

Understanding Patriarchy

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Subordination of women to men is prevalent in large parts of the world. We come across experiences where women are not only treated as subordinate to men but are also subject to discriminations, humiliations, exploitations, oppressions, control and violence. Women experience discrimination and unequal treatment in terms of basic right to food, health care, education, employment, control over productive resources, decision-making and livelihood not because of their biological differences or sex, which is natural but because of their gender differences which is a social construct. "Sex is considered a fact - one is born with either male or female genitalia. Gender is considered a social construction - it grants meaning to the fact of sex. Conversely, it could be said that only after specific meanings came to be attached to the sexes, did sex differences become pertinent" (Geetha, 2002: 10). Gender based discriminations and exploitations are widespread and the socio-culturally defined characteristics, aptitudes, abilities, desires, personality traits, roles, responsibilities and behavioral patterns of men and women contribute to the inequalities and hierarchies in society. Gender differences are man made and they get legitimised in a patriarchal society. This paper attempts to link the theoretical dimensions of patriarchy with its empirical experiences to engage in the ongoing debates and discussion on "patriarchy" which manifests itself in various forms of discriminations, inequalities, hierarchies, inferior status and position of women in society. Thus it is important to understand patriarchy in terms of its multiplicity, complexities and dynamics.

What is Patriarchy?

Patriarchy literally means rule of the father in a male-dominated family. It is a social and ideological construct which considers men (who are the patriarchs) as superior to women. Sylvia Walby in *"Theorising Patriarchy"* calls it "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990). Patriarchy is based on a system of power relations which are hierarchical and unequal where men control women's production, reproduction and sexuality. It imposes masculinity and femininity character stereotypes in society which strengthen the iniquitous power relations between men and women. Patriarchy is not a constant and gender relations which are dynamic and complex have changed over the periods of history. The nature of control and subjugation of women varies from one society to the other as it differs due to the differences in class, caste, religion, region, ethnicity and the socio-cultural practices. Thus in the context of India, brahminical

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patriarchy, tribal patriarchy and dalit patriarchy are different from each other. Patriarchy within a particular caste or class also differs in terms of their religious and regional variations. Similarly subordination of women in developed countries is different from what it is in developing countries. While subordination of women may differ in terms of its nature, certain characteristics such as control over women's sexuality and her reproductive power cuts across class, caste, ethnicity, religions and regions and is common to all patriarchies. This control has developed historically and is institutionalized and legitimized by several ideologies, social practices and institutions such as family, religion, caste, education, media, law, state and society, which are discussed in the later sections.

Patriarchal societies propagate the ideology of motherhood which restrict women's mobility and burdens them with the responsibilities to nurture and rear children. The biological factor to bear children is linked to the social position of women's responsibilities of motherhood: nurturing, educating and raising children by devoting themselves to family. "Patriarchal ideas blur the distinction between *sex and gender* and assume that all socio-economic and political distinctions between men and women are rooted in biology or anatomy" (Heywood, 2003: 248). Gender like social class, caste, race or religion is a significant social cleavage and it is important to analyse it to understand social inequalities, oppressions and unequal relationship between men and women. It has been explained by feminist scholars / thinkers/ writers who believe that the theory of 'sexual politics' and 'sexism' are conscious parallels with theory of 'class politics' and 'racism' to understand oppression of women.

The traditionalist view accepts patriarchy as biologically determined and as the biological functions of men and women are different, the social roles and tasks assigned for women are also different. Sigmund Freud stated that for women 'anatomy is destiny' and it is women's biology which primarily determine their psychology and hence their abilities and roles. Similarly the traditional notion of 'public-private divide' which located politics in the public sphere and family and personal relationships in private sphere as non-political, believed that sexual inequality is natural and not political. While the political sphere was preserved for men the private sphere was reserved for women as housewives and mothers who were excluded from politics. These theories of male supremacy have been challenged and opposed by feminists as they lack historical or scientific evidence. Feminists argue that the biological difference might lead to some difference in their roles, but the former should not become the basis of a sexual hierarchy in which men are dominant. The dismantling of these theories enables us to acknowledge that patriarchy is man-made and has developed historically by the socio-economic and political processes in society.

Gerda Lerner in "*The Creation of Patriarchy*" (1986) has argued against single cause theories and against looking for one historical moment when patriarchy was established. Patriarchy has been conceptualized and analyzed by several feminist scholars in different ways. Feminists have

challenged patriarchal knowledge, ideology, values and its practice. Despite a range of common themes within feminism, disagreements exist amongst the feminists in understanding patriarchy. All feminists do not like the term “patriarchy” for various reasons and prefer the term “gender” and “gender oppression”. Patriarchy has remained a relatively undefined concept and some feminist scholars are at unease with the use of the concept of ‘patriarchy’ when it involves the notion of a general system of inequality. Michele Barrett argues that the use of the term patriarchy assumes that the relation between men and women is unchanging and universalistic. She suggests that it can only be appropriate if it is defined very narrowly and refers to specific aspects of ideological relations such as those of father-daughter relationship described in Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas* (Barrett, 1980: 15). The use of the term often involves confusion between ‘patriarchy’ as rule of the father and ‘patriarchy’ as men’s domination of women (ibid, 16). However, Sylvia Walby critiques Barrett as the problem is not with the concept itself but with the way it is used in specific texts as it involves problems of reductionism, biologism, universalism, and therefore the inconsistent definition of patriarchy needs to be overcome in an adequate analysis of gender inequality (Walby, 1986: 28). Sheila Rowbotham also argues that ‘the term patriarchy necessarily implies a conception of women’s oppression that is universalistic, ahistoric and essentially biologicistic and that it incorrectly leads to a search for a single cause of women’s oppression either in a base super-structure model or as quest for ultimate origins from capitalist relations’ (Rowbotham, 1981, in Walby, 1986: 30).

