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**MOTHERHOOD: WOMEN IN A GENDER ROLE OF A MOTHER IN A
PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY**- Saumya Gupta¹**SOURCE:**

“One Part Women by Perumal Murugan.”

ABSTRACT:

In India, society frequently doesn't accept a woman succeeding in her professional career until she has children, as though a woman's primary life goal is to have children and provide the family with an heir. The novel research focuses on how patriarchy oppresses female sexuality by assuming that it has only one function: childbearing and that it is the foremost duty of a couple to bear a child; otherwise, they are incomplete. Family members that are female are mostly acknowledged as the bearers of progeny. They are characterized as being fertile and frequently given credit for having innate maternal instincts. It seems that a woman's inalienable purpose in life is to utilize her biological capacity to procreate. The paper questions: Why does society consider it a serious life issue if a couple has been married for a number of years but does not have a child? The study looks at the challenges that working mothers face with regard to their families and kids. It also throws light on the impact of superstitions a couple can face. The data and information used in this study were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. In order to paint a broad picture of how gender ideology may affect working mothers' issues in their families and the so-called duty of the couple is procreate, secondary material from prior research was gathered. The article draws its main details from Perumal Murugan's book One Part Women.

INTRODUCTION:

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About the Author:

Murugan has written 10 novels, five short stories and poems collections, ten nonfiction books on language and literature, and numerous fiction and nonfiction anthologies. He's also edited a number of books. Two of his books have been translated into English: "Current Show" and "Seasons of the Palm." 2013 saw the release of his memoir, Nizhal Mutrattu Ninaivugal.

Murugan began his writing career by publishing a series of short stories in the Tamil magazine Manavosai between 1988 and 1991. These stories were eventually collected and published in the book "Thiruchengodu" (1994). In 1991, "Eru Veyyil" (also known as "Rising Heat"), his first book, was published. It examined the challenges a family faced when their land was acquired for the construction of a housing colony while tackling issues of family, greed, and corruption. His second book, "Nizhal Mutram" (1993), which was later translated into English by V Geetha as "Current Show" (Tara Books, 2004), was based on his own experience helping his father run a soda stand in a movie theatre.

Murugan's 2000 book "Koolamadari" was translated into V Geetha's 2004 book "Seasons of the Palm" (Tara Books). N. Kalyan Raman, a critic, and translator, referred to it as "a tour de force." The book's protagonist, Koolaiyan, a young goatherd from the Chakkili caste who was compelled to work for a Gounder caste family to pay off his father's debts, was recounted in the book along with his tribulations. Freedom, independence, and childhood were among the subjects covered in the book.

The repercussions of female foeticide and sex-selective abortions that caused an uneven sex ratio in the Kongunadu region were examined in his later book, "Kanganam" (Resolve, 2008). The main character, Marimuthu, is single because there aren't many ladies in his caste and culture. His 2010 novel Madhurobhagan, which Aniruddhan Vasudevan translated as One Part Woman (Penguin, 2013), dealt with a young childless couple fighting within their marriage and drew heavily from the society and culture of the Kongunadu region.

Author Perumal Murugan's book "One Part Woman" is based on what might have been a long-ago cultural practice among those in the Tiruchengode area.

About the Book:

In Tamil Nadu, there is a couple known by the names of Kali and Ponna. Despite their 12-year marriage, they have never been able to conceive. Family and neighbors constantly tease them about their infertility, which they either attribute to curses passed down through the years, God's

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wrath, or their bad ancestors. In their desperation, the couple tries a variety of treatments, prayers, and offerings, but to no avail. It is regularly suggested that Kali take on a second wife; he considers it but chooses against it. Their families ultimately advised Ponna to go to the festival of the androgynous god Ardhanarishvara, where on the 14th day, the societal taboo about extramarital sex is lifted and consenting men and women are allowed to share beds.

