

## **Women's Struggle for Economic Equality within Patriarchy in Marjorie Barnard's Short Story, "The Lottery"**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores women's struggle for economic equality within patriarchy. Marjorie Barnard's short story "The Lottery" (1959) is taken as a primary text to explore the struggle of women against patriarchal systems for their equal economic rights by interpreting the women's position within their family and society. Women are exploited, oppressed, and deprived of their access to economic space. As a result, women face subordination, and male domination including unequal pay, rights to property and job opportunities. Patriarchy is so powerful it always hinders women and controls their economic domain. Patriarchy rules women both through language and actions. Women are the main victims of patriarchy because females suffer from workplace disparities, less wages and less job opportunities in comparison to males. Women struggle and raise their voice against the existing system of patriarchy for their economic equality as males. Despite this they still face problems in the economic lives of women.

**Key words:** Patriarchy, Inequality, Women's struggle, Economic exploitation, Marxist feminism.

**‘Patriarchy has stolen our cosmos and returned it in the form of 'Cosmopolitan' magazine and cosmetics Mary Daly’**

### **Introduction**

The above quote may be saying that patriarchy undermines women's freedom and rights, as well as women's position in the society. Patriarchy sees women as a commodity, and uses them only as a means of advertisements in the magazines. The use of cosmetics is a symbol of identity crisis since it hides the reality of women, hence it opens a way for women's oppression. In this modern era, it is generally expected that the people of all genders have equal opportunities and rights to economic activities. Yet, there are inequalities that still prevail in societies that are predominantly patriarchal. Males enjoy access to economic resources whereas the women have to struggle for it. As Sultana (2010) in her article "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis" opines, "Patriarchy system is characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy and competition. So, patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (p. 3). So, it is the man who creates and controls discourse so that the woman is deprived of her equal economic rights. Such a form of domination of the man makes the woman dependent on him for her financial behaviours. Hartman (1981) in "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism" claims, "The material base of

patriarchy is men's control over women's labor power" (p. 105). Therefore, patriarchy appears as the tool that guides and regulates the economic life of women.

The role of patriarchy is crucial and complex in that it hegemonizes women to keep them in the place of subordination and women cannot have access to income generating activities. Donaldson (2013) states that "In terms of gender, hegemony is used to describe the dominance of patriarchy; the control men have and have had over women and society" (p. 645). Patriarchy creates and controls discourse, for which women are unaware of, and they accept the discourse without observing its effects on them. For instance, in Marjorie Barnard's story "The Lottery" the major female character Grace, depends on her husband's income because she does not have any source of income despite looking after the children along with other household works. Thus, patriarchy controls and regulates women using hegemony and other different tools.

Women, as a result, get exploited and deprived of their equal economic involvement from home to society. "They are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources" (Lerner, 1989, p. 239). Therefore, power of patriarchy is a prevalent form of familial and social power that exploits women. In other words, inequality is created through patriarchal power and discourse. Such a form of domination makes women passive both mentally and psychologically. Because of such domination, women remain under the pressure of poverty and always struggle to come out of the domination. Becker (1999) points out, "Women have made strides and as workers during the current wave of the feminist movements, yet, progress now seems to be at a snail's pace" (p. 1). For instance, in Marjorie Barnard's story "The Lottery" the female protagonist, Grace Bilborough, struggles for equality within her family. After a number of women's movements against patriarchy, it has been a prediction that there is not any kind of economic oppression over women. Hence, in this paper, I will critically argue based on Marjorie Barnard's short story "The Lottery" that though there has been a general expectation of economic equality for women through women's movements, there is still oppression and exploitation, and women's struggle for economic equality against patriarchy continues.

## **Literature Review**

Many researchers have explored the functioning of patriarchy as the root cause of women's economic inequality in society. The story "The Lottery" by Australian writer Marjorie Barnard depicts the economic subordination of women within the patriarchal system. The story shows the true condition and struggle of women for economic equality within the family which is guided and controlled by patriarchy. Discourse is created by patriarchy to give a certain positioning to women in the society, which legitimates the interest of males through different ideologies. It makes consciousness of women, and shapes their actions. As a result, oppressed women are deceived without being aware of their own needs and interests. Therefore, critical analysis of patriarchy is significant to disclose the operations of such discourse by decoding ideologies.

It is the patriarchy, which creates discourse for the legitimization of its interest. Albee and Perry (1998) state that, "Women are often the last to be hired and the first to be fired. They are employed part-time and fired early to avoid the cost of fringe benefits and retirement costs" (p. 145). Men are given priority for employment and women get less opportunities to generate their income. Even if they are employed, they have to face inequality and exploitation, and its root cause is patriarchy itself. Similarly, Bilquees

and Shahnaz (1988) in their article, "Employment Situation and Economic Exploitation of Poor Earning Women in Rawalpindi" present that the total sample consists of three hundred and eighty-five, only one hundred and seventy-six women found working, and thirty-two stopped working due to very low payments, and fifty-five were prohibited from paid employment by the family and/or husbands (p. 791). This study clearly shows the discrimination of women regarding economic equality and opportunities in their work. Therefore, women are discriminated against, exploited and discouraged everywhere just because of patriarchal structure.

