
UNIT 4 VIOLENCE WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Structure

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

You have already read in Unit 1 and 3 on patriarchy and violence in broader sense. In this unit, you will study about violence within communities. The community often creates an impression of harmony among its members. On the contrary, there are power relations that impact a community. There are issues related to hierarchies within a community. Impact of the external power relations to decide the nature of the communities. It reproduces patriarchy in multiple ways. Modern society coexists with its laws and customs. It exists with such contradictions. Such so-called societies have become modern is also need to be analyzed to differentiate modernity from that tradition. There are societal contradictions that impact the nature of relations among the members of the community. It is also impacted by the political economy at the national and international levels. Communities cannot exist outside such political and cultural orders. Communities thus are undergoing various forms of schisms and consensus across their members.

4.2 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this Unit, you are able to :

- Understand the role of patriarchy that determine the violence within communities;
- Learn the categories of violence and communities;
- Engage with the debates on the category of honor; and
- Study the resurgence of norms and customs in the modern society.

4.3 PATRIARCHY AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS

Before delving into the epistemological or knowledge-related dimensions of the category of patriarchy, one needs to have a rudimentary understanding of that category. The literal meaning of the patriarchy is the rule of the father. It was deployed to refer to the fathers of the tribes of Israel. Later it was used in the context of the honorific designation of the Bishops of the Church. Gradually, it became the official term for the heads of the Eastern churches. It was used in the context of the government of the family, church and society of fathers. It is deployed to show the social systems grounded in the authority of the male heads of the households. Contemporary feminist theories use this term to refer to male domination. It is observed that in “Durkheim’s view, the transition from clan to patriarchal family to conjugal family is connected to the fact that family solidarity rests on both persons and things” (Adams and Sydie,2002:109). While discussing the violence within the communities, one has to understand the various perspectives on the family. It is analyzed that the patriarchal family has increased the moral scope of the wife and the mother (Durkheim, cited in Adams and Sydie,2002:114). It is further noted that the increase in the family “intervene to occupy a man’s mind, the more he falls out of the habit of regarding his wife as inferior” (Durkheim, cited in Adams and Sydie,2002:114)). Some scholars analyzed patriarchy as part of the anti-status-quoist ideology and practice. Friedrich Engels analyzed that the abolition of the monogamous patriarchal family was needed for the emancipation of women. At the same time, there were critiques of the class-based enquiry that could not capture the unique nature of the class status of women within the patriarchal, capitalist system. It is critiqued that “a major difficulty is that Marx and Engels, blinded by the entrenched patriarchy of their day, did not identify women as members of the oppressed proletariat” (Sydie, cited in Adams and Sydie,2002:138).

Patriarchy also determines the women, work and gender (Standing, 1999:587). The gig economy in the neoliberal phase of current capitalism structures the nature of work and gendered labour. However, one should have a fundamental understanding of the patriarchal power while exploring the violence within the communities. What is the nature of patriarchal power? Power and domination, for Adams and Sydie, need to be understood in the context of Max Weber’s reading of social relations as conflict relations. Max Weber analyzed how the structure of domination determines the social sphere. Weber analyzed “diametrically contrasting types of domination” such as “the indirect form of the domination” and “the direct form of the domination”. Goods and marketable skills-related domination is part of the indirect form of domination. It is noted that the boundaries that mark these dominations are fluid (Adams and Sydie,2002:182). Weber argued that “clear-cut antithesis between factual power which completely out of possession and by way of interest compromises in the market and... the authoritarian power of a patriarch or a monarch with its appeal to the duty of the obedience as such “(Weber, cited in Adams and Sydie,2002:182). It is noted that all forms of domination need self-justification or legitimation.

Weber analyzed three forms of domination or the three principles of legitimation such as traditional, charismatic and rational-legal.

