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Original Research Article

Need for sustained efforts for creating a gender-balanced society in Indian culture

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ABSTRACT

Diverse feminist viewpoints have been used to explore and study the construction of masculinity in India. During the pre-colonial and colonial centuries, the feminist approach, which concentrated on the discourse, grew significantly more popular. Due to severe patriarchal oppression, women's status in the pre-independence era significantly declined in the areas of productivity, reproduction, sexual health, mobility, and economic resources. Sex-determination tests that result in the killing of female babies today in the post-colonial era are detrimental to women. Strong indicators that have warranted the examination of gender frameworks that govern how masculinities are produced and manifested are rapidly shifting sex ratios and growing evidence of violence against women. Women behave in self-restraining ways because they are trapped in many roles, a lack of decision-making power, and a gender-inequitable society, not because they are trained as women. In order to achieve a gender-balanced society, this article emphasizes the necessity for persistent efforts to improve both men's and women's participation in eradicating socio-cultural barriers, stereotyped views, and violence against women.

1. Introduction

Indian society is still patriarchal, much like many other "classical" societies. Through certain cultural metaphors, patriarchal principles governing sexuality, reproduction, and social productions are conveyed. There were overt laws preventing women from engaging in vital particular activities and denying them certain rights. The most subtly expressed form of patriarchy, however, is symbolism, or the sending of messages about the inferiority of women through myths that extol the pure, selfless image of women. It is also demonstrated by the ritualistic actions that consistently highlight women's roles as devoted mothers and devoted wives. Additionally, women are taught not to oppose subjugation, exploitation, subordination, and discrimination at different levels of the system. These expectations prevent women from having goals outside of marriage. Similar to how women's gender norms are built around femininity, men's sense of self is dependent on their capacity to dominate women. Until the daughter gets married, the father's honor and manhood are symbolized by his guardianship of her and his insistence that she remain virginal.

A substantial portion of ideas and literature on Indian men are restricted to a middle-class, metropolitan strata. A few book-length studies on various facets of Indian masculinity have been published recently using interdisciplinary approaches to the topic [1]. Indian masculinity is difficult to theoretically explain. In a literal meaning, masculinity refers to traits or qualities that are thought to be usual or fitting for a male. But how is a man from India different from other men? Is it even feasible to distinguish between the experiences of men in the various societies that make up our world, or are we

attempting to challenge a single hegemonic male authority? When attempting to comprehend Indian masculinity, the researchers were forced to consider a number of issues.

Men's expectations of their role have become unclear as a result of women's demands for freedom and equality, claim analysts in the subject of masculinity studies [2]. The dependent housewife model of the family is disintegrating, and one of the issues that has plagued males is how they may demonstrate their supremacy and manhood in these new conditions. Additionally, sociologists contend that in response to societal and cultural shifts, feminism has grown in strength and new conceptions of masculinity have also evolved. Thus, the replacement of Connell's hegemonic masculinity by the New Man, also known as the feminized man, has sparked a moral panic about what it means to be a man at the start of the 21st century.

2. Objective of the study

This paper examines the numerous discourses that contribute to the creation of masculinity and the various difficulties that women in India encounter. Based on the secondary data that is currently accessible, the major goal of this study is to investigate the contributing elements that can be linked to men's attitudes and behaviors on a variety of issues as they pertain to gender equality in Indian society. During their formative years in the 1980s and 1990s, Indian males witnessed a certain brand of patriarchal masculinity that is now being questioned. Is masculinity in trouble then? There is no doubt that it appears like masculinity is in transition at the



moment, with the notion of what a man is and how he should behave being up for debate. The challenge to masculinity as it has been for the past several hundred years is more unquestionably true.

3. Psychoanalysis and masculinity

Psychoanalytic feminists examine gender-specific desires and meanings at the unconscious level of experience in addition to the conscious level of experience when analyzing patriarchy. The roots of patriarchal behavior representations can be found at key phases of an individual's psychological growth. These are the times when questions of desire and identity arise and are resolved in various ways based on societal, cultural, and personal circumstances. Some of these moments center on the relationship between the two mothers, while others focus on the interaction between the mother, child, and father. All of these involve attempts by boys and daughters to free themselves from their mother's wish to become identified with the father, who stands for strength and authority. Through psychological reunifications with the mother-figure, the sons readily transition into the sphere of power and authority that is reserved for men. It is different for daughters who develop behaviors that make them more appealing to males in order to make up for their inability to emulate their fathers.

