CHAPTER 3

Women in Patriarchy

The phenomenon of crimes against women is more often than not is a consequence of patriarchy and a part of a systematic attempt to maintain male domination and women subordination within the home as well as in the society. Therefore, this chapter deals briefly with the concept and meaning of patriarchy and also traces its origin and development. While briefing on the origin and development of patriarchy, different viewpoints by various feminists have been elaborated. It focuses on the structures of the society like family, religion, education, politics, economy, and the media that perpetuate and reinforce the ideology of patriarchy and also presents the relationships between patriarchy and crimes against women.

History has been witnessing patriarchy as a social structural phenomenon since very early times. Though some societies are considered to be more patriarchal than others, these social traditions are universally predominant in all human societies. Such traditions look upon the difference in the physical strength between man and woman as a ‘natural order’ which puts woman in an inferior position. (Etobi et al., 2015).

3.1 Meaning and Definition

The literal meaning of ‘patriarchy’ denotes the ‘rule of the father’ or the ‘patriarch’. Patriarchy is characterized by the rule of the father or the eldest male member who exercises absolute power and authority over the other members of the family. The term was originally used to define a particular type of ‘male-dominated family’. Women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants were all included in the
large household of the patriarch and they were under the rule of this patriarch, the dominant male. But in recent times, it has been more specifically used ‘to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways’ (Bhasin, 2006). Patriarchy is the hierarchical relationship between men and women manifested within the families as well as in the other structures of the society. It is the domination of male over women both in public and private spheres. Private patriarchy is the male domination which occurs within the private sphere of the home. Public patriarchy on the other hand can be found in the various institutions of the society other than the household. Millet (1977) stated that the ideology of patriarchy overstates the differences endowed biologically between men and women to make way for men to dominate, to present them as masculine and women as subordinate. This ideology is so powerful that ‘men are usually able to secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress’. They do this ‘through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women’s subordination to men’. These institutions including both public and private are crucial in the perpetuation of patriarchy.

The concept of patriarchy has been treated differently by different scholars. Patriarchy, according to Rothman (1989), refers to ‘any system of male superiority and female inferiority’. Mitchel (1974) opines that patriarchy is related to the kinship systems in which women are exchanged by men as well as the symbolic power enjoyed by fathers within these systems; at the same time it refers to the effects of this power upon the “inferiorized... psychology of women”. In the words of Eisenstein (1999) patriarchy is sexual hierarchy which is manifested in the various roles a
woman plays within the family: mother, domestic labourer and consumer. Walby (1990) views patriarchy as system shaped by social structures and practices which allow men to dominate, oppress and exploit women. Her explanation of patriarchy as a system of social structure clearly rejects the notion of biological determinism according to which man and woman are different biologically and accordingly their functions are different or ‘the notion that every individual man is always in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one’. In Lerner’s (1986) definition, patriarchy manifests and institutionalises men’s dominance over women and children in the family as well as society. It implies that ‘men hold power in all the important institutions of society’) and that ‘women are deprived of access to such power’. Therefore, patriarchy is a manifestation of institutionalised system of male dominance. It denotes a set of social relations between men and women having a material base which inspite of being hierarchical give man independence and solidarity enabling them to dominate over women (Jagger and Rosenberg, 1984). Thus, patriarchy is characterised by power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition.

3.2 Patriarchy: A Historical Perspective

There are varied views regarding the origin and development of patriarchy. Some believe that patriarchy is a form of a natural hierarchical order which has always existed. While there are many others who discard these notions and consider that it is not natural and has not always existed. It had a beginning and it is man-made and perpetuated by man-made institutions such as laws, customs, education, culture and religion. Various viewpoints have been put forward in this regard by various feminists.
The traditionalists view that patriarchy has been determined both naturally and biologically. In this context, Sigmund Freud laid emphasis on the idea ‘anatomy is destiny’ and considered that woman’s biology mainly determined their psychology and therefore, their abilities and roles. In fact, ‘patriarchal ideas blur the distinction between sex and gender and assume that all socio-economic and political distinctions between men and women are rooted in biology or anatomy’ (Heywood, 2003). Moreover, it needs to be added here that the traditionalists’ explanation about the naturalness of patriarchy was further reinforced by the theories of Aristotle. He considered males as ‘active’ and females as ‘passive’. In his view, a woman’s biological inferiority leads to her inferiority in her capacities, reasoning power and decision making. The corollary of it is that man is superior and he is born to rule and women is inferior and she is born to be ruled. He said ‘the courage of man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying’ (Bell, 1973). Jean Jacques Rousseau, the French political thinker, even viewed women as inferior and ‘voluptuous creatures meant for male entertainment’. In his book Emile (1762), he claims ‘women’s place was to oblige us, to do us service, to gain our love and esteem, these are the duties of the sex of all times, and what they ought to learn from their infancy.’ A woman is framed particularly for the delight and pleasure of man’ (Kerber, 1980). Thus, the traditionalists regard women as naturally inferior and, therefore, subordinated to men. Lerner (1986), describes that the ‘Traditionalists, whether working within a religious or a ‘scientific’ framework, have regarded women’s subordination as universal, God-given, or natural, hence immutable... what has survived, survived because it was best; it follows that it should stay that way’.
Many liberal feminists have also explored the origin of patriarchy. The first major feminist text, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) gave a very important explanation of patriarchy in understanding women’s oppression and subordination. She argued that an irrational rejection of rights of women in the field of education and lack of opportunities to cultivate reason were the origin of patriarchy and its perpetuation. Mill also viewed that women’s subordination is not a natural phenomenon. It is a barbaric tradition that has survived from a period of time that no longer exists. It is originated in force and it is now sanctified by custom that gives it a ‘natural’ appearance. He does not disagree with the fact that women appeared to be inferior to men in many ways but defends it by saying that social pressure and faulty education caused it - ‘the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others.’ (Mill, 1983).