They are the ideal types of domination or legitimation. It is observed that such forms “occurring in historical reality constitute combinations, mixtures, adaptations, or modifications of these pure types” (Weber, cited in Adams and Sydie,2002:182). Tradition or custom determines the nature of traditional domination. It justifies or sanctifies the position of the ruler. Patriarchy is considered a form of domination. It is further noted that it is the patriarchy linked to the household or the clan. What decides the claim to legitimacy? Max Weber discusses the legitimacy grounded nature in descent, God or the divine event. It is noted that a claim based on divine connection can be male or female. It is noted that the claim is carried out through the male line. It makes the patriarch exercise personal power. Reverence for tradition and custom may force the subordinate to obey the patriarch. Patriarch may be replaced due to the hereditary lines of patriarchal succession. Patriarchal domination acquires various forms such as feudalism. Patriarch thus maintains absolute power over the subordinate sections. It is analyzed that the administration by the patriarch is personally held and it negates the borders between the public and the private. It is observed that women sometimes gain power in patrimonial systems. But they are analyzed as the “stand-ins for their male kin or offspring and their exercise of power are unusual and short lived. Patriarchal power is pure male power and derives from the bases of household authority -superior strength and practical knowledge and experience” (Adams and Sydie,2002:182-183). It is described as the power of “men as against women and children, of the able-bodied as against those of lesser capability of the adult against the child, of the child against the young” (Weber, cited in Adams and Sydie,2002:183). Women and children are the subjects who have to obey the patriarch. It is noted that “whether the woman is a wife or a slave regardless of the facts of paternity” (Weber, cited in Adams and Sydie,2002:183). Weber analyzed the nature of the patriarchal household organization. (Adams and Sydie,2002:182-183). Max Weber thus provides a nuanced understanding of the patriarchy.

There are various interpretations related to patriarchy. Social theoretical and purely social science-based perspectives proliferate the readings on the category of patriarchy. It is important to revisit those perspectives on patriarchy to revitalize the understanding of violence within communities. Henry Maine discussed the “totalitarian patriarchy”. Totalitarian patriarchy is “a primordial patriarchal despotism for the human race” (Amadiume, 2005:84). Maine’s perspectives are regarded as the general gender history and they are called the patriarchal theory. It is considered a fundamental theoretical premise that operates behind European philosophical and political thought. It focuses on the power called father and results in the denial of the motherhood kinship and structure (Amadiume,2005:84). There are othering and conceptual dilemmas in the such understanding of the patriarchy. It is observed that “Diop has argued that this basic patriarchal ideology was reproduced at the state level in the European model, but the actual concept of state came to the Europeans from Egyptian Africa as a result of the direct capitalism” (Diop, cited in Amadiume,2005:84). It is observed that Cheikh

Anta Diop thus disagreed with the generalized evolutionist scholars of marriage, kinship and motherhood like J .M.Mclennan, L.H.Morgan and J.Bachofen. It is further observed that “...they postulated a progression from barbarism and savagery in primitive sexual promiscuity to matrilineal descent to matriarchy and mother-right, and finally to masculine imperialism in patriarchy, monogamy and the nuclear family (Amadiume,2005:84). Thus, the patriarchy and matriarchy are contested in the context of race and geopolitics of ideas. Scholars across various racial-global locations have generated diverse readings on the category of patriarchy.

Matriarchy is often analyzed as a social order that challenges the patriarchal society. It is the social organization in which mothers act as the head of the families. Friedrich Engels discusses it as the rule of women in hunter-gatherer societies (Engels,884). Those societies did not have the idea of property rights. However, patriarchy emerged as a consequence of the privatization of land rights. Patriarchy is also equated with that of conquest. The idea of matriarchy also challenges the universal nature of the category of patriarchy. Scholars have discussed this shift from the right of the mothers to that of the rights of the father. There are diverse critiques of the dominant understanding of patriarchy. It is noted that “the mother-child relationship, in Weber’s view, simply a natural, pre-social relationship that only became a social relationship when men organized households and acquired control over women’s sexuality so that the connection between (male) parent and child could be legally established. Weber claimed that great empires of the Far and Near East, India and the Mediterranean, as well as Northern Europe, all developed out of the patriarchal household organization. Weber asserted that the idea of matriarchy is inaccurate due to the lack of evidence “if any other form of kinship arrangements other than patrilineal relationships “ever since kinship relations ...(have) been regulated by law” (Adams and Sydie,2001:183). There are racial constructions related to the matriarchy as well.