4. Pre-colonial period and masculinity

Natural resources and cultural legacy are abundant in India. During the Vedic era, women in India were treated equally to men in all spheres of life. Women were educated and married at a mature age, according to the renowned ancient Indian saints Patanjali and Katyana, and they also had the freedom to choose their husbands. Due to the Aryan and Mughal invasions during the Middle Ages, women's status in society declined. The alien culture was foisted onto Indian women. Women were viewed as second-class citizens at this time due to the dominance of the patriarchal society.

For Hindu liberals and conservatives alike, India's historical knowledge finally contributed to the development of compelling rhetoric, particularly with regard to the myth of the Vedic era as the golden age of Indian femininity. The Vedic *dasi* was left to continue being caught, oppressed, and enslaved by the conquering Aryans as a result of this image's focus on the Aryan women as the only historical issue. The Vedic *dasi* was a member of the ancient Indian society as well, but she vanished and is not mentioned in the history of the nineteenth century. Nobody lamented her disappearance, but nobody also paid attention to her when she was there. Ramabai [4], a nineteenth-century advocate for women's rights, provides an autobiographical account of a widow from the illustrious "golden age" to offer an informative picture of the true position of women in high caste houses.

5. Colonial period and masculinity

Diverse discourses that have addressed the issue of women's position have divergent views on the causes of and solutions to female oppression. The first group was made up of colonial administrators, missionaries, ideologues, and other Western observers in India, while the second group was made up of academics, politicians, and social reformers from India.

They tended to share a view in the superiority of the Civilization of Westernized Christian nations over others, although having distinct objectives. Others had received a Western education and were liberally influenced, while some of them were experts in Indian philosophy and literary works. In her book *Modern India*, American writer Katherine Mayo made a graphic illustration in 1927. This book is notable for its outright prejudice towards Indian traditions and culture. According to James Mill, a nation's treatment of women reflects its level of civilization. As a result, one setting for male discourse about the possibility of improving the status of Indian women was imperialism.

A series of foreign invasions began in the second century B.C. in India; some of the invaders fled after causing looting, fire, and murder, but some stayed and established themselves. The Moghuls, who came to the subcontinent from the North West, were most notable for bringing a new religion and a different system of power relations. Despite the fact that some monarchs forced people to become Christians, many of them did not change the social structure of the community. While pursuing their commercial objectives, the British also intruded into Indians' private lives. According to them, their acts were "clear, precise, instrumentalist, technical, scientific, true, and above all beneficial to all, who came into contact with it" [5].

6. Post-independence and masculinity

Following independence, the Indian Constitution embraced the idea of gender equality. The preamble mentioned social, economic, and political equality of status and opportunity. Several legislation, including the Uniform Civil Code, those pertaining to dowry killings, rape, and health difficulties, addressed the issue of violence against women. In response to each public agitation by the feminists, the government on its part introduced a number of revisions to the existing legislation.

7. Sex ratio and masculinity

For many years, there has been concern about the high masculine sex ratios in India. Since the numerical disparities between the sexes were highlighted in the 1970s [10], a great deal of attention has been dedicated to various characteristics of female deficits in India and persistent regional differences [6-9]. The focus of the discussion has been reduced to changes in the juvenile or child sex ratio as a result of the 2011 Census results. In the South Asian environment, which is considered to be more hostile to females at a young age, changes in the sex ratio of children between the ages of 0 and 6 are better indications of the status of girl children. Additionally, it depicts the overall gender relations within households.

8. Socialization, internalization, and masculinity

Masculinity is not a singular, homogeneous concept. Caste/race, class, the urban-rural divide, geopolitical boundaries, family, and other environmental elements are sociocultural forces that shape it. However, due to patriarchy's pervasiveness, several common trends may be seen in many societies. Through the socialization process, gender prejudice in many forms is encouraged in the family. Playing with dolls, assisting the mother or sister in the kitchen, or performing household tasks are portrayed as not being within the purview

of men, and boys who engage in these are branded as "effeminate" not only by older men but also by their peers. Boys are taught that being sad or crying is not a sign of a real man from a young age. The male infant is taught not to display basic human emotions like fear or grief, therefore the male mind has to erase sentiments of delicacy, propriety, and sensitivity from his mental landscape and construct a protective wall of bravado radiating alienation and loneliness. His quest for authority and control to feel secure starts there. The struggle for dominance creates a cycle where people can't build meaningful relationships and later fail to recognize their value.

