

INDIAN PATRIARCHY AND RAYMOND WILLIAMS'S (ENGLISH) RESIDUAL

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Patriarchy is one of the potent weapons of the structural edifice of capitalism vis-à-vis which the social system or social relations are tactically moulded to ensure the proliferation and strengthening of the capitalist structure. But, when specified or contextualized in the scenario of the Indian nation state, the more obvious question that captures our imagination is: is capitalism inevitably the dominant or hegemonizing Indian social structure? Perry Anderson suggests that the emergence of the absolutist state in early modern Europe freed the 'bourgeois' commercial economy from the dead hand of feudalism and landlordly power, separating political and economic spheres by concentrating sovereignty in a centralized state. Immanuel Wallerstein further suggests that the European nation state, in sharp contrast to more advanced Asian empires, laid the foundation for capitalism, because the organization of Europe into multiple polities, instead of one overarching empire, permitted the development of a trade-based division of labor, without the burden of massive appropriation by an imperial state that siphoned off surpluses that could otherwise have been invested. (Wood, 166, 2013) And when Ellen Meiksins Wood posits: "the necessary conditions for the 'spontaneous' or indigenous and self-sustaining development of a capitalist system, with mutually reinforcing agricultural and industrial sectors, existed only in England" (Wood, 167, 2013), the complexity of the Indian nation state becomes further convoluted owing to the non-destruction of the pre-capitalist structures, notwithstanding India being colonized. The pre-capitalist structure (the feudal structure) still survives and thrives in India, and its entanglement with (the advent of) capitalism and modernism makes it conspicuously unique and therefore the 'potent weapon' should be termed the specific Indian variant of patriarchy.

The field of cultural studies has focused primarily on class-based societies. Talking of the 'complexity of a culture', Raymond Williams says: "In what I have called 'epochal' analysis, a cultural process is seized as a cultural system, with determinate dominant features: feudal culture or bourgeois culture or a transition from one to other." He further adds: "...bourgeois

culture' is a significant generalizing description and hypothesis, expressed within epochal analysis by fundamental comparisons with 'feudal culture' or 'socialist culture'." (Williams, 121, 1977) Thus, notwithstanding the mention of the transition phase and the 'internally comparative differentiation', his hypothesis focuses on a more distinctive past, present and future (the feudal, the bourgeois and the socialist) structures. The 'transition' (though referring to epochal advancement) too aims at depicting a continuum where the past is continuously losing its sheen and the present - the hegemonizing dominant - is engulfing its arena. But the Indian state (semi-feudal, semi-colonial, and semi-capitalist) in its specificity hampers the historical formulations and here we observe a co-dominance where the co-existence produces myriad probabilities and exacerbates the oppression. Thus, it is not only the pre-capitalist structures providing the base for patriarchal oppression but the gender oppression, owing to the constant self-expansion of capitalism, also conforms to the requisite necessities of the dominant. Further, the historically unprecedented material advances that capitalism (magnificent and imposing in appearance) has brought alongside its wide penetration into every aspects of social life and the changing experiences of modern life, which is commonly associated with capitalism, has had terrible consequences in the terrain of India as the experiences may have changed but have definitely not changed unanimously, thus, we have arising the whole discourse of dual nation i.e 'Bharat' (the rural) and 'India' (the urban). And when this situation is juxtaposed with 'gender relations', the results obtained comprise multitudinous and variegated identities of women, for example 'upper class', 'middle class', 'working class', 'upper caste', 'lower caste' and many more, and most often, more than one identity overlaps and coagulates. In this multifarious identitarian politics, any attempt to understand gender equations and patriarchal oppression (not from the working class perspective or intervention) ends up in piling up or making an alliance of identities. Thus, this paper will not only look into the disastrous specificity of Indian patriarchy but will also make an attempt to achieve a synchronization with Raymond Williams's concept of the 'residual' and will then try to gauge the revolutionary potential that the 'residual' in the Indian patriarchal structure possesses.

The labor becomes objectified owing to one knowing the fact that one is bound to serve whatever the situation is. As Marx says: "Under these economic conditions this realization of labor appears as loss of realization for the workers; objectification as loss of the object and bondage to it; appropriation as estrangement, as alienation." (Marx, 1844) According to Marx, what capitalism does is that it turns the "activity" against the individual, independent of the individual, and not belonging to her leading to "self estrangement." Capitalism differentiates and marginalizes the senses, the non-unification of which mars the autonomy, the individuality and the very identity of the species-being (the so called female being). Capitalism depends on a constant supply of women's unwaged labor. The structural framework of the gender relation is two-fold. It is not just production i.e. a direct participation in the process of production involving wage labor and producing surplus value, but reproduction too (involving procreation, unpaid housework, to the production of culture

