



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Navigating Misogyny and Hatredness in Indian Cultural Context

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ABSTRACT

At a time when crimes against women are increasing, the recent being the dowry deaths of four educated women in a span of one month, the Twisha Sharma murder has put before us enormous questions, where she was judged for her decisions by her mother-in-law, passed remarks and tried to malign her character we also at the same time witness hatred and abusive words being used against a dead woman. This is not a single incident where women have to bear the burden of being judged and character assassinated. At a time when we talk of scientific innovation, the attitude towards women unfortunately remains backward, and misogynistic views are strengthened through the institutions of patriarchy and traditions, customs, etc. The Global Gender Parity Report has ranked India in the 131st position out of 14 nations, which only emphasises the need for a gender-equal society that is far away from the current situation in the country. Every time, a woman should prove herself for the remarks that are passed or judgements given, which only complicates the conditions. Hence, navigating misogyny, patriarchy, and hatred has been the biggest challenge the women's movement is facing today. This paper, based on a theoretical perspective and secondary data, identifies such traits that are responsible for this outlook and analyses the causes behind it.

Keywords: Gender discrimination, Misogyny, Patriarchy, Perception, Traits

INTRODUCTION

In the recent past, crimes against women have been increasing, and justifications given by the family members/spouse/husband is alarming in nature. In the Twisha Sharma case, the claims made by her Mother-in-law, who herself is a retired judge, that Ms. Sharma had past relations and she had terminated the pregnancy since she had relations, are totally unfair and normalising this and blaming a dead woman is what shocks the concerned. Similarly, while browsing Facebook, I came across a post that mentioned a person living in Canada who killed his ex-wife, who was pregnant. Two lives were lost, but the husband substantiated his crime, saying that his ex-wife was responsible for the death of his mother. So, she deserved it. How can a person who was wedded to her take her life and that of an unborn child? Such justifications are

being normalised in the name of "protecting the family interest". Now we can understand the amount of torture she must have undergone while living with him. It was precisely for this reason that she had filed a complaint of domestic violence. However, what is alarming is the kind of misogynistic remarks that are made against this woman in social media. Instead of seeking punishment, people have started to defend the husband and accuse the woman that she deserves it. Apart from this, they are also accusing women in general of marrying and luring men to seek alimony. Yes, there may be certain incidents of women misusing the laws. However, when we look into the harsh reality, the picture is different. The NCRB's "Crime in India 2023" report, released in late 2025, revealed a 7.2% rise in total registered cases, totalling 6.24 million, with a crime rate of 448.3 per lakh population (National Crime Records



2023). Cybercrime rose 31% in 2022, while crimes against women and children also saw increases, with high rates in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala. Another study of King's College, London, is also alarming. The survey undertaken in the UK, USA, INDIA, and a few other countries had more than 23000 respondents of Gen Z men, out of which 41% believed that women should listen to their husbands (King's College, London 2025). What is alarming is that 23% of Gen Z women accepted that it is okay if a husband beats his wife. If domestic violence is normalized and believed that it is okay to accept it, how can a gender just society be built?

Another incident, as quoted from the movie ASSI, is again shocking. A school teacher is gang raped and molested, and when the students she teaches come to know the incident, remarks in a WhatsApp group, "Why was he not called?" A seventh-standard boy commenting on such a serious issue in a derogatory manner is, of course, a matter of concern. What needs to be understood here is the mindset that is created and young minds corrupted since they are made to believe that women have to be treated like that. Where are such thoughts coming from, and why are such comments spread across social media when such incidents take place? Perhaps, it is here that Bell Hooks, in her book, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*, says, learning to wear a mask is the first lesson in patriarchal masculinity that a boy learns.

WHAT IS MISOGYNY? HOW CAN WE ADDRESS IT?

The term misogyny was coined in the 17th C from Greek, *Misos* meaning 'hatred' and *gune* meaning 'woman'. Hence, misogyny in a larger context means hatred, hostility against women, typically exhibited by men, especially in a patriarchal society, i.e. a male dominated society, who challenge male dominance. It aims to control women through the ideas, traditions, culture, and patriarchy. The roots of misogyny can be traced back to the emergence of patriarchy when women were considered property, which led to their subjugation, which continues to prevail even now.