In their study, researchers found that most girls have measurably less free time than guys. The distinct sexual division of labour assigned to boys and girls has been demonstrated by Gore [11] in his psycho-social studies on child-rearing in Indian homes as one of the strategies to implant gender-specific expectations. Gender stereotypes of domineering women and weak men may obstruct communication, limit access to health information, and encourage dangerous behavior in women. In the end, they make people more susceptible to risks to sexual health such as violence, sexual exploitation, unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and HIV [12].

Men are socialized to prepare them for a world of management and leadership that is marked by aggressiveness, risk-taking, and a long-term, reliable dedication to the career. The 'macho-world' of business, management/administration, or politics is not for women. The process of socialization continues constantly through a variety of institutions, including family, school, the media, church, etc., which support the gender ideology by the roles and images they present. Because humans are acted upon by society and socialization is seen as being outside of human control, this explanation takes a functionalist perspective. Those who disagree with this strategy contend that the ideology enforced is a dominating group ideology. Men make up the dominating groups in the symbolic interaction, while women make up the subordinate groupings.

9. Sexual division of labour and masculinity

A saying like "home and childcare taste sweeter to women while business and profession taste sweeter to men" has long had unquestionable societal approbation in Indian society. The sociocultural norms have largely limited the role of women to childbearing, childrearing, and taking care of household duties; women are not expected to participate in employment outside the home. The soul of a man is in his work outside the home, but the soul of a woman is in caring for the man, according to a frequently quoted line from ancient Tamil classical (Sangam) literature. In Tamil, the word "Illal" (one who dominates the home) is a synonym for women.

Her ties to her husband and family determine how connected she is to the market and the "public." A woman who works outside of her house has also experienced low regard and low value. It is more socially acceptable for a woman to work as an unpaid family member on her family's farm than it is for her to work in the same field as a paid or waged worker [13].

Male-female work polarization varies depending on the various social values accorded to men and women. While pursuing higher education, stereotypical thinking and gender

bias have an impact on both men and women, resulting in variations in their professional expectations and choices. Society sends a message to young men that they should get ready for a career that would provide for a family. Young women are told differently, implying that their professions are less significant than those of men. Women are confined even in higher education with little opportunity for advancement.

10. Violence and masculinity

The modern women's movements played a crucial role in identifying and emphasizing gender concerns impacting women around the world. Even though problems like violence against women are widespread, different communities experience these problems in different ways, such as dowry killing, genital mutilation, honour killings, etc. The women's movements and their academic offshoot, Women's Studies, not only made these "invisible" issues public, but they also gave analysts of all "human" issues a solid, thorough, alternative paradigm. Through a skillful blending of academic research and experience-sharing, the "women's perspective" on everything from sexuality, gender relations, to development paradigm, and ecology, was developed. The women's movements made the most significant effort to dissolve the opposition between "theory" and "action," "experience" and "discourse," etc.

While Roop Kanwar's sati sparked a female uprising against religiously motivated violence. In response, the government passed a sati prevention bill that was essentially a rehash of the flawed 1929 law. The lines between forced and voluntary sati are muddled by this statute, which also designates sati as a crime against women and holds the other parties only partially responsible for the woman's actions.

The Mathura rape case ruling, which freed the cops who had sexually assaulted a young tribal girl named "Mathura" and blamed the unfortunate child for her destiny, stunned India's educated middle class women in 1980. In the former, the odds were on the side of the women, but in the later, the court cited article 25, which protects the right to practice one's religion. When a girl was gang-raped in a moving bus on a Delhi road on December 16, 2012, it stunned the nation's capital and sparked nationwide outrage. The victim's premature death served as motivation for taking action to reduce crime against women. The Government had to alter the legislation due to the severity of the crime and public protest. According to Mane and Aggleton's findings from 2001, society has different expectations for women than it does for males, and it tolerates a number of behaviors that are bad for women's sexual health, like early marriage and sexual or domestic abuse.

