of women. As Qadeer (2015, p. 1233) argues that Pashtunwali took up and mixed in itself the laws of Islam which were made for the political, social and economic interests of men. But Zalmay (2016) on the other hand has refuted this idea and has well explained that it is the duty of every Pashtun man and woman to spend their life according to Pashtunwali, which is not a thought and practice of few years, but is based on the hundreds of years of Pashtun sagacity, and the basic characteristics of this ancestral code of life (Pashtunwali) are hospitality, honor and kindness. Pashtunwali cannot be attributed to the patriarchal norms for its principles have been followed by Pashtuns for centuries and Ali (2013) has well said that, “ Dating back to the Pre Islamic era Pashtunwali is the code of conduct every proud Pashtun follows” (para. 1

In some areas of Pashtun lands the role of religion has been made patriarchal by the conservative tribal and religious leadership. Naz, Parvez, Mughal, Alam and Khan (2012) state that in some regions of Pashtun territory women are not let to get proper education because people’s thoughts are widely affected by the orthodox sermons and speeches of ignorant and stereotype religious scholars. Alaoui (2011) asserts that the conventional religious Pashtun leaders cannot implement those principles of Islam in their society which can eradicate patriarchy; they rather not only violate the principles of Islam but defy the standards of human rights too. Such religious leadership knows the fact very well that with the implementation of true Islamic rules, their earning in the name of Islam will stop and their control over women will be lost. Islam has guaranteed them all their due rights of getting education, taking part in politics, performing of duties at the time of war and doing jobs but in Pashtun religious patriarchal system as S. Kakar (2014) says with the reference of patriarchal religion and Pashtun women, “women are not given their rights that Islam guarantees them.” (para, 1). She further is of the opinion that religion is being used in suppression of women and thus they are deprived of their rights. “Conservative practices are used in the name of religion and tradition denying women their formal legal rights.” (para, 3). S. Kakar (2014) says that although Islam gives woman inheritance rights but at the time when she demands for it, she is disowned by her family. Women are usually not allowed to get education for the reason that religion does not allow them and in this way half strength of inhabitants of the area are left ignorant and undeveloped. Abbasi (2009) too points out the same problem that Islam has been made a great obstacle in the way of getting education for women and a greater strength of the society remain uneducated. While in Islam it is obligatory for both men and women to get education if they have to go for it to China, and the first verse of the Holy Book, revealed on Muhammad (PBUH) was,

‘Read in the name of thy Lord Who created; created the human being from blood clot. Read in the name of thy Lord Who taught by the pen; taught the human being what he did not know.’(96, 1-5)

In Qu’ran God Almighty addresses to all human beings, whether they are men or women,

‘ Are the people having knowledge equal to them who do not know anything.’ (39, 9)

False interpretations of Islam are presented by patriarchy for keeping women backward and under control. “This is a sad reflection upon Muslims and the societies that we have built since knowledge is one of the important pillars upon which the edifice of Islam has been raised.” (para, 2) . Islam is certainly a religion that puts great emphasis on the rights of all members of the society and is indifferent with their gender, class and race but the religious leadership particularly in Pashtun society present fake and self-made Islamic rules regarding women’s role in the society as Nasimi (2014) states that the reinforcement of some customs by the religious

leaders are destructive because these are their own and baseless explanation of Islam, which they devise for their own satisfaction and women's suppression. "In most cases, however, these practices are inconsistent with Sharia" (Para, 7) .

The conservative and orthodox Pashtuns usually living in countryside and tribal areas are really patriarchal and empower women; particularly they do not allow them to get education, but the liberal and educated Pashtuns insist on female education and independence. Jamal (2014) also states that men's attitudes regarding female education and empowerment is being changed now, and as compare to undeveloped and tribal areas the old tradition of making women subjugated and deprived is not put into practice by the Pashtuns living in urban areas.

Conclusion.

In all the patriarchal societies religion has been used like a weapon for oppressing and subjugating women. Such patriarchal religious practices have been performed in the different societies indiscriminately of their ages and locations. Such patriarchal behavior with women in the name of religion must be discouraged because in this way a large portion of society is being made disabled and is left without playing their positive role in the progress of society.

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