Kali mentions it to Ponna, who says that she would go if he so chose despite being horrified by the idea. Kali feels deceived by her response and gradually distances herself from her. The following year, Ponna's family makes the conscious decision to take matters into their own hands by luring Kali outside while giving her the impression that he has granted her permission to attend the festival. By doing this, she locates a man she considers "a god" to be the father of her child. Kali loses it and curses Ponna when he returns home and sees she's gone.²

About the Title:

The title of the research paper, "Motherhood: Women in a Gender Role of a Mother in a Patriarchal Society" is particularly appropriate. The publication mainly discusses how a woman's role in society is pre-decided on that to be a mother. A woman is considered incomplete if she is not a mother or chooses not to conceive. In the patriarchal society, we have always witnessed that a woman is put in the situation of choosing between her career and family. If a woman, who is also a mother, chooses to continue with her career even after giving birth, she is considered to be unemotional or a bad mother. Society considers a woman as a born mother who does not have any identity apart from a daughter, wife, or mother, as if she is born just to deliver her duties as a daughter, wife, or mother. Why does society forget that she is a person in herself before any roles mentioned above? She has got dreams to achieve and a passion to work upon. Apart from this, the paper also focuses on the impacts that a couple faces if they decide to go childless forever. The decision to have or not to have a child should completely rest with the couple, not the family members, relatives, or society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study employs the qualitative method. The two types of data sources used in this method are primary and secondary. The autobiography is the primary data source, with secondary sources being supplementary texts like books, journal articles, and case laws about the study.

²(One Part Woman)

Both pieces of information are gathered using the legal database.

HYPOTHESIS:

The purpose of this research study is to address the issues raised by the following questions:

- Why does society view a married couple's inability to have a child after several or many years of marriage as a severe life issue?
- Society's unacceptance towards women who has no children after their marriage.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

1. The article- **“To Be Or Not To Be A Mother In A Patriarchal, Fascist World Facing Climate Change”** discusses “How can one become a mother and welcome a child into a world where patriarchy continues to run deep, the concerns around climate change continue to unsettle, and fascist governments increasingly continue to occupy space?”
2. The article **“Motherhood – A Norm Enforced by Patriarchy?”** talks about how any woman who deviates from this patriarchal norm and refuses to marry or have children is seen as weird, rebellious, and even in need of assistance. It seems that a woman's inevitability in life is her biological capacity to bear children. However, gender studies have shown that many women nowadays become forced moms rather than natural mothers, despite the traditional patriarchal standards establishing the female as a mother and homemaker. A healthy, 'normal' woman CAN choose not to have children through biological means. She might decide to adopt or even have no children. However, patriarchy establishes the standards of parenting, and women are expected to live behind the façade of being inherently nurturing carers when, in reality, they may merely be following the societal rules that have been established for them.
3. The book **“The Concept of Motherhood in India- Myths, Theories and Realities,”** edited by Zinia Mitra, gives an overview of historical and contemporary examples of motherhood that are both diverse and homogeneous. It discusses how important parenting is to women's lives and explores how ideal motherhood and motherhood ideology are manufactured. This is supported by research on the media, religion, and other institutional structures of society, as well as archetypes. The book's opening chapter situates motherhood in its historical setting and reexamines the myths surrounding it as major social constructs. In order to define and comprehend the notion of motherhood, the second section examines the various theories that have emerged surrounding it. The lived experience of motherhood is also examined in this section.

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4. The article “**Childless by Choice: The Reasons and the Reactions**” discusses that parenthood, albeit one of life's most rewarding experiences, should be chosen deliberately rather than as a result of social pressure. There can be no concessions made when a child's life is concerned.

ANALYSIS:

The word "family" conjures up images of a mother as the housewife, a working father, and dependent children. Women and men are assigned different roles within the context of the family. In a typical Indian household, women take care of the kids and take care of the housework while the men go out and work to support the family. Even while pursuing higher education, girls are taught to multitask and manage domestic responsibilities in addition to their schoolwork. Working women share the same predicament. Usually, her in-laws provide their consent for her to carry on working after marriage. But she has to handle her obligations at home and work. These women perform two different forms of work, yet only one of them is recognized. Meanwhile, men make the least effort to look after a child and perform household chores. Inequality is the issue with the family system.

