

South Asian Literature, Culture and Society

A Critical Ruminatiion



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Patriarchy and Female Subordination: Exploring the Equality Debate

Kauser Tasneem

Patriarchy believes in male superiority and female inferiority and is expressed in the form of male domination and female subordination. Patriarchal society denies gender equality. Individual expressions are particularly strong in areas of women's autonomy and individuality. In the public sphere, the man owns the socio-political and economic institutions of society. Man has power because of this ownership, and he uses this power to maintain his status quo in society. In the private sphere, a woman who makes a 'home' out of a house is not the decision-maker of the house. The story of mankind has been the story of this ownership and dependency which is articulately manoeuvred through the institution of 'patriarchy.' Half a section of society is subordinate to the 'other' half section of the society. A woman is perennially kept dependent by her systematic exclusion in economic organizations and in decision-making bodies of the legislature. In the private as well as the public arena, power always vests upon the male section of the society. Kamla Bhasin opines: "Patriarchy refers to male domination, to the power relationship by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in many ways" (3). At the same time, Walby defines "patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (20).

Ethnic and religious groups strongly rally against any progressive step to bring about gender equality as they find it