Likewise, most of the women who are involved in paid jobs have experienced economic oppression and inequality. Women neither get equal wages as men from their jobs nor do they feel freedom in workplaces. As R. Fuchs (1989) argues "Women believe that they earn less than men because they are women, and they are correct" (p. 3). Similarly, in the article entitled " Patriarchal hegemony: Investigating the impact of patriarchy on women`s work-life balance" it is stated that "...male dominance and excessive subordination of females, domestic and gender-based division of labor and higher proclivities among men are the ingredients of patriarch society" (Adisa et.al, p. 33). Hence, women face mistreatment, inequality and exploitation regarding their pay and other facilities at their workplaces.

## **Discussion**

Through the lens of patriarchy, this study critically observes context, specific sentences spoken by different characters in the story, the mindset of the characters in favor of patriarchy, and negative representation of the woman character, Grace. Further, the study identifies some gaps in the text that indicate inequality and exploitation, and women's struggle against the patriarchal system.

The language used by patriarchy is a powerful tool by which women are exploited. Patriarchal language creates the suitable atmosphere for inequality and exploitation of women. Some expressions spoken by some characters reflect the picture of patriarchy in the story " The Lottery." For example, the narrator describes Ted with positive words like "a good citizen" and " a good father" whereas Grace is described with the words like "hard girlishness' ' and "raw ". Ansberg (2022) opines that "Language gender markers give us a framework for putting people into categories often in order that leaves women less powerful than men" (p. 3). Through the use of language patriarchy exploits women's economic rights and freedom. The setting of the story is Australia, and the situation of the women is common. They are all the prey of subordination, exploitation and oppression and patriarchy creates the base for it with the help of language. The language and expressions are also guided by the patriarchal structure which is the first step to make the women feel weaker.

Similarly, some conversations between Grace and Ted depict the traces of patriarchal role that makes women subordinated in terms of economic possession. One can feel the sense of inequality and male-domination existing within patriarchy through the conversations. For example, when Grace wins the lottery with a big amount of money worth 5,000 pounds, Ted does not respond it positively. Instead he asks Grace, "And where had the five and three-pence come from?" It indicates that Grace does not have the rights even to spend a meager amount of money without the consent of her husband, Ted. Grace has bought the lottery ticket without informing him. This becomes a very disturbing factor for Ted and

again she does not inform him about winning the lottery. Thus, "The Lottery" reflects the supremacy of patriarchy and women's economic situation through the use of language

Males possess economic power, but females are given less access to economic activities. The mindset of the people is deeply rooted in the norms and values created by patriarchy regarding the males' possession of economic power. For example, Grace, Ted Bilborough's wife wins the lottery, but other characters of the story ask what Ted will do with that money. It suggests that the ideology is already created within patriarchy and that even the property of women is in the hands of males. "What are you going to do with it, Ted" (Barnard, 1959, p. 22)? Noone asks Grace what she wants to do with that money that she has won. It is because patriarchy always bestows its favour to the males than to the females. According to a Chinese proverb, "A stupid son is far better than a virtuous daughter" is the evidence of how males are given priority in society. This kind of favour given to males creates the foundation for economic inequality between men and women.

Although the writer raises her voice by writing this story, being part of a similar society and being indoctrinated from patriarchal discourse, women are always presented negatively. Though Grace had always been a good wife to Ted, she is presented negatively. "It was Grace's fault. She wasn't cheery and easy going" (p. 23). On the other hand, Ted is presented positively as a good husband and father. "He was a good fellow in both senses of the word. Not namby pamby, always ready for a joke but a good citizen too, a good husband and father" (p. 21). In this way, women are psychologically made weaker and they are given less priority in society so that they can always be deprived of access to property, income and other spheres of life.

The ideology of patriarchy always expects women as submissive to and dependent on men in monetary terms. The property and economic resources are controlled by males. One of the main reasons behind it is that usually women work inside the house which does not generate any income so women depend on men to fulfill their needs. For instance, Ted thinks that Grace has spent the money from his income without informing him to buy the lottery ticket, but unlike his doubt, she tells him how she managed money for the ticket. "I sold my mother's ring and chain. A man came to the door buying old gold. I bought a ticket every week till the money was gone" (p. 26). This kind of psyche of the males makes women to be dependent on them. Likewise, Fawole (2008) in the article entitled "Economic Violence to Women and Girls: Is It Receiving the Necessary Attention?" states that "At home, some were barred from working by partners; while others totally abandoned family maintenance to the women" (p. 167). In this way, women are deprived of their access to money and sources of income.