and every other necessary activity) is crucially pivotal to capitalism. The manner in which there exists a disjunction between the issues of production, reproduction, sexuality and sexual violence pertaining to the woman's question (instituted by capitalism), in the same vein capitalism ensures a distinct segmentation of women vis-à-vis class divisions, apparently showcasing middle class women as privileged. But to my understanding, a distinctive class division (middle class/working class) cannot prevail in the question relating to gender and reproductive labor. Irrespective of the class a woman belongs to, her class identity does not transcend her inevitable attribution to unpaid domestic duties (sexual/non-sexual), sexual discrimination and harassment (outside and inside the house). Thus, a middle class woman too is somewhere middling between being a privileged person and a worker and therefore her placement in the category of a 'worker' and that of the oppressed is both necessary and unavoidable for a working class revolutionary politics. Notwithstanding the generalization of the questions of women as a gender (irrespective of divisions) being necessary, the 'working class' women's constant vulnerability at the periphery can never be underestimated. Owing to both the male and the female in a 'working class' being wage laborers, a 'working class' woman's labor-power is both directly and indirectly consumed for her own waged work as well as in reproducing the working class man's labor-power (in which her unwaged labor plays a constitutive role). As James and Della Costa posits: "The very unity in one person (the working women) of the two divided aspects of capitalist production presupposes not only a new scope of struggle but an entirely new evaluation of the weight and cruciality of women in that struggle." (Costa M., James, 13, 1975)

Marxism understands that some material conditions had to arise due to which the position of women changed and they were subordinated. The significant change in material conditions came with the generation of considerable surplus production. How this surplus would be distributed is the point at which classes arose, the surplus being appropriated by a small section of people in the community. But these mere economic questions would not suffice to our understanding of Indian patriarchy because one prominent question that cannot be evaded is: why the sexuality of women, more than that of men, is the subject of social concern? As Gerda Lerner says: "There was a need to look beyond economic questions and focus on the control over women's sexuality and the manner in which reproduction was organized and thus to look for the causes and effects of such sexual control." (Lerner, 8, 1986) Uma Chakravarti in her essay attempts to explore the relationship between caste and gender, thereby concluding that even the upper caste women are subordinated, and the effective sexual control over them is not only to maintain the patrilineal succession (a requirement for all patriarchal societies) but also caste purity, the institution unique to Hindu society. (Chakravarti, 579-585, 1993) Notwithstanding a woman may or may not having a high status, position, and enjoying economic independence, sexuality was always under the control of men. Women actually became the pivot of the whole structure; with the shift of women to another caste, class or religion (via marriage), there occurs a shift not only of honor but also of material possessions. And thus a close guard seclusion of women ensures a continuity of

the domination capitalist organization. This can perhaps be traced as a prominent reason behind the inter-caste, class, or religious sexual violence (full of hatred and enmity) women witness. A woman's role in reproduction, the cause of her earlier elevated status, now becomes a means of her enslavement. Which clan/extended family the children she bore belonged to, became important and it is then that we find the emergence of the patriarchal family in which the woman was subordinated and her main role in society became that of begetting children for the family. Uma Chakravarti posits:

“Through the recalcitrance of women, the established property and status order can be subverted. To prevent such a contingency women's sexual subordination was institutionalized in the brahmanical law codes and enforced by the power of the state. At the same time women's co-operation in the system was secured by various means: ideology, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges and veneration bestowed upon conforming and dependent women of the upper classes, and finally the use of force when required.” (Chakravarti, 579-585, 1993)

Thus, it becomes important to politically confront the question of reproduction. And in the capitalist structure, as Marx says: “Labor uses up its material factors, its subject and its instruments, consumes them, and is therefore a process of consumption.” (Marx, 179, 2010) He further adds: “...its instruments and subjects are themselves products; labor consumes products in order to create products, or in other words consumes one set of products by turning them into means of production for another set.” (Marx, 179, 2010) Thus, women in the Capitalist structure, in the process of production (which can be read as reproduction) are themselves transformed into products, are commodified and consumed. The capitalist state has always tried to control women's bodies because they are the vehicle for the production of workers. From their point of view, women are machines for the production of labor power. There is a direct connection between women's reproduction of children and the dynamics of the labor market. In many cases, they have wanted women to be sterilized when the children they produced demanded more than the capitalist class was willing to concede. But the issue has always been the desire to control the female body, both in terms of labor market and also of the discipline and the relation between women and men. And as Marx says: “The capitalist, formerly a buyer, now returns to market as a seller, of commodities.” (Marx, 179, 2010) Thus being both bought and sold in turns at the hands of the capitalists, where remains then a woman's identity, and her individuality?