Suma Chitnis (2004) argues that because of the inadequate note of historical circumstances and values that render women’s issues different in India, a large section of the population recoils from the feminist rhetoric. Similarly the unease with the term patriarchy is because of the role that men have played in the emergence and growth of women’s question in India. In a hierarchical society often gender oppression is linked with oppressions based on caste, class, community, tribe and religion, and in such multiple patriarchies “men as the principal oppressors” is not easily accepted (Chaudhuri, 2004: xxii-xxiii). However, Mary E. John argues that multiple patriarchies which are byproducts of discrimination along class, caste and communal lines, are diverse in nature and it is because of the unequal patriarchies that “there is a need to conceptualize the complex articulation of different patriarchies, along with the distinct and equally challenging question of how subaltern genders are relating to questions of power in the current conjuncture” (John, 2004: 66).

The assertion of autonomous dalit women’s organizations have thrown up several crucial theoretical and political challenges besides underlying the brahmanism of feminist movements and patriarchal practices of dalit politics. Within the framework of ‘difference’ the issues of caste is primarily responsible for oppression of dalit women (Rege, 2004: 211). Sharmila Rege argues that the category of ‘difference’ has been brought to the centre of feminist analysis by the black and third world feminists who question the sex/class debate of the 1970s and argue that the

complex interplay between sex, class, race need to be underlined (ibid, 213). Vaid and Sangari make a distinction between “the modernizing of patriarchal modes of regulating women” and the “democratizing of gender relations” both at home and work place and underline both the revolutionary potential and inherent contradictions that the democratizing movements constituted for peasants and working class women (Vaid and Sangari (1989) in Rege, 2004: 215). Thus feminist historiography made radical breakthroughs in redefining gender and patriarchies in the context of hierarchies of caste, class, community and ethnicity. Therefore it is pertinent to underline several perspectives of feminism for a comprehensive understanding of patriarchy in terms of its origin, characteristics, nature, structures and persistence.

Feminism

“Feminism is an awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation and oppression at the material and ideological levels of women’s labour, fertility and sexuality, in the family, at the place of work and in society in general, and conscious action by women and men to transform the present situation” (Bhasin and Khan, 1999: 3). It is a struggle to achieve equality, dignity, rights, freedom for women to control their lives and bodies both within home and outside. As a cross cutting ideology feminists have different political positions and therefore address a range of issues such as female suffrage, equal legal rights, right to education, access to productive resources, right to participate in decision-making, legalization of abortion, recognition of property rights and abolition of domestic violence. Thus feminism passed through several paradigms which are referred to as first wave and second wave of feminism.

Since the origin of patriarchy and establishment of male supremacy can be traced to different factors and forces feminists differ in their approach to understand patriarchy and adopt different strategies to abolish it. One way to understand the various dimensions of feminist theories and their theoretical approaches to understand patriarchy is to locate them within the broader philosophical and political perspectives that have been broadly classified as Liberal, Marxist, Socialist and Radical. However, despite the ideological differences between the feminist groups, they are united in their struggle against unequal and hierarchical relationships between men and women, which is no longer accepted as biological destiny.

Feminist theorists generally share four concerns (Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1984 in Mandell, 1995: 4) (i) They seek to understand the gendered nature of all social and institutional relations, which determines who does what for whom, what we are and what we might become. (ii) Gender relations are considered as problematic and as related to other inequalities and contradictions in social life. “Family, education and

welfare, worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure are socially structured through relations of gender, power, class, race and sexuality”.

(iii) Gender relations are not viewed as either natural or immutable but as historical and socio-cultural productions, subject to reconstitution. In particular feminist analysis deconstructs errors and myths about women's empirical realities, and constructs theories by and about women. (iv) Feminist theorists tend to be explicitly political about their advocacy about social change. They challenge the traditional race-class-sexuality-power arrangements which favour men over women, white over non-whites, adults over children and their struggle to embrace inclusivity continues (ibid, 4-5).

Since feminism is not ahistoric, understanding several perspectives of it engages us in understanding the history of feminism (also see Chaudhuri, 2004: xvii). An uneasy relationship with western 'feminism' and the claim for an "indigenous feminism" led to the search for the indigenous roots of feminism, which is often linked to our colonial past. Kumari Jayawardena defines feminism as "embracing movements for equality within the current system and significant struggles that have attempted to change the system". She asserts that these movements arose in the context of i) the formulation and consolidation of national identities which modernized anti-imperialist movements during the independence struggle and ii) the remaking of pre-capitalist religion and feudal structures in attempt to modernize third world societies (Jayawardena, 1986: 2, also see Chaudhuri, 2004: xvi). Indian feminists like Veena Mazumdar link the anti-imperialist struggle of the national movement with awareness of women's issues as "the independence of the country and of women has become so intertwined as to be identical"(also see Chaudhuri, 2004: xxxi).