For instance, it is noted that Patricia Hill Collins questioned the white scholar’s description of black women as powerful matriarchs who “allegedly emasculate their lovers and husbands”. Adams and Sydie observed that “...in this interpretation, the “absence of the black patriarchy is used as evidence for Black cultural inferiority “and Blackmen’s underachievement” (Collins, cited in Adams and Sydie,2001:570). W E B Du Bois earlier observed that “Black women’s centrality in black families “ was not a “cause of African-American social status” but an “outcome of racial oppression and poverty”(Du Bois, cited in Adams and Sydie,2001:570).It is analyzed that Cheikh Anta Diop “postulated four cradles or histories of kinship and gender: Africa as the agricultural matriarchal south, Europe as nomadic patriarchal north, the Mediterranean basin as the middle belt where matriarchy preceded patriarchy, Western Asia as the zone of confluence”(Diop, cited in Amadiume,2005:85). What led to such reductionist understanding of patriarchy? It is noted that “...in all the so-called scientific comparative reconstructions by the nineteenth-century theorists, African data were left out. Significantly, it was African data that effectively overturned the theories of a general evolution of kinship. The concept of matriarchy as a female rule

has been the main reason why the idea was ruled out as non-existent in history. Diop marshalled an array of empress and queens from as far as back as the nineteenth century BC and through into recent history, from Ethiopia, Egypt and the rest of Africa -to challenge this Eurocentric conclusion” (Amadiume,2005:85). Diop observed that “in pre-colonial Africa, there was no transition from matriarchy to patriarchy since the social structure was essentially matriarchal in the sense of female rule, the female transmission of property and descent, and man being the mobile element in marriage and sexual union. Fundamental changes in the African social structure began with Arabo Islamic invasions ...and became more far-reaching under European imperialism” (Diop, cited in Amadiume,2005:85). Patriarchy and its changing nature have been addressed by the scholars. It is argued that “...men and patriarchal ideologies control women’s reproductive and sexual capacities, and that as a result, women are trapped by their reproductive and sexual capacities, and that as a result, women are trapped by their reproductive anatomy and by a dogma of compulsory heterosexuality” (Rosaldo, Lamphere, Rubin, Rapp, Rich, Abel and Caplan, cited in Nfah-Abbenyi,2005:260). Capitalism radically impacts the social systems throughout the world. It is important to understand the patriarchy in the neoliberal phase of contemporary capitalism. Gendering, for Lorraine Green, can be located in the context of its intersections with capitalism.

Kate Millet analyses how the gendering of individuals is being carried out from the top to the bottom through the process known as internal colonization “...that operate in and through monolithic patriarchy...or via patriarchal and capitalist forces .as traditionally, explicated by radical and dual systems feminists” (Millet, cited in Green, 2004:35). Capitalistic patriarchy as a category unveiled the complex relations of capitalism and patriarchy. It is observed that “capitalism uses patriarchy and patriarchy is defined by the needs of the capital ...patriarchy (as male sexual supremacy) provides the sexual hierarchical ordering of society for political control and as a political system cannot be reduced to its economic structure; while capitalism as an economic class system driven by the pursuit of profit feeds of the patriarchal ordering” (Eisenstein,1979:28). Patriarchy as an ideological system thus limits the social mobility of the women. It is noted that “patriarchal, hegemonic power significantly limits and constraints individual agency and self-actualization, particularly that of women, whose significantly reduced life chances in comparison to men, are reflected in gendered inequalities in poverty, health...and in various other spheres such as unemployment” (Glendinning, Millar, Doyal, cited in Green, 2004:57). Systemic violence related to the gender relations thus undermine the spirit of an egalitarian society. The next section discusses the violence within communities.

Check Your Progress-1

1. *Write your views on patriarchy and its manifestations.*

4.4 VIOLENCE WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Power relations within a community often operate in overt and covert ways. There are visible power relations. Intergenerational differences may be caught within the overall structure of the communities. Social stratification redefines the community in multiple ways. It fragments and polarizes the community as well. The cohesive nature of the community may operate at an ideal level. Moral education and its relations with ethos/religion complicate the nature of ethics. The position of the individual is often questioned in plural ways. At the same time, an individual can not completely detach from the ethical space of the community. Actions and consequences of the members of the community question the nature of ethics as well. Violence within the communities challenges the existence of individuals in particular and communities in general. The community looks at the violence within the communities in a complicated manner. The community may have the idea of good actions and taboos. At the same time, the question is whether the community can derive an internal critique or not. It is observed that “violence against women among the Beba is considered as a taboo; indeed, beating one’s wife is as serious a crime as committing suicide through hanging...individuals are thus encouraged to seek other avenues within their families/society in solving their problems instead of resorting to suicide (Nfah-Abbenyi,2005:270). There are metanarratives or dominant constructions related to health and gender relations within the communities. Such projection of community often is uncritical of its ideology and practices. It is also not helpful to assess the relations across the members of the community.