The amalgamation of ‘internal segmentation of women along class lines’ and ‘the working class's segmentation along gender lines,’ make it a complex but dynamic interrelation. This ‘complexity of culture’ (as Williams emphasizes), where gender categories cross-cut different social strata (contradicting their very categorization as ‘gender categories’), a deeper understanding of how women may be controlled by dominant gender ideologies while simultaneously being implicated in these constructions becomes a necessity.

NehaDixit's fact finding report of the recent Muzaffarnagar (some 116 kms from the Indian capital Delhi) communal riots makes some frightful revelations. Owing to the majority of the victims being from the weaker sections, and ironically the assaulters too belonging to the same class (instigated on the basis of identity with the bourgeois and the ruling class acting as catalysts), terming it a violent display of flawed identity under 'false consciousness' would not be wrong. As one of the victims reported to BBC saying: "Mai naa Muslim hoon, naa Hindu hoon, mai gareeb hun" (I am neither a Muslim nor a Hindu, I am a poor worker). And juxtaposing it to gender relation, if the communal tension/hatred/enmity is downplayed and emphasis is laid on the hierarchical gender division then her report speaks volumes and penetrates the intricacies of the Indian patriarchal structure. One of the sufferer's statements (if we ignore her community, caste and class) shed significant light: "First they pulled my elder daughter. Dragged her to the ground, raped her by turn. Then they took my second one, hit her private parts with a baton." Another said: "Hindi songs blared on loudspeakers as they raped us. *Dhols* too were playing. Two men held me, biting me everywhere. Three then raped me." (Dixit, 2013) The state machinery of such a structure was nothing but a mute, biased spectator as when the women asked for protection from the police officer, he tried to arrest the victim's husband and owing to the majority of the (victimized) women being from the weaker sections, they were threatened to stay silent. This conjuncture where the women is at the receiving end is somehow productive for capital as it acts as a pressure release for the social tensions it produces in its workers. Sexual violence is an extreme manifestation of this safety function. James and Dalla Costa aptly posit: "The frustration caused by working in the factory and the 'hunger for power that the domination of capitalist organization of work implants' finds the woman as an outlet, especially at sexual moments of the man woman relation." (Costa M, James, 42, 1975) The most shocking of all the statements was when a number of women pretending to be completely unaware of everything said: "we fled before it happened," and attributed it to some (imaginary) 'other women': "But we know of other women who were brutally raped." This escape from accepting oppression discloses how capital makes the sexuality of a woman the subject of social concern.

One of the heads of the community, when asked of the assaults, despicably states: "Women have been raped and tortured, but it is my sincere advice to forget them. The families of these women will disown them if they come to know that they have spoken about it." (Dixit, 2013) The first obstacle a woman encounters when she wants to make a fight is not directly the capitalist state but the man in the family. So, it has been very useful and productive for the capital that men have this power over women and procreation. Sexuality has been part of their mechanism of surveillance and policing of women. Who says capitalism makes slaves? I'd rather say that capitalism makes lords. Capitalism makes lords out of slaves. And capitalism makes lords out of slaves in every house. Each slave is allowed to lord over his wife and children in compensation for his own degrading condition. And by making lords in every home, half the population i.e. female population is already controlled and this is how capitalism thrives and proliferates. Even a working class man becomes an "agent of capital

by accumulating wife's unpaid labor (sexual and non-sexual)" (Chandra, Chauhan, Sharma, 2013). Then, how is it possible for the 'working class' to retain its inherent entity when the male of the 'working class' becomes an agent of the capital? This is where the duality in the nature of Capitalism becomes clearly visible, where it first makes a distinct, oppressed 'working class' and then seeps into the 'working class' (via patriarchy) and creates its agents and thereby prevents or at least dampens the revolutionary prospects and proliferates. Thus, when we speak of the 'working class' and the revolutionary consciousness of the class, to my understanding this can only be achieved when the notion of 'male-ness' and 'female-ness' is sublimated.