Whether women's movements from the Seventies onwards can only be termed as feminist is an equally important question of concern to some feminist scholars. With the women's movement gaining momentum sharp critiques of mainstream conceptualization of work, development, legal process and the state emerged, which led to several theoretical and praxiological reformulations. It led to the debates of class v/s patriarchy, caste v/s patriarchy and women's movements have addressed issues concerning women of working class, dalit, tribal and minorities. Gopal Guru located the need for dalit women to talk differently in a discourse of descent against the middle class women's movement by dalit men and the moral economy of peasant movement. He argues that social location determines the perception of reality and therefore representation of dalit women by non-dalit women was less valid and less authentic (Guru, 1995: 2549, also see Guru 2003: 81-83). A dalit feminist standpoint is seen as emancipatory as it places emphasis on individual experiences within socially constructed groups and focuses on the hierarchical, multiple, changing structural power relations of caste, class, ethnic, which construct such a group (Rege, 2004: 222). Since dalit women is not a homogeneous group, the dalit feminist standpoint is open to interrogations and revisions and the subject of dalit women's standpoint is multiple, heterogeneous and contradictory (ibid).

Since in the Indian context questions of cultural identity, difference, plurality and diversity have been important, some Indian feminists in their effort to counter attacks of being western have turned out to “Hindu iconography and Sanskrit idioms denoting women’s power, thus inadvertently strengthening communal identity that Indian, Hindu and Sanskrit are synonymous” (Flavia 194: 1124, also see Chaudhuri, 2004: xix). Flavia Agnes critiques such feminist groups. Maitrayee Chaudhuri also argues that in India the battle for recognition of ‘difference’ had to be worked out independently without the accepted terminology of today’s western feminism or multiculturalism Chaudhuri, 2004: xxii). “Within the Indian sub-continent there have been infinite variations on the status of women diverging according to cultural milieu, family structure, class, caste, property rights and morals” (Thapar, 1975: 6). Therefore despite several debates and discussion on Indian women’s movement there have been no clear ideological lines drawn and no major trends have emerged. In fact, the women’s issues taken up in the women’s movement since 1975 have arisen out of the movement itself and have been taken up by women’s groups representing all ideologies and tendencies (Omvedt, 2004: 180). The effort to characterize the specificity of women’s oppression and to analyse the links with other forms of social oppression is more an ongoing theoretical research rather than an ideological dividing line (ibid, 181). In India almost all feminists agree that women’s movement has to be linked to broader movements against all kinds of social oppression (ibid, 183). While in the West there have been a wide variety of feminist positions, from those stressing male power and sexual dominance to “Marxist –Feminist” positions stressing social production, in India it has been mainly the Marxist who have dealt with the issue of women’s oppression and subjugation though there have been varying approaches.

Approaches to Understand Patriarchy

Liberal Feminism: Liberal feminists have championed equal legal and political rights for women to enable them to compete with men in the public realm on equal terms. The philosophical basis of liberal feminism lies in the principle of individualism and they campaigned for all individuals to participate in public and political life. Several women’s movement demanded female suffrage during the 1840s and 1850s in United States and United Kingdom. The famous Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 marked the birth of women’s rights movement which among other things called for female suffrage. Women were granted the right to vote in the US Constitution in 1920. In UK though franchise was extended to women in 1918 for a decade they did not exercise equal voting rights with men. Mary Wollstonecraft’s “*Vindication of the Rights of Women*” (1792) was the first text of modern feminism which campaigned for women’s right to vote/ female suffrage. Wollstonecraft claimed that if women gained access to education as rational creatures in their own right the distinction of sex would become unimportant in political and social life. John Stuart Mill in collaboration with Harriet Taylor in “*The Subjection of Women*” (1841) proposed that women should be entitled to the citizenship and political rights and liberties enjoyed by men. It indicts traditional

arrangements of work and family as tyrannizing women and denying them freedom of choice (Mandell, 1995: 6). Thus, liberal feminists believed that female suffrage would do away with all forms of sexual discrimination and prejudice. Walby contends that “first wave feminism was a large, multi-faceted, long-lived and highly effective political phenomenon” (Walby, 1997:149).

Betty Friedan’s *“The Feminine Mystique”* marked the resurgence of liberal feminist thought in the 1960s and is often credited as stimulating the emergence of ‘second wave’ feminism. She referred to the cultural myth that women seek security and fulfillment in domestic life and that their feminine behaviour serves to discourage women from entering employment, politics and public life in general. In *“The Second Stage”* (1983) Friedan “discussed the problem of reconciling the achievement of personhood by making it possible to open up broader opportunities for women in work and public life while continuing to give central importance to family in women’s life which has been criticized by radical feminists as contributing to ‘mystique of motherhood’”(Heywood, 2003: 254). Therefore, liberal feminism is essentially reformist and does not challenge the patriarchal structure of society itself. Critics suggest that the liberal reforms to increase opportunities for women, prohibit discriminations and to increase public consciousness of women’s rights have not been shared equally by all women because these changes have not addressed issues of socially structured inequalities (Mandell, 1995: 8). Thus, while the first wave feminism ended with winning suffrage rights the emergence of second wave feminism in 1960s acknowledged that political and legal rights were insufficient to change women’s subordination. Feminist ideas and arguments became radical and revolutionary thereafter.

Marxist Feminism: Marxist feminist believed that both subordination of women and division of classes developed historically with the development of private property. Frederick Engels in *“The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State”* (1884) stated that with the emergence of private property, women’s housework sank into insignificance in comparison to man’s productive labour. ‘The world historical defeat of the female sex with the establishment of capitalism based on private property ownership by men did away with inheritance of property and social position through female line’ (also see Bhasin, 1993: 24-25). Thus maternal authority gave place to paternal authority and property was to be inherited from father to son and not from woman to her clan. The bourgeois families which owned private property emerged as patriarchal families where women were subjugated. Such patriarchal families became oppressive as men ensured that their property passed on only to their sons. Therefore bourgeois family and private property as a byproduct of capitalism subordinated and oppressed women.

