To Change the Patriarchal mindset for a Better Human Civilisation

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In a two month study based findings released on August 24, 2016 of All India Women's Conference, it was noted that there still exists a strong preference for male child among parents having kids of both genders. This study is based on Delhi which is the capital of India where urban atmosphere and profusion knowledge regarding recent national policies and schemes is easier and faster than other parts of India. Despite the speedy expansion of information network through different media, schemes for betterment of girl child are not properly channelized, the study has viewed. The uncertainty of competence level of females, the physical abuses suffered by them that include sexual violence etc. put the girl child at a disadvantageous position and hence there is this revelation of strong preference of male child among the parents. The findings of the study can be also linked to the perpetuation of societal behaviouristic pattern of people that supports continuation of human lineage along the male line.

A keen observation of human psyche in this context reveals that the patriarchal mindset is imbibed in both sexes of human beings. In a socially constructed framework of human mindset, patriarchy is deep rooted and ever encompassing issue. It may thus be defined as a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line. Patriarchy in its crude form is a subjugation of women by men; whether be it in the field of property rights, decision making powers, access to social and cultural avenues and others. It may exist in different forms also, e.g. patri-locality and patri-lineal which are some diffused versions where development is traced and recorded in the male line.

One important point to note down is that these different forms of patriarchal psyche imbibed in the human mind-set is so deep rooted that sometimes some questions may irk in

one's mind whether this type of inequality based gender stereotyping is structured physiologically in human life? But the rational human mind does not easily comply with such notion although it may agree to the nature-bound truth that this difference lays only in the reproductive role of men and women - woman as child bearer, man as sperm producer that leads to creation of human life in woman's womb. That women are weaker physically to men is traceable through analytical tool; however division of views are also noticeable.

That agriculture and agricultural practices were spearheaded by women in the post-hunting-gathering phase of human civilisation is a well accepted concept. However, when settled farming practices emerged as a better avenue of livelihood among the communities, the decision, work practices and other associated matters were taken up by men, they being free from the biological bindings of child birth and related issues. In the later period, with the advent of permanent agricultural practices and emergence of market as a strong economic determinant along with property rights, power relation went in favour of men in the society. Preference for male child marked its beginnings which ensured social security and decadence of inheritance in the male line.

Defining human society in terms of lineage or descendent of a race contains the seeds of patriarchy. A seed germinates when it comes in contact with requisite environment that is composed of land, heat, water etc. These are the determining factors which give the seeds a vista for growing up into a plant. The building up of the physiological structure and acquisition of the distinct characteristics are conditioned not only by what is imbibed in the seeds, but also by the surrounding ecological structure. In the human reproduction, the fertilisation of woman's ovum by man's sperm creates the zygote, the seed of newer generation of humans. It contains the genetic and physiological characteristics of both man and woman. However, the child born in due course of time is identified along the man's line the attributes and legacy of birth is sought through it. The woman as the mother of the child is emotionally attached, being the baby's bearer and caretaker; however, in the patriarchal mode the recognition of her contribution does not go far. The child grows up to a mature human being in an environment where male-centric priorities are common. Hence the moulding up of its thought process with a patriarchal leaning is very natural.

The human society in the primitive stage of civilisation did not follow the dictum of modern life; men's role as the gatherers, hunters, fighters was not alienated from women in carrying out these activities. Women as child bearers did not put them at a disadvantaged position, rather as gatherers of food and eatables from nature they invented the agricultural practices of sowing, transplanting and harvesting of food seeds. The growth of mankind's civilisation took the hierarchal turn with the advent of public-private division of work and activities, also in the process of classifying human beings in the racial line. The public sphere

which is visible, pronounced and ever encompassing became male-centric; especially where power and exchange value predominated. Women's child bearing and child rearing roles restrain them from taking active parts in the emerging public domain. On the other hand, the purity of race was preconditioned by virginity of female body in binding nuptial knots, a practice which is still prevalent in the British and other European royal families. However, men's prowess in making sexual contacts with numerous women never created much uproar in the society. The legitimacy of children born from such contacts was up to society's look-out; with the liberal and unorthodox spree of acceptance in surrounding societal environment, all were internalised in course of time. Whatever might have been public scorn, contempt and misgivings of situations, this internalisation of lineage along the male line is invariably linked to the germination of patriarchy.