Scholars in India have analyzed the methodological tensions that emerge while studying the violence within the communities. Social science-based research on marriage demonstrates the difficulties in unveiling such a conceptual world of internal community-linked tensions. It is analyzed that “the discussions on dowry have been particularly tied to the issue of ‘bride burnings ‘and has both enabled and obscured the issue of marital violence. Women’s groups have been active in both issues, though unevenly so, across time and place...Importantly, there has been a tendency for studies to focus on violence per se. Unwittingly perhaps, this feeds into the idea that violence is a pathology rather than embedded in the cultural and political economy of contemporary marriage, kinship and gender. A critique of the perceived normality of marriage and gender practices have entered the frame in some studies of ‘honour killings’ seen primarily in certain regions of the subcontinent such as parts of Pakistan and northern India” (Palriwala, Chowdhry, Hossain and Welchman, Saheli and Kaur, cited in Kaur and Rajni,2014:11). Religious and caste-based violence led to polarization based on diverse caste cum religious identities. There are dominant sections and subordinate sections within the community. Violence may erupt between the internal and hierarchical ranks before affecting the conflict at the external level. Racial intolerance too fragments the idea of the community. The next section discusses the question of honour and its embedded nature in caste and violence.

4.5 QUESTION OF HONOUR

Social institutions reproduce crime in peculiar ways. It assesses conformity and deviance in a particular manner. Honour killing is much discussed across diverse disciplines. It is observed that “reports of what is called ‘honour killings’-violent attempts to prevent self-choice or inter-caste marriage-are also frequent in North India and Pakistan” (Palriwala and Ravinder,2014:1). khap Panchayats have attracted people across the diverse streams of academics due to its primitive and diabolical character. There are popular perceptions and academic perspectives related to khap Panchayats. The nature of khap and its transition from tribal to caste council shows its various transformations. The norms, culture and morality of the region are governed by senior male members. This peculiar structure of khap shows its patriarchal nature (Singh and Gavit,2016:241-242). Punishment or honour killing by the khap panchayats questions the existing legal systems and civic sense.

Honour killing is usually analysed as the response to the loss of power when youngsters marry outside the caste or the community norms (Chaudhry and Kaur, cited in Kaur and Rajni,2014). The existence of honour killings shows the existence of barbaric practices in our society. The role of khap Panchayats is discussed in this context (Awasthi,2016). khap Panchayats operate through clans (Vati,2016). Honour killings are being carried out through the khap panchayats which control people through social boycotts and imposition of fines. Those who violate the dictates of khaps are forced to commit suicide. Thus, it challenges the modern laws and spirit of the Constitution. It is critiqued that the political system also is responsible for maintaining such retrogressive social organization (Awasthi,2016). khap Panchayat also gains its space through its social activities (Gupta,2016). Palvinder Kaur argued that it is important to read khap panchayats by their material role in society than dismissing their significance. It is further argued to seek the possibilities of modernization of khap panchayats (Kaur,2016). The lack of reforms converts such institutions to one that monitors the sexuality of women (Singh,2016). According to the local khap panchayat, those who marry within the same gotra and the same village are regarded as committing incest and, subsequently such a union is branded as unacceptable and invalid. khap Panchayats are criticized for declaring death orders for those couples who do inter-caste marriage (Singh and Garvit,2016:242). Marriage between diverse gotra people that belong to the same village is not acceptable to the khap panchayat. Sometimes, in the case of the same gotras, the bride from village is compelled to move to another village to join her husband. However, there should not be any kind of prior ties of kinship with either their mother-in-law or their sister-in-law. Therefore, all women and men of a similar clan and the same village are restrained by the morality of the brother-sister relationship. Norms and values codified by the khap panchayat are patriarchal. Social shaming and punishment of the khap panchayats show their withdrawal from modernity (Dwivedi and Sharbani,2016). Culture of the barbarity is not challenged by the economic development of those regions (Awasthi,2016). Capitalism thus is not able to annihilate barbaric, social practices.