Marxist feminists unlike the radical feminists argue that class exploitation is deeper than sexual oppression and women’s emancipation essentially requires social revolution which will overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. Engels believed that “in a socialist society marriage will be

dissolvable and that once private property is abolished its patriarchal features and perhaps also monogamy will disappear". Therefore Marxist feminists like many socialist feminists connect structural changes in kinship relations and changes in the division of labour to understand women's position in society. They argue that it is not women's biology alone but, private property and monogamous marriage, economic and political dominance by men and their control over female sexuality which led to patriarchy. However, the Marxist feminists have been criticized for differentiating working class women and bourgeois women and also for the focus on economic factors to explain subordination of women. Recent socialist feminists critique traditional Marxist feminists as the later emphasize only on economic origins of gender inequality and state that female subordination occurs also in pre-capitalist and socialist systems (Mandell, 1995: 10). In fact socialist feminists accuse Marxists feminists of being 'sex blind' and only adding women to their existing critique of capitalism (Hartmann, 1979).

Socialist Feminism: Unlike the liberal feminists, socialist feminist argue that women do not simply face political and legal disadvantages which can be solved by equal legal rights and opportunities but the relationship between sexes is rooted in the social and economic structure itself. Therefore women can only be emancipated after social revolution brings about structural change. Socialist feminists deny the necessary and logical link between sex and gender differences. They argue that the link between child bearing and child rearing is cultural rather than biological and have challenged that biology is destiny by drawing a sharp distinction between 'sex and gender'. Therefore, while liberal feminist takes women's equality with men as their major political goal, socialist feminism aim at transforming basic structural arrangements of society so that categories of class, gender, sexuality and race no longer act as barriers to share equal resources (Mandell, 1995: 9). Gerda Lerner's (1986) explains how control over female sexuality is central to women's subordination. She argues that it is important to understand how production as well as reproduction was organized. The appropriation and commodification of women's sexual and reproductive capacity by men lies at the foundation of private property, institutionalization of slavery, women's sexual subordination and economic dependency on male.

Most socialist feminists agree that the confinement of women to the domestic sphere of housework and motherhood serves the economic interests of capitalism. Women relieve men of the burden of housework and child rearing, and allow them to concentrate on productive employment. Thus unpaid domestic labour contributes to the health and efficiency of capitalist economy and also accounts for the low social status and economic dependence of women on men. But, unlike the Marxist feminists, socialist feminists look at both relations of production as well as relations of reproduction to understand patriarchy. Unlike orthodox Marxists who have prioritized class politics over sexual politics, modern socialist feminists give importance to the later. They believe that socialism in itself will not end patriarchy as it has cultural and ideological roots.

In *'Women's Estate'* (1971) Juliet Mitchell believes that gender relations are a part of the super structure and patriarchy is located in the ideological level while capitalism in the economical level (Mitchell, 1975: 412). Like traditional Marxist analysis she fails to consider the significance of sexual division of labour as an economical phenomenon (Walby, 1986: 34). She argues that patriarchal law is that of the rule of the father, which operates through the kinship system rather than domination of men. Mitchell stated that women fulfill four social functions (i) They are members of workforce and are active in production, (ii) they bear children and thus reproduce human species (iii) they are responsible for socializing children and (iv) they are sex objects. Therefore "women can achieve emancipation only when they liberate from each of these areas and not only when socialism replaces capitalism" (also see Heywood, 2003: 257-258). Walby critiques Mitchell as she fails to consider the material benefits that men derive from women's unpaid domestic labour and the significance of men's organized attempts to limit women's access to paid work. On the other hand, Delphy argues that the basis of gender relations is the domestic mode of production in which the husband expropriates the wife's labour (Delphy, 1977: 37). Women share a common class position and are exploited by men as a class. Thus it is not women's position within the domestic mode of production which is the basis of their class oppression alone but it is their main form of subordination. The forms of oppression outside the family therefore derive from oppressions within the family (Walby, 1986: 38). She further argues that women's relation to production is not determined by content of the task but by the nature of the social relations under which they labour. Therefore it is the relations of production which explain why their work is excluded from the realm of value (ibid, 4). Delphy has been critiqued by Molyneux for placing all women in one class without making a distinction between the bourgeoisie and proletariat (Molyneux. 1979: 14).

Similarly Zillah Eisenstein in *"Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism"* (1979) argues that 'male supremacy and capitalism are the core relations which determine oppression of women' She defines patriarchy as a "sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and economic privilege' (Eisenstein 1979:17). Patriarchy is not the direct result of biological differentiation but ideological and political interpretations of these differentiations. "On the one hand the capitalist live a process in which exploitation occurs and on the other the patriarchal sexual hierarchy in which the women is mother, domestic labourer and consumer and in which the oppression of women occurs" (also see Bhasin, 1993: 28). Social relations of reproduction are therefore important and they are not the result of capitalist relations but cultural relations. Thus, while in her early work in 1979 there was greater stress on the synthesis between capitalism and patriarchy, in her later work in 1984, there is more recognition of conflict and tensions between the two (Walby, 1986: 31). Heidi Hartmann (1979) argues that both patriarchy and capitalism are independent yet are interacting social structures. She believes that "We can usefully define patriarchy as a set of social relations

between men who have a material base who through hierarchical, establish/create interdependence and solidarity among men and enable them to dominate women (Hartmann, 1979: 11). She argues that historically both had important effects on each other as the material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men's control over women's labour power. "In capitalist societies a healthy and strong partnership exists between patriarchy and capitalism" (ibid, 13). She has been critiqued for paying insufficient attention to tension and conflict between capitalism and patriarchy (Walby, 1986: 44).