As it is witnessed throughout the phases of human civilisation, women's invisibility in publicly accountable sectors not only put them at a disadvantageous position but also subordinated them to men. The growing realisation and resulting frustration made the call for women's emancipation strong, sometimes loud and shrill but which have no doubt made its presence felt in a remarkable way in almost every nook and corner of the conscientious world. In the words of Emma Goldman "Emancipation should make it possible for woman to be human in the truest sense. Everything within her that craves assertion and activity should reach its fullest expression; all artificial barriers should be broken, and the road towards greater freedom cleared of every trace of centuries of submission and slavery". Early women's right leader Lucy Stone viewed that in the white men's world there is a parallel between women and slaves. The call for women's emancipation from this subordinated and subjugated position later generated the issue of women empowerment as an agenda at all levels whereby women's equality as citizen of the society is sought through obtaining empowerment at all levels.

Women empowerment is a strong issue which was initiated for bringing gender justice in the private and public sphere of human society so that the process of development is shared and contributed by men and women wholly and totally. It is a process that began with the attainment of certain level of intellectual ability of humans where the invisibility of women in publicly accountable domains was duly marked and strategies were structured to make them visible and accountable. The terminology encompasses a broader horizon than salvation of women from patriarchal clutch of the society and internalises it with overall development of human society and growth.

Synthesising the essential elements of women's empowerment developed by various authors associated with this field of study, Anju Malhotra, Ruth Schuler and Carol Boender in their paper "Measuring Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development" have proposed the following framework for measuring women's empowerment:

Table 1. Commonly used dimensions of women's empowerment and potential operationalization in the household, community and broader arenas

Dimension	Household	Community	Broader Arenas
Economic	Women's control over income; relative contribution to family support; access to and control of family resources	Women's access to employment; ownership of assets and land; access to credit; involvement and/or representation in local trade associations; access to markets	Women's representation in high paying jobs; women CEO's; representation of women's economic interests in macro-economic policies, state and federal budgets
Socio-Cultural	Women's freedom of movement; lack of discrimination against daughters; commitment to educating daughters	Women's visibility in and access to social spaces; access to modern transportatio; participation in extra-familial groups and social networks; shift in patriarchal norms (such as son preference); symbolic representation of the female in myth and ritual	Women's literacy and access to a broad range of educational options; Positive media images of women, their roles and contributions
Familial/ Inter-personal	Participation in domestic decision-making; control over sexual relations; ability to make childbearing decisions, use contraception, access abortion; control over spouse selection and marriage timing; freedom from domestic violence	Shifts in marriage and kinship systems indicating greater value and autonomy for women (e.g. later marriages, self selection of spouses, reduction in the practice of dowry; acceptability of divorce); local campaigns against domestic violence	Regional/national trends in timing of marriage, options for divorce; political, legal, religious support for (or lack of active opposition to) such shifts; systems providing easy access to contraception, safe abortion, reproductive health services
Legal	Knowledge of legal rights; domestic support for exercising rights	Community mobilization for rights; campaigns for rights awareness; effective local enforcement of legal rights	Laws supporting women's rights, access to resources and options; Advocacy for rights and legislation; use of judicial system to redress rights violations
Political	Knowledge of political system and means of access to it; domestic support for political engagement; exercising the right to vote	Women's involvement or mobilization in the local political system/campaign; support for specific candidates or legislation; representation in local bodies of government	Women's representation in regional and national bodies of government; strength as a voting bloc; representation of women's interests in effective lobbies and interest groups
Psycho-logical	Self-esteem; self-efficacy; psychological well-being	Collective awareness of injustice, potential of mobilization	Women's sense of inclusion and entitlement; systemic acceptance of women's entitlement and inclusion