Raymond Williams in his book *Marxism and Literature* says: "The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present." (Williams, 122, 1977) On the other hand, Uma Chakravarti by her studies of the cave paintings of Bhimbetka (ancient India) proves actual participation of women in both motherhood and hunt. In the Mesolithic period in Central India, women's role in economy was equal if not more than men. Their relative status was 'separate but equal.' (Chakravarti, 579-585, 1993) Gilda Lerner says: "Based on modern anthropological data on tribal societies it has been postulated that the most egalitarian societies are to be found among hunting-gathering tribes which are characterized by interdependency." (Lerner, 29, 1986) Further Roy adds: "Female reproductive power in such a hunting-gathering society is regarded as valuable because the very survival of the community is dependent upon it. Prehistoric paintings of Kathotia, Bhimbetka and Khar-Wai treat female sexuality as one aspect of female existence. Thus women as reproducers are as evident as women's productive activities in the hunting-gathering economy." (Roy, 7, 1987) Neumayer says: "Society in this phase has been characterized by one scholar as 'matristic'— in which women were not subjected to the authority of men, or of other women." (Neumayer, 21, 1983) On juxtaposing the views of these scholars with Williams's idea of the 'residual', it can be argued that the notion of liberation, emancipation, and an equal status of women has had been effectively formed in the past and is also an effective element of the present but is not 'dominant' but rather 'residual.' The institutionalization of patriarchal control over women in the contemporary scenario has resulted in these experiences to be "lived and practiced on the basis of the residue"—in the dominant present. Further as Williams says: "It is crucial to distinguish this aspect of the residual, which may have an alternative or even oppositional relation to the dominant culture, from that active manifestation of the residual (this being its distinction from the archaic) which has been wholly or largely incorporated into the dominant culture." (Williams, 122, 1977) Now talking of this 'incorporation' or the 'cultural colonization' or the 'cultural myth', the socially constructed gender and hierarchy is validated and made acceptable by the elevated status (like 'angel of the house' or 'equivalent to mother goddess', full of warmth and innocence) of the women that the semi-feudal, semi-capitalist Indian state assigns and this is how the dichotomy persists and the 'production relations' and the

‘reproduction of production relations’ continues. Bertolt Brecht in his essay, “A Short Organum for the Theatre” uses the phrase “bourgeois narcotics business”. In this bourgeois capitalist society, it is this notion (the idea of romanticization) which acts as ‘narcotics’, addicts and prevents us from seeing the actual social reality. And it is here that the notion of ‘history’ and ‘real history’ which Williams talks of comes to the fore. Brecht talking of the bourgeois habit says: “...we must drop our habit of taking the different social structures of past periods, then stripping them of everything that makes them different; so that they all look more or less like our own, which then acquires from this process a certain air of having been there all along, in other words of permanence pure and simple. Instead we must leave them their distinguishing marks and keep their impermanence always before our eyes, so that our own period can be seen as impermanent too.” In the same vein Williams’s ‘real history’ has an onus to make conspicuous the real exploitation and the hidden motive of capital behind this oppressive gender relations, because this permanence granted by the bourgeois society are masks of ratification of existing iniquities. And Williams according to me is right in probing the masks that conceal the reality from us. The oppositional and alternative residual is to be distinguished from the manifestation of the residual that has been wholly incorporated into the dominant culture. Being at some distance from the effective dominant culture, and in that sense being oppositional (potentially at least), there is thus an attempt at incorporation and sublimation of the ‘residual’—it being risky for the dominant culture to allow too much residual practice and experience outside itself. Williams points out: “It is in the incorporation of the actively residual—by reinterpretation, dilution, projection, discriminating inclusion and exclusion—that the work of the selective tradition is especially evident.” This attempted incorporation, which is very much a distinctive feature of any dominant social order, is equally at work, if not more in the case of the ‘emergent’, and its effectivity lies in the fact that “much incorporation looks like recognition, acknowledgement, and thus a form of acceptance.” (Williams, 123, 1977)

This residual (i.e the equal status of women) vis-à-vis its relation with the dominant (the institutionalized patriarchal control), and a knowledge of the extent to which this residual has been incorporated and diluted which sheds light on how ‘other’, ‘different’ or ‘real’ it is, provide the necessary resources for class struggle. The ‘residual’ which appears oppositional to the ‘dominant’, which is constantly trying to hegemonize it, acts as a necessary catalyst exhibiting revolutionary consciousness.

The penetration of big capital has remorselessly torn apart the old patriarchal relations that existed in the past. This has given a particularly ferocious character to capitalist exploitation. The protection that was given to women and children in the past by the extended family and the rules of tribal-clan society has been destroyed and nothing put in its place. Thus, in the Indian subcontinent, women still suffer the old torments, superimposed by the barbaric economic exploitation of the capitalist system. The Indian bourgeoisie, half a century after so called independence has not even succeeded in abolishing the caste system. The most

important factor at this juncture is fighting capital and the various avatars it manifests itself in. And the need of the hour is to understand the specific channels in which Capitalism is constantly pumping its energies in order to thrive, and rip off the 'attractive' tactical masks it puts on show which help oil this monster machine and grow, spreading its tentacles into every nook and cranny of our everyday world. If patriarchy is one of the 'potent' legs on which Capitalism stands and a source from which it in many ways derives its 'potency', then the need of the hour is to snap this leg – to render it 'impotent' and also, hence, 'father Capital'. Of course, it has to be kept in mind that such an endeavor has to steer clear of any purely deterministic approach focusing on one select aspect at the cost of ignoring others, but, very much in line with Williams' methodology, tease out the "interpenetrating activity" of historically based social formations and their respective specific manifestations – in the Indian context, then, looking at gender as it overlaps and intersects with caste and class under the roof that is Capitalism.

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