Maria Mies, in her paper "*The Social Origins of the Sexual Division of Labour*" refers to women's labour as 'shadow work'. She suggests that we should no longer look at the sexual division of labour as a problem related to the family, but rather as a structural problem of a whole society. The hierarchical division of labour between men and women and its dynamics form an integral part of dominant production relations i.e. class relations of a particular epoch and society and of the broader national and international divisions of labour (also see Bhasin, 30). She argues that the asymmetric division of labour by sex, once established by means of violence was upheld by such institutions as the family and the state and also by the powerful ideological systems. The patriarchal religions have defined women as part of nature which has to be controlled and dominated by man (ibid, 33).

Thus, socialist feminists have advanced theoretical boundaries by analyzing the ways class and gender relations intersect. Economic class relations are important in determining women's status but gender relations are equally significant and therefore eradicating social class inequality alone will not necessarily eliminate sexism. Patriarchy existed before capitalism and continued to exist in both capitalism and other political-economic systems (Mandell, 1995: 11). However, patriarchy and capitalism are concretely intertwined and mutually supportive system of oppressions. Women's subordination within capitalism results from their economic exploitation as wage labourers and their patriarchal oppression as mothers, consumers and domestic labourers (ibid, 13).

Sylvia Walby in '*Patriarchy at Work*' (1986) attempts to conceptualise patriarchy not only in terms of the complexity of relationships of gender but also subtleties of interconnections of patriarchy with capitalism, which is a relationship of tension and conflict and not of harmony and mutual accommodation. Domestic labour is a distinct form of labour and core to patriarchal mode of production which is essential to exploitation of women by men and is independent of exploitation of proletariats by the capitalists (Walby, 1986: 52). Within the household women provide all kinds of services to their children, husband and other members of the family, in other words in the patriarchal mode of production, women's labour is expropriated by their husbands and others who live there. The control over and exploitation of women's labour benefit men materially and economically. "Patriarchy is a system of interrelated social structures through which men exploit" (ibid, 51). She states that gender relations

need to be explained at the level of social relations and not as individuals. Within the patriarchal mode of production, the producing class comprises of women and domestic labourer and husbands are the non-producing and exploiting class. And domestic labourer works to replenish/ produce his/ their labour power, she is separated from the product of her labour and has no control over it, while the husband always has control over the labour power which the wife has produced. She is separated from it at every level, physically, in the ability to use it, legally, ideologically etc. (ibid, 53). Thus the domestic labourer is exploited as the husband has the control over the wage he receives from the capitalist in exchange of his labour. The relations of production in such a mode of production are personalized relations between individuals (ibid, 54). When the patriarchal mode of production articulates with the capitalist mode, women are prevented from entering paid work as freely as men and are reinforced by patriarchal state policies.

The state is a site of patriarchal relations which is necessary to patriarchy as a whole as it upholds the oppression of women by supporting a form of household in which women provide unpaid domestic services to male (ibid). Thus capitalism benefits from a particular form of family which ensures cheap reproduction of labour power and the availability of women as a reserve army. Patriarchy is also located in the social relations of reproduction and masculinity and femininity are not biological givens but products of long historical process. Thus, socialist feminists combine both marxist and radical approach and neither is sufficient by itself. Patriarchy is connected to both relations of production and relations of reproduction.

Therefore reactionary feminism differed from conventional feminism challenging the traditional public/private divide and the influence of patriarchy not only in politics, public life and economy but also in all aspects of social, personal, psychological and sexual existence. This was evident in the pioneering work of radical feminists. Kate Millet's "*Sexual Politics*" (1970) and Germaine Greer's "*The Female Eunuch*" (1970), Simon de Beauvoir's "*The Second Sex*" (1970), Eva Figes's "*Patriarchal Attitudes*" (1970) drew attention to the personal, psychological and sexual aspects of female oppression. It is because of the 'patriarchal values and beliefs which pervade the culture, philosophy, morality and religion of society that women are conditioned to a passive sexual role, which has repressed their true sexuality as well as more active and adventurous side of their personalities' (Greer in Heywood, 2003: 258). Therefore the emphasis shifted from political emancipation to women's liberation and the second wave feminists campaigned for the legislation of abortions, equal pay legislation, anti-discrimination laws and wider access to education and political and professional life. Women's Liberation Movement during the 1960s and 70s called for radical social changes rather than legal and political reforms and criticized the repressive nature of the conventional society.

Radical Feminism: Unlike the liberal and socialist traditions, radical feminists developed a systematic theory of sexual oppression as the root

of patriarchy which preceded private property. They challenge the very notion of femininity and masculinity as mutually exclusive and biologically determined categories. The ideology of motherhood subjugates women and perpetuates patriarchy, which not only forces women to be mothers but also determines the conditions of their motherhood (Bhasin, 199: 8). It creates feminine and masculine characteristics, strengthens the divide between public and private, restricts women's mobility and reinforces male dominance. "While sex differences are linked to biological differences between male and female, gender differences are imposed socially or even politically by constructed contrasting stereotypes of masculinity and femininity" (de Beauvoir, 1970: 258). Simone de Beauvoir in *"The Second Sex"* (1970) pointed out that women are made and not born. She believed that greater availability of abortion rights, effective birth control and end of monogamy would increase the control over their bodies. Judith Butler turned the sex-gender distinction on its head: by making sex the effect of gender, a legitimization subsequently imposed in order to fix the socially contingent through recourse to an unquestioned biology, "the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" (Butler, 1990: 7 also see Mary John 2004).