In the Indian perspective, women's empowerment is also linked to acquirements of different rights for their salvation from societal bondage. The acquirement of property rights for women especially in the disadvantaged societies of countries like India is a major determining factor. M Sarshar (2010) of National Law University, Delhi in his work "Patriarchy- The Indian Experience" has viewed:

In particular there are four methods of empowerment through conferment of substantive of rights or power on person to be empowered. Firstly, by creating penal sanctions against certain types of behaviour that violate the dignity and liberty of women, such as section 376 in the Indian Penal Code for custodial rape and section 498-A for harassment and cruelty against women. Secondly, by creating proprietary entitlement for women such as giving them a share on matrimonial property or giving them a right to work and an equal wage. Thirdly, by providing preferential treatment for women or providing compensatory discrimination in their favour by reserving jobs and seats in local self governing institution. Lastly, by facilitating the exercise of liberty and freedom for females.

These methods may look not all engulfing but in the present ongoing position of average Indian woman where rural population dominate, empowerment in the above mentioned fields can make way for gender justice and equality for women's visible presence in the nation and society at large. Health and education are some other important factors of capacity building and empowerment along these directions give ways to their freedom and self determination.

The growing importance of women empowerment at different policy issues and levels has shown the relevance of the subject in the growth and development of human civilization. It is well directed and has picked up its speed in modern life. However the very skewed distribution of income and wealth, domination of rural life and society, polarization of population along caste creed and ethnicity, religious taboos and superstitions etc. of our country lead to a direction which is far away from what is sought through women's empowerment. Here the domination of patriarchal mindset is a stark reality especially among the village people where people's awareness lack due to relative inaccessibility of knowledge generating through still existing bottlenecks and hurdles.

Sexual difference, based on physical differences between men and women is naturally nurtured, a requirement for the progression of human race. Women as child bearers have inbuilt physical capability that should be properly taken care of for a sustained and healthy human race. The notion of gender difference that generated through culturally connoted roles of men and women had appeared uneven and unjust to women in the patriarchal mould of society. When it makes one gender a relatively disadvantageous entity to the other, dichotomy thus created threatens healthy growth. The call for gender equality and gender

justice has harnessed from this situation. The culturally developed gender role of male and female has changed over time and it is moving towards gender equality. The movement towards this egalitarianism is spearheaded by a good number of women rights activists and groups, women's emancipation movement, the pioneers of women's empowerment and others. Hopefully this development is not likely to put any blockade on expansion of one's horizon, it be mental, physical or intellectual on the part of man and woman. Also, the quest will be wholly successful if and only if these efforts become effective in eliminating the patriarchal mindset of both men and women.

Another concept that attracts recent attention of people is the issue of gender neutrality. This concept marks no difference between male and female with regard to various issues be it education, health, access to different avenues of livelihood etc. The concept sounds good but by overlooking the differences in physical capabilities and its consequences in human's social and personal life, its stand appears as not based on ground reality. Besides, the patriarchal tradition is still very much present in most of the developing countries. Without empowering the weaker gender to generate capabilities on their own, the implementation of gender-neutral norms is likely to generate more unequal status between men and women. One may point out its relevance in the context of transgender people. But mere gender neutral approach does not seem to be capable of eradicating the problems of this group. The ethos and taboos linked with it are deep-rooted that need more subtle and inclusive methods for bringing the intersex people to the mainstream. The scorn and distrustfulness of patriarchal outlook has not been capable of generating confidence in them as persons; and it may be one reason for the transgender to mostly attire themselves like women, it being a refuse where they can find solidarity with the oppressed gender - the female gender!

The transition from an unequal set up to a structure based on equality of sexes is somehow marred by the still scintillating presence of patriarchal mindset among people. The women empowerment movement is expected to eliminate it by spreading up the empowerment measures in whole-hearted manner so that confidence in girl child finds its place at par in human mindset.

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