Rise in the honour crimes show the persistence of the reactionary ideology, clan, caste and patriarchy. Scholars have studied complex conditions of the governance systems in such cases (Farhat and Nagendra,2016). Emotion, physical and sexual honour crimes are challenging the existence of legal institutions (Yadav,2016). Colonial engagement with the local level practices of resolution of domestic issues have maintained social organizations such as Khap panchayats are also explored to understand its strange survival (Sharma,2016). Such social organizations complicate the ideas such as “traditional “and “modern” (Hashiya and Yadav,2016).khap panchayat differs from Panchayati raj institutions and criminal courts and police to effectively reduce the issues of domestic violence and honour killing(Dhyani,2016). Patriarchal forms of traditional governance and traditional justice thus are caught within their ideology of clan and region. The politics around honour thus haunt the members of the community. It haunts the women and individuals who do not want to be governed by the community’s internal vicious ideology. Anti-modern cultural practices that harm communities thus are condemned by human rights organizations and development movements across the globe. The following sections attempt to grapple with the issues related to the revivals of norms and customs and their deleterious impact on modern society.

Check Your Progress-2

1. *Write your understanding on khap panchayat.*

4.6 RESURGENCE OF NORMS AND CUSTOMS AND ITS CONFLICT WITH MODERN SOCIETIES

The politicization of religion has rechanged the nature of the traditional understanding and practices related to religion. The shift from spirituality to that organized religion happens in the presence of the religion and laws of the nation. Sometimes, modern laws of the nation are not able to circumvent the weight of the hate-mongering customs. Thus, customs often become counterrevolutionary in countries based on democracy and modern political systems/governance. In other words, it destroys the social change that emerged through the advent of modern laws and citizenship. Before discussing the larger implications related to the resurgence of norms and customs and their tensions within modern societies, one needs to understand the fundamental debates related to norms and customs. Norms are described as the expectations about proper conduct which stand for the same directions for social action. Human beings demonstrate some regular tendencies which emerge due to their coexistence with common norms. The action of human beings is rule-governed in nature. Actual behaviour may not be part of the social norms. Normative behaviour is not always in the existing pattern.

Norms correct human behaviour as proper. It also shows legitimacy, consent and prescription. Deviations from the norms are usually met with penalties. People encounter norms through internalization and socialization. The idea of norm is central to perspectives on social order (Abercrombie, Stephen and Bryan,2000:231). Customs are the accepted schemas of behaviour and belief. It signifies the day-to-day life and varies according to diverse cultures (Abercrombie, Stephen and Bryan,2000:84).

Female genital mutilation is contested due to its positioning within the identity politics and Western media gaze (Nnaemeka,2005:60). The rituals related to community lead to the oppression of women. Members of the (patriarchal) community often challenge developed countries 'civilizing mission for developing and underdeveloped societies. In other words, developed countries always judge developing and underdeveloped societies through the cultural and political parameters of developed countries. As part of their resistance to such foreign interventionism, they return to the cultural practices of the community. Such a return to one's own culture becomes the path for the oppression of women within the communities (Nnameka,2005: 61). In other words, the abuse of the female body in any culture or nation may be problematic for other nations. Policymakers and human rights activists often condemn such acts of barbarity as a way to abolish the oppression of women across the globe. Thus, policymakers have to transcend the circles of particularism and embrace the perspectives related to universalism. At the same time, these practices are read as patriarchal in their outlook. The question that arises is that if certain practices are patriarchal and others are considered non-patriarchal, how the cultural particularism of a social system/region/country can be addressed? It is critiqued that "the one-sidedness of the prevailing discourse on women would appear intolerably grotesque if it were suggested..." (Lazreg,2005:68). These debates are central to the perspectives on the decolonization of the dominant/Eurocentric/imperialist feminism. It thus challenges the geopolitics of the idea of (hegemonic) feminism and the question of women throughout the world. Politics across the globe are witnessing the revival of orthodox and conservative groups. The clash across political cultures operates around the internal logic of the community and its process of othering.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied how patriarchy determines violence within communities. It also discusses the etymological and epistemological underpinnings of the category of patriarchy in the context of violence within the communities. It also introduces the debates on the relations between the categories and social practices related to violence and communities. The idea of honour that usually exists as a marker of violence within the communities is also discussed in this context. Questions related to the resurgence of norms and customs that challenge the spirit of modern society are also explored in this unit.

4.8 UNIT END QUESTION

1. Analyse the idea of patriarchy in your own words.
2. Discuss the various dimensions of the violence within the communities
3. Do you think that the revival of the norms and customs challenges the ethos of modern society? Illustrate with suitable examples
4. Write your understanding of the question of honour in contemporary society.

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