Kate Millet in *"Sexual Politics"* (1970) defined politics as power structured relationships, which is not only confined to government and its citizens but also to family between children and parents and husband and wife. Through family, church and academy men secure consent of the very women they oppress and each institution justifies and reinforces women's subordination to men with the result that women internalize a sense of inferiority to men (Mandell, 1995: 16). Men use coercion to achieve what conditioning fails to achieve (Millet 1970:8). She proposed that patriarchy must be challenged through a process of conscious-raising and women's liberation required a revolutionary change. The psychological and sexual oppression of women have to be overthrown. Shulamith Firestone in *"The Dialectic of Sex"* (1972) believes that the basis of women's oppression lies in her reproductive capacity in so far as this has been controlled by men. She stated that patriarchy is not natural or inevitable but its roots are located in biology which has led to a natural division of labour within the biological family and liberation of women required that gender difference between men and women be abolished (also see Heywood, 260). Firestone's attempt to build a theory of patriarchy in which different sets of patriarchal relations have their place and specify their articulation with class and race relations is one of the most sophisticated and highly developed radical feminist theories (Walby, 1986: 25). However, her analysis of relations of patriarchy with class and ethnicity are rather reductionist as she ignores various structures and institutions which have shaped these relationships through out history (ibid, 26). Walby critiques her for her insufficient analysis of capitalist relations and their interrelationships with patriarchal relations, which Walby sees as a serious omission (ibid). Her believe that the connection between childbirth and child care is a biological rather than a social fact has also been critiqued.

Mackinnon argues that sexuality is the basis of differentiation of sexes and oppression of women and this she considers as parallel to the centrality of work for Marxist analysis of capitalism. "Sexuality is to Feminism what work is to Marxism: that which is most one's own, yet most taken away" (Mackinnon, 1982: 1). She considers that sexuality constructs gender and these are social processes and not biological givens. Walby critiques her for not assessing the relative importance of class/labour for gender equality as compared to sexuality (Walby, 1986: 27). For radical feminists sexual relations are political acts, emblematic of male/female power relationships. The traditional political theory which divide personal and political spheres and believe that family is non-political and personal has been questioned by radical feminists who argue that family is that space where maximum exploitation of women takes place. It is this 'public-private divide' which legitimizes exploitation of women. In fact, it is essential that the private sphere must be mapped in terms of the same values of justice, equality and freedom which are necessary in the public sphere.

Radical feminists aim at the need to redefine individual identity, free language and culture from the clutches of masculinity, re-establish political power, re-evaluate human nature/ behaviour and challenge the traditional values. Thus along with legal reforms and the right to franchise the protest against capitalist society is important to transform the traditional sexual identity through sexual revolution. Radical feminists therefore believe that unless sexuality is reconceived and reconstructed in the image and likeness of women, the later will remain subordinate to men (Mandell, 1995: 16).

While radical feminists claim that 'personal is political' liberal feminist warn against the dangers of politicizing the private sphere, which is the realm of public choice and individual freedom. On the other hand the limitation of individualism as the basis of gender politics has been raised by radical feminists as an individualist perspective draws attention away from the structural character of patriarchy. Women are subordinated not as systematic individuals who happen to be denied rights or opportunities but as a sex that is subject to pervasive oppression (Heywood, 2003: 254). They critique individualism which makes it difficult for women to think and act collectively on the basis of their common gender identity. Liberal individualism depoliticizes sexual relations and equal treatment might mean treating women like men. Finally the demand for equal rights only equips women to take advantage of the opportunities and may therefore reflect the interest of white, middle class women in developed countries and fail to address problems of women of colour, working class women and women in developing countries (ibid). Thus while 'egalitarian feminists' link gender difference to patriarchy as a manifestation of oppression and subordination and want to liberate women from gender difference, 'difference feminists' regard the very notion of equality as either misguided or simply undesirable. Alison Jaggar in "*Feminist Politics and Human Nature*" (1971) critiques the radicals for ignoring the causes that led to the origin of patriarchy and its structures which requires

theorizing human behaviour and human society. She states that it is not that gender differences determine some forms of social organizations but the later which give rise to gender difference. Therefore instead of controlling their bodies women should be able to control their lives. Marxist feminists critique radical feminists for ignoring the historical, economic and materialist basis of patriarchy and therefore the later are trapped in ahistorical biological deterministic theory.

The new feminist traditions such as psychoanalytical feminism, eco-feminism, postmodern feminism, black feminism, lesbian feminism have emerged since the 1980s. **Psychoanalytical feminists** analyse the psychological process through which men and women are engendered. They do not hold biological factors as responsible for the construction of sexual difference. Psychoanalytical feminist explore the hidden dynamics at work in personal, interpersonal and social relations and the unconscious dynamics that shape the way we think, feel and act in the world. Freudian psychoanalysis describes women oppression in patriarchy as a process, which need to be altered. After Juliet Mitchell's book "*Psychoanalysis and Feminism*" (1974) the psychological process which determine patriarchy has expanded (see Brennan, 1989). Similarly "*Feminism and Psychoanalysis*" (1992) edited by Elizabeth Wright demonstrates the continued interest in this field. Psychoanalysis feminists may share the politics of radical, marxist or socialist feminists but the kind of questions and concerns raised by them are not acknowledged by the later. They analyse gender difference beyond conscious levels of experience and focus on the unconscious levels where gender -specific desires and meanings are constituted and formed. Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow draw on a school for psychoanalysis called 'object-relation theory'. Exclusive female mothering is seen to be the cause of gender inequality (Mandell, 1995: 20).