Although the writer of the story may be trying to show the economic inequality of women in the patriarchal framework and liberation of women, there are some gaps so it seems incomplete. There are some views behind this. Marxist feminists blame "The capitalist mode of production as one of the main causes for male domination and women's oppression in society" (Hossein et al. 2016, p. 13). Males have a direct access to production because females are generally away from it since males believe that it is their right to work outside the house. Judith Lorber (2010) gives an example:

In Ibsen's famous nineteenth-century novel *A Doll's House*, Nora forges her dead father's signature because she cannot legally sign her own name to the loan she needs to save her sick husband's life, and she works at home in secret to pay it back. When her husband finds out, he does not thank her

but rather he condemns her as immoral and dishonest and not a fit mother for their children. He eventually forgives her, but Nora refuses to continue to live as a doo-wife, and leaves him, slamming the door of the doll's house behind her. (p. 2)

The focus of women's struggle is economic rights within the patriarchal domain, but Grace takes a different path for her liberation. Instead of seeking equality from her husband within the family, she buys the lottery ticket by selling her mother's ring and chain. Why is she not able to spend money on her own? Ted earns money but Grace also performs her familial duties like she looks after the children and does other household works. She could have said it was her right to have an equal share of the income of her husband, Ted. Whatever methods women use, the main objective of women remains their ultimate liberation from patriarchy. This shows how women are barred from the economic activities by the males in the patriarchal society.

Another issue that shows the gap in women's economic liberation from patriarchy is the topic choice. The topic of the story is "The Lottery." The lottery is a game of luck and coincidence and there is no certainty of winning all the time. For example, Grace's liberation from the patriarchal system depends on her luck of winning the lottery which is not justifiable. It suggests that women have to depend on luck for their economic freedom, and women without good luck cannot break the age-long chain of patriarchy. Likewise, Grace fails to establish her rights through her struggle against male domination, she seeks her financial freedom depending on women herself. "Oh," he said. Grace had sold her mother's wedding ring to buy a lottery ticket" (Barnard, p. 26). The true liberation comes from the struggle which the topic of the story fails to establish.

Though Grace decides to leave her husband and children to liberate herself from the chains of patriarchal structure, she cannot liberate herself completely. Leaving the house, the husband and going away may not be the complete liberation of women from patriarchal exploitation. "I suppose you're wondering what I'm going to do? I'll tell you. I'm going away. By myself! Before it is too late. I'm going tomorrow" (p. 26). Neither she asks for her share from the property of Ted which is her legal right nor she takes possession of the children. In patriarchy, generally the possession of children goes to the males. It seems that partly she accepts the patriarchal structure by leaving her children with Ted as practised in patriarchy. To some extent, Grace denies the existence of a male-dominated society by leaving her husband, her children and home, but she seems to accept the existing patriarchal system. For example, after Grace tells Ted her decision of leaving home, she informs Ted a woman will come there to care for him and the children. Grace says, " Beattie will come and look after you and the children. She'll be glad to. It won't cost you a penny more than it does now" (p. 26). It suggests that she leaves home and takes the money that she has won with her, but she replaces another woman in place of her to serve Ted. It is the liberation of Grace as an individual woman, not of all the women. Ted Bilborough is a symbol of patriarchy, there is Beattie to serve him after Grace. Beattie is supposed to remain with Ted and it is again the continuation of patriarchy.

Women have been suffering from oppression, exploitation and inequality within the patriarchal system for ages so they have been struggling for their economic equality. They always try to set themselves free from prejudices created by patriarchal society. For instance, "...different branches of feminism focused on different perspectives, all of them have the same outlook that women are oppressed and there is a need to bring women out of this oppression" (Hossein, 2016, et al. 13). But the walls of

patriarchy are so strong that it is quite difficult to come out of it completely, but women have a hope to liberate themselves. In the story, the amount Grace gets by winning the lottery is her last hope to get rid of herself from the boundaries of the patriarchy. "Then you meant what it said in the paper, " Last Hope?" he said. "Yes," she answered" (p. 27). The struggle of women for their economic equality within patriarchy continues in different forms.

## Conclusion

Through this study, it is found that the patriarchal system is responsible for women's exploitation, oppression and inequality. Patriarchy discriminates against women through its powerful ideology, and it makes women powerless, propertyless dependents, and inferior to men. Women struggle for economic equality through different movements, and they raise their voices against its system. Despite women`s efforts for their equal position as males, women are not able to liberate themselves from the boundaries of the patriarchal system because it continues to oppress women through the multiple numbers of discourses. Women are given less space to exercise their economic activities like they are not given equal opportunities to jobs, and females get less pay in comparison to males. For instance, after the analysis of the story "The Lottery" by Marjorie Barnard, it is found that women are dominated within their own families and society. Moreover, women have no equal economic rights as males, as a result, they struggle for economic equality within the patriarchy.

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