The hidden labor of women forms the basis of a family's operation. This elevates the prestige of the males in the home who handle the funds and think they are more significant. Along with their status as the patriarch, they also have undisputed control and authority over the family.³

Being a mother has long been regarded as an honor, and having children is now accepted as a natural part of marriage in our culture. But having or not having children after marriage should be a decision solely taken by the couple. Still, people around start to comment on couples going childless. They think a couple, precisely a woman, is incomplete without giving birth. Society believes that women are biologically capable of giving birth. The deep-seated biological determinism that the patriarchy uses and interprets for its own advantages allows society to maintain the assumption that all women are meant to have children.⁴ The patriarchal mandate presupposes that all women desire to have children and that this desire is innate in all women. The patriarchal institution of motherhood requires selflessness, constancy, and sacrifice from women while denying them selfhood and life outside of their motherly responsibilities.

Mothers are unquestionably unique. While they each have their own goals and ambitions, they are also expected to be the only family nurturers by society because they are mothers. Because

³(Varshney, 2020)

⁴(Mitra, 2020)

of this, all moms have an ongoing sense of shame that makes them feel as though they are in some way inferior if they choose their careers above their families. The way we view working men and working women differs significantly. Men have traditionally worked in the public sector, but their feeling of duty to their families is restricted to the function of a breadwinner, as opposed to the role of a housewife. As a result, whenever women enter the workforce, their sense of commitment to their families is occasionally questioned, and their priorities need to be established immediately.⁵

Many working mothers in India face struggles on a daily basis connected to their own mental fitness, which is profoundly and directly influenced by the environment in which they live. So if the parents, spouse, in-laws, or community continually stress that your first obligation as a woman is to be a mother and that your child is your primary responsibility, eventually, the mother caves—mentally, emotionally, and professionally.⁶

When a couple learns, they are infertile after engaging in unprotected sex for years; they often react through denial. To cover up the underlying worries, the first step is to overdo things—have more sex, unwind, and go on vacation. Anger replaces the denial after a year. The majority of couples believe that God, their doctors, and their bodies have all failed them. Some people visit various temples, refrain from smoking as a penance, and engage in havans, pujas, and pilgrimages. “One woman, who wed into a small community of goldsmiths in Bikaner, was frequently exposed to neighborhood "Babaji," flogged with peacock feathers, made to observe fasts, forced to plant flags in odd locations, and even made to feed a certain black dog chapati for a month.” Many people think about committing suicide, divorcing, or getting married again. After all, in India, not having children is nearly a curse.

Women and mothers are expected to live up to certain expectations from the family and extended family in accordance with Indian culture and traditions. Be it in terms of the professions she can choose, the hours she can work, the chores she must complete at home, when to have kids and how many, etc.

CONCLUSION:

While becoming a parent might be among life's most fulfilling experiences, it should be chosen voluntarily and not as a result of social pressure. Every working woman should have thought about whether she could keep her job or quit during her pregnancy. There, the challenge is deciding between her personal life and career. When their children are young and have not yet

⁵(Jha, 2014)

⁶(Kaushik, 2013)

begun formal schooling, the majority of working mothers go through a period of transition. The most crucial element that can make a difference during this era is "flexibility at the workplace." There is a significant lag between policy and action, even while many organizations offer some flexibility to women, and it is high on the priority list for many others. Women ought to feel empowered and that they have a distinct identity. Starting at home and challenging the patriarchal family system that supports the oppression of women is essential if we are to reform the larger patriarchal framework. It should be left to the discretion of the couple whether or not they want to have a child rather than commenting and pressurizing them to have one. They are adults who very well know what is good and bad for themselves. Rather than telling a woman to choose her children over her career, they should suggest ways in which a couple can divide their responsibilities towards the child as the child's sole responsibility is not only with the mother. The father is equally liable for the growth of the child.

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