Eco-feminists accept women's attitudes and values as different from men. They believe that in certain respects women are superior to men and possess the qualities of creativity, sensitivity and caring which men can never develop. Vandana Shiva in her conception of ecofeminism critiques development and establishes the connection between ecological destruction and capitalist growth as a patriarchal project (Shiva, 1999: 41, for details see Vandana Shiva's "Colonialism and the Evolution of Masculinist Forestry"). **Postmodern feminists** claim that there is no fixed female identity. The socially constructed identities can be reconstructed or deconstructed. Thus the distinctions between sex and gender are criticized from two perspectives: (i) 'difference feminists' who believe that "there are essential difference between men and women and the social and cultural characteristics are seen to refer the biological differences" and (ii) 'postmodern feminists' who "questioned whether sex is a clear-cut biological distinction as is usually assumed". In other words the features of biological motherhood do not apply to women who cannot bear children. Thus "there is a biology-culture continuum rather than a fixed biological/cultural divide and the categories male and female become

more or less arbitrary and the concepts of sex and gender become hopelessly entangled” (Heywood, 2003: 248).

Linda Nicholson in *“Feminism / Postmodernism”* (1990) claims that there are many points of overlap between a postmodern stance and position long held by feminists. According to Nancy Fraser and Nicholson if feminism pursues a trend towards a more historical non-universalizing, non-essentialist theory that addresses difference amongst women (lesbians, disabled, working class women, black women) then feminism will become more consistent with postmodernism (Nicholson, 1990: 34). This trend means giving up universal claims of gender and patriarchy. However, feminists hostile to postmodernism theory claim that no feminist politics is possible once one has called into question the nature of gender identity and subjectivity (Mandell, 1995: 26).

Black feminists have prioritized differences based on race and challenge the tendency within feminism to ignore it. They portray sexism and racism as interlinked systems of oppression and highlight the particular range of gender, racial and economic disadvantages that confront “women of colour”. Black feminists argue that women are not subject to common forms of oppression due to their sex but ‘women of colour’ in particular are more vulnerable to oppression and subjugation. They criticize the liberal, Marxist, socialist and radical feminists for ignoring race as a category of oppression and analysis (also see Brand, Dasgupta). By assuming that gender is primary form of subordination, oppression of class, sexuality and race become extensions of patriarchal domination. Radical feminists’ insistence that the elimination of sexism is key to the elimination racism is inadequate to “women of colour” as they experience racism from white women as well as from men (Grant, 1993 in Mandell, 1995: 18). Thus an analysis of the intersection of class, caste, race, sexuality and gender is important.

Similarly **lesbian feminists** primarily struggle against homophobia which is as important as the struggle against patriarchy. Lesbian feminism and cultural feminism are two types of feminist separations advocating the creation of women identified world through the attachments women have to each other. They believe that since patriarchy is organized through men’s relations with other men, unity among women is the only effective means for liberating women. They position lesbianism as more than a personal decision and an outward sign of an internal rejection of patriarchal sexuality (Rich in Mandell, 1995: 14). Lesbianism becomes a paradigm for female-controlled female sexuality which meets women’s needs and desires. ‘Another popular strategy for resisting patriarchy has been to redefine social relations by creating women-centered cultures that emphasise positive capacities of women by focusing on creative dimensions of their experiences’ (ibid).

Therefore while earlier feminists struggled for a legally equal position for women and demanded democratic rights, which included right to education and employment, right to own property, right to vote, right to

birth control, right to divorce, today feminists have gone beyond demanding mere legal reforms to end discrimination between men and women. They have raised issues of violence against women, rape, unequal wages, discriminatory personal laws, the sexual division of labour, distribution of power within the family, use of religion to oppress women and negative portrayal of women in media (also see Bhasin, 1993: 9). Emancipation of women necessarily calls for challenging patriarchy as a system which perpetuates women's subordination. Several structures of society such as kinship and family, class, caste, religion, ethnicity, educational institutions and state reinforce patriarchy. Some of the experiences of multiple patriarchies can be illustrated by analyzing the dynamics and interface of social forces which institutionalize and legitimize patriarchy in society.

Structures of Patriarchy

The first lessons of patriarchy are learnt in the family where the head of the family is a man/ father. Man is considered the head of the family and controls women's sexuality, labour or production, reproduction and mobility. In a patriarchal family the birth of male child is preferred to that of a female. The former is considered as the inheritor of the family while the later is considered as *paraya dhan*. The Indian joint family is the "patriarchal family" and it was constituted by a group of persons related in the male line and subject to absolute power of the senior most male member (Maine in Uberoi, 2005: 363). In the South Asian context kinship systems are largely based on patrilineal descent which is the foundation of a pervasive patriarchal ideology that rationalizes the differential access of men and women to the material and symbolic resources of society (ibid, 377).