11. Caste and masculinity

Researchers in Rajasthan looked into how caste affected how males perceived violence and masculinity. Two State districts that are diverse in terms of culture and economy are where the study was conducted. Caste differences that highlight the various facets of masculinity were investigated. For instance, Rajputs stressed bravery and engaging in wider social issues, whereas Jats emphasized working hard and supporting the family. However, there were significant similarities in men's views of violence and masculinity across

castes. All respondents said that perceived "failed" masculinity, such as arguments about one partner not fulfilling their role or threats to the husband's masculine entitlements, served as the catalyst for violence against their wife.

Researchers studied the effects of militancy and broader economic change in Punjab, finding that increasing agricultural expansion had a negative influence on domestic violence. Two districts with different histories of militancy and agricultural transformation were the sites of the study. The study's key result was that women's primary function in Punjab's upper castes is to maintain their husbands' public masculinity. Women were particularly susceptible to violence from their spouses in the domestic domain during the militant period, when men's masculinity was undercut in the public sphere. Lower castes now have access to larger wages and are better able to imitate higher castes to obtain status as a result of industrialization and the Green Revolution. This trend includes lower caste men reporting substantially higher levels of violence and imitating upper caste men's strict control of women [14].

12. Men and masculinity

The way that males govern the women in their families and make sure that they perform their expected roles is another important way that men exhibit their masculinity. Women who do not play necessary roles or who question men's behavior put men's masculinity in danger, frequently leading to a violent response. According to Fuller [15], wives are invariably the ones who set off violent outbursts, either because they neglected to uphold their end of the bargain or because they "reacted with energy" when the husband neglected his. Violence was more likely to break out in circumstances where the wife challenged the man in front of his relatives or friends. The most extreme examples of this behavior are probably when male family members kill women for "dishonouring their families" by engaging in adultery and other sexual vices.

Women and girls are the "gender" that requires protection and control, whereas men and masculinity are accepted as the norm. In our society, men are supposed to become the "providers" and "protectors" of their families. The society expected men to be aggressive, powerful, and emotionless, both implicitly and frequently overtly. Yes, not all men or masculinities are created equal. Some men try to prove their manhood through their sexual prowess due to the appearance of patriarchal masculinity, which is defined by male sexual domination and unequal gender roles, as well as a lack of sexual experience and knowledge. Due to the channels of coercive sexual behavior and sexual control, this has a significant negative impact on how women in society choose to express their sexuality. It's intriguing to investigate how these behaviors appear to prioritize impressing other males with their masculinity. Men's opinions toward male-to-male sex, ideas about women's sexuality, and concerns about sexual health all contribute to the connection between masculinity and sexuality.

Due to the general pattern of male dominance and privilege, men have generally been invisible in identifying gender problems. But in order to have a more accurate knowledge of how gender inequality and other inequities are created, men's harms must be exposed. Masculinity analysis is

the study of how males are gendered. This investigation has shown how the mere identification of men as men is linked to gender violence. In particular, being a man demands ongoing demonstration of one's manliness; it is a position that can never be attained but must instead be continuously developed and put to the test.

13. Conclusions

Without improvements in men's and women's lives, gender equality will not be feasible. The reality that gender imbalances in patriarchal systems favor males must be recognized; as such, it is crucial to urge men to take charge of their reproductive health as a responsible sexual partner, husband, and parent. Men in particular need to be taught and socialized about having healthy sexual relationships and how important it is to help women by bearing some of the load. Additionally, consistent efforts must be made to reduce stereotyped attitudes, socio-cultural barriers, violence against women, and gender inequality in order to improve the involvement of males in the family. These underlying structural issues must be taken into account and seriously addressed if sexual behavior is to be changed in an effective way.

A review conducted by the Public Health Foundation of India and ICRW in 2014 found that organizations employed gender-congruent or gender-transformative tactics to alter men's and boys' attitudes about gender parity. Women are entering the public sphere as India undergoes its transformation due to a shift in the thinking of the populace. As a result, the cultural code of masculinity will be broken, leading to a society where gender equality is the norm.

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