These thoughts are so ingrained that we are unable to see women as an equal partner. Society believes that women are inferior to men, despite their achievements. Every time she is required to prove that she is capable of doing. Aristotle, whom we consider the father of political science, held that women were inferior to men and denied the rights of slaves and women, and patriarchy is one of the causes for the emergence of such ideas. Women are weaponised, humiliated in public spaces, and stripped of their innocence, their rights, and their dignity. Toni Morrison, a renowned Poetess, in her poems, discusses cruelty subtly. She describes a system that slowly operates without anyone noticing it. Male dominance, Morrison argued, doesn't need to shout. It doesn't need force; it

works through constant extraction until one is exhausted, and the same system demands that women be soft, nurturing, caring, and, when this has vanished, blame them, including in politics. Columnist Aparna Bhattacharya, in one of her write-ups, opines that the attacks on political leaders are deliberately used to delegitimise them and distract them from substantive debates. Further, she says that misogyny in politics is not incidental but systemic, reflecting a culture where women are targeted through humiliation and gendered abuse, rather than policy criticism. The politics of misogyny will always be obscene because it seeks to shame and silence women rather than engage with their ideas of leadership, she writes¹.

WHAT IS PATRIARCHY THEN?

The word patriarchy literally means the rule of the father or the patriarch. It is a system that primarily gives men the power and authority at all levels, and denies women their rightful choices, discriminates against them solely based on their gender, the preference for a son, etc., thus depriving women of all the opportunities⁷. The social norms on one hand and patriarchy on the other, demoralize women's position in society. As a result, she is subjected to oppression, violence, and humiliation. Her struggles are reflected in every woman, thus making patriarchy stronger. Patriarchy is a system that gives some men the power to control both bodily and psychologically. It shapes power dynamics, social norms, and gender roles.

However, during the feminist movement, this was popularised to show the extent of hatred and abuse that was prevalent in society. Since historically women were assigned the roles lesser than men, she was confined to household chores and raising kids, which later led to the gap in gender roles, thus assuming that it was in no way equal to the roles played by men, who were the bread winners of the family (Even in modern times this continues to exist and men continue to occupy major positions) in all walks of our social life, and in politics it is evident that we are unable to elect competent women and those elected face severe discrimination, the recent one being the speaker of the upper house in Karnataka addressing an MLC in singular word and abusing her in the democratic platform. Instances like this are normalised, but what message does it leave?

Such biases are the result of the social norms that are deeply rooted, which again is a hindrance in building a gender just society. Every time a woman stands up for herself, she stands up for everyone. However, she has to face severe societal restrictions and norms. She has to prove her worth for standing up, and in doing so, she fails. As Simon De Beauvoir has aptly said, "One is not born, but becomes a woman" has such deep meaning in it and



contextualizing in the present times we see how women's ideas are shaped to protect the culture and globalization and imperialism have manifested this systematically and ruthlessly⁹. Thanks to certain programs and policies that try to address such issues. However, we are regressing instead of progressing, and to create a gender just society, we should adopt a much more substantive approach in the interest of all. A more comprehensive healthy practice than the rigid cultural norms, a more diverse thinking than a conservative approach, becomes essential. Then and only then will we be able to build a better society to live and let live. However, what is hindering us from moving forward is the patriarchal beliefs on one hand and the ruthless capitalist ideas and policies on the other⁶.

CAPITALISM AND PATRIARCHY

Though we live in an era of technological innovations, Capitalism and Patriarchy are inseparable as both try to normalise, commodify, and exploit the resources. It believes that gender identity is a profitable issue that is manufactured to cater to the industry, hence a tool of exploitation. The economic exploitation of man by man is witnessed in capitalism, whereas patriarchy too demands women's subordination to men in the name of 'culture', depriving them of a decent and dignified life. Women are often portrayed as the forebearers of traditions, customs, and traditional values that make them believe that they are duty-bound to perform them, irrespective of religion. This keeps women away from the labour market, denying them their rightful position. Female labour participation after the COVID-19 pandemic had drastically reduced but has seen some increase in the recent past, and economists point to this increase as a desperate attempt of rural women's participation in work force, a large portion of them in unpaid, unorganised sectors. Normalising gender stereotypes, norms, misogyny are a part of constructed systemic capitalist ideas which either glorifies or reduce her to non-existent entity. The liberated women on the other hand are made to believe that they have a right over their body and mind. Ultimately, in the end, in the gendered labour market, it is the women who is exploited and bears the burnt of both patriarchy and capitalism. Miki Kashtan argues that patriarchy isn't a war between the sexes – it is a 7000-year-old operating system that strips

men of their humanity while concentrating power in very few⁸.

CONCLUSION

The harmless words, harmless jokes, and talks in a lighter manner that are derogatory to the dignity of women need to be addressed immediately, which can prevent violence to a large extent. However, ending misogyny needs a multi-level approach which involves a combined effort of educating the youth in the right perspective, institutional changes that require inculcating a culture that respects women and girls, and more importantly, see it, naming it, and stopping it. Yes, it's a big challenge, and unless we start changing the mindset right from the family, both patriarchy and misogyny cannot be rooted out. It is a long journey that needs a new beginning.

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