According to Gerda Lerner, family plays an important role in creating a hierarchical system as it not only mirrors the order in the state and educates its children but also creates and constantly reinforces that order (Lerner, 1986: 127; also see Bhasin, 1993: 10). Family is therefore important for socializing the next generation in patriarchal values. The boys learn to be dominating and aggressive and girls learn to be caring, loving and submissive. These stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are not only social constructs but also have been internalized by both men and women. While the pressure to earn and look after the family is more on the man, the women are supposed to do the menial jobs and take care of their children and even other members of the family. It is because of these gender stereotypes that women are at a disadvantage and are vulnerable to violence and other kinds of discriminations and injustices. Systemic deprivation and violence against women: rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, female foeticide, infanticide, witch-killing, sati, dowry deaths, wife-beating, high level of female illiteracy, malnutrition, undernourishment and continued sense of insecurity keeps women bound to home, economically exploited, socially suppressed and politically passive (ibid: 13).

Patriarchal constructions of knowledge perpetuate patriarchal ideology and this is reflected in educational institutions, knowledge system and media which reinforce male dominance. More subtle expressions of patriarchy was through symbolism giving messages of inferiority of women through legends highlighting the self-sacrificing, self-effacing pure image of women and through ritual practice which emphasized the dominant role of women as a faithful wife and devout mother (Desai and Krishnaraj, 2004: 299). Laws of Manu insist that since women by their very nature are disloyal they should be made dependent on men. The husband should be constantly worshiped as a god, which symbolized that man is a lord, master, owner, or provider and the shudras and women were the subordinates. It legitimized that a woman should never be made independent, as a daughter she should be under the surveillance of her father, as a wife of her husband and as a widow of her son (Chakravarti, 2006: 75). While in ancient India (Vedic and Epic periods), women were by and large treated as equal to men, the restrictions on women and patriarchal values regulating women's sexuality and mobility got strengthened in the post-vedic periods (Brahmanical and Medieval periods) with the rise of private property and establishment of class society.

Patriarchal constructions of social practices are legitimized by religion and religious institution as most religious practices regard male authority as superior and the laws and norms regarding family, marriage, divorce and inheritance are linked to patriarchal control over property biased against women. A person's legal identity with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance are determined by his or her religion, which laid down duties for men and women and their relationship. Most religions endorse patriarchal values and all major religions have been interpreted and controlled by men of upper caste and class. The imposition of parda, restrictions on leaving the domestic space, separation between public and private are all gender specific and men are not subject to similar constraints. Thus the mobility of women is controlled. They have no right to decide whether they want to be mothers, when they want to be, the number of children they want to have, whether they can use contraception or terminate a pregnancy and so on and so forth (also see Bhasin, 6). Male dominated institutions like church and state also lay down rules regarding women's reproductive capacity.

Similarly caste and gender are closely related and the sexuality of women is directly linked to the question of purity of race. The caste system and caste endogamy retained control over the labour and sexuality of women. Anuloma and pratiloma marriage by definition denigrate women (for details see Desai and Krishnaraj, 2004: 303). Caste not only determines social division of labour but also sexual division of labour. Ideologically concepts of caste purity of women to maintain patrilineal succession justified subordination of women. The prohibition of sacred thread ceremony for both women and sudhra, similar punishment for killing a women and sudhra, denial of religious privileges are illustrations which indicate how caste and gender get entrenched (Altekar 1962: 204,317,

326 also see Desai and Krishnaraj, 2004: 304). Feminist writings as '*Gendering Caste Through a Feminist Lens*' (2006) illustrates how caste system upholds the patriarchal values and ideology which is used to justify the dominant, hegemonic, hierarchical and unequal patriarchal structures. Therefore it is important to emphasize the substantive question of sub-ordination of certain sections of society and the structures that make their sub-ordination. For feminist scholars the issue is no longer whether the status of women was low or high but the specific nature and basis of their subordination in society (Chakravarti, 2006: 25). Hence the historical developments of patriarchy/ies and how they have come to stay is important.

Uma Chakravarti argues that the establishment of private property and the need to have caste purity required subordination of women and strict control over their mobility and sexuality. Female sexuality was channeled into legitimate motherhood within a controlled structure of reproduction to ensure patrilineal succession (Chakravarti, 2006: 69). According to her the mechanism of control operated through three different levels. The first device was when patriarchy was established as an ideology and women had internalized through *stridharma* or *pativartadharma* to live up to the ideal notion of womanhood constructed by the ideologues of the society. The second device was laws, customs and rituals prescribed by the brahmanical social code which reinforced the ideological control over women through the idealization of chastity and wife fidelity as highest duty of women. Like Gerda Lerner she believes that patriarchy has been a system of benevolent paternalism in which obedient women were accorded certain rights and privileges and security and this paternalism made the insubordination invisible and led to their complicity in it. The relationship between women purity and caste purity was important and central to brahmanical patriarchy and women were carefully guarded and lower caste men were prevented from having sexual access to women of higher caste. The third was the state itself which supported the patriarchal control over women and thus patriarchy could be established firmly not as an ideology but as an actuality (Uma Chakravarti, in Mohanty, 2004: 285). Therefore gender relations are organized within the structural frame work of family, religion, class, caste, community, tribe and state.

Thus feminist theories provide explanation for a wide range of particular issues and have been enriched by different approaches and perspectives. The feminist movements need to draw on the strength of all feminist theories as each one on its own is incomplete. In fact, feminism will survive as long as patriarchy persists and 'the challenge is to establish a viable and coherent third wave feminism', which will explain the changing nature of gender relations and explore the 'myth of post-feminism' that society is no longer patriarchal as the most obvious forms of sexist oppression have been overcome.

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