Marxist feminists viewed that patriarchy occurred simultaneously with the development of private property. In ‘The Origin of the Family and Private Property and the State’ (1972), Friedrich Engels argument is that when economic surpluses started accumulating, subjugation of women, too, started; as such private property which gave birth to class hierarchy and the state, also brought about women’s oppression. When larger clans and communal living groups were replaced by individual families, women lost their reciprocal roles. In short, Engels argues that private property was the source of ‘the world historical defeat of the female sex’.

Radical feminists locate the root of patriarchy in biology rather than in economics or history. For them, motherhood begets all evils. It is an ideology that oppresses women and facilitates the continuity of patriarchy. It brings in division in human qualities as masculine and feminine; the division between the public sphere
and the private sphere is fortified, limitation is put on women’s mobility, increases male dominance. Shulamith Firestone in her work *The Dialectic of Sex* (1971) even claims that the basis of women's subjugation lies in their reproductive ability. Some radical feminists classify the social system into the economic class system and the reproductive class system; the first is based on relations on production; the second is based on relations of reproduction. The reproductive class system is responsible for women’s inferior position (Jefferey, 1977). The notion of patriarchy is understood with reference to the sex-class system which is associated with the rule of women by men; this rule is based upon men’s ownership and control of reproductive capacities of women. However, these feminists state ‘it is not women's biology itself, but the value men place on it and the power they derive from their control over it that are ‘oppressive’.

There are also radical feminists who related patriarchy not to women’s biology but to the biology of men. Susan Brownmiller (1975) claims that the ability of men to rape women has led to the subordination of women. In fact, man uses his ability to rape in order to control and intimidate women, and this has resulted in male supremacy and dominance over women. Also, patriarchy has been linked to the psychology of men. Mary O’Brien argues that man’s incapability to bear children has to be psychologically compensated. The need for psychological compensation compels them to create institutions through which they can dominate (Lerner, 1986). That women’s bodies and sexuality are controlled by the patriarchal order of society has been made clear by the radical feminists. This is a notable contribution by them. However, their recognition of biological determinism has been condemned. They
have also not been able to establish a link between the economic class system and the sex class system.

Unlike the liberal and Marxist feminists, socialist feminists stated that the legal, political rights and economic determinism were not responsible for the emergence of patriarchy. Rather, they located the root of patriarchy in the masculine psychology, language and thought. They look upon patriarchy as a combination of both material and sexual factors. That is why they put their efforts in emphasising the relations between reproduction and production and also the role of the family in capitalist. Zillah Eisenstein (1999) describes male dominance and capitalism as ‘the core relations determining the oppression of women today’. She further observes that contemporary society is characterised by capitalist labour where exploitation exists. At the same time, a woman is a mother, domestic labour and consumer in the patriarchal sexual hierarchy where repression of women takes place. In her view, patriarchy does not grow out of biological differentiation; it is the differentiation in the ideological and political interpretations that gives birth to patriarchy.

Hartmann (1981) examines the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism and claims that patriarchy relates all men to each other regardless of their class. In his view, a women’s work is beneficial to capital as well as the husband. He defines patriarchy as a set of relations with a material base which carries hierarchal relationships between men which bring about unity among them and empowers them to have control over women. Therefore, domination of men over women’s labour power is determined by the material base of patriarchy.

Gerda Lerner’s work ‘The Creation of Patriarchy’ has also been found to be very significant in understanding the origin and development of patriarchy. She view
that patriarchy is a ‘historic creation formed by men and women in a process which
took nearly two thousand five hundred years to its completion’. She based her study
on ancient Mesopotamia as the earliest written, historical records come from it. The
Sumerian culture was one of the earliest cultures (from 3100 BC to 600 BC) that
developed in Mesopotamia and also transformed to a male dominated society from
the ancient matrifocal and matrilineal tradition. Lerner has put up a few premises in
support of her observation:

- Private Property and class society occurred much later than man’s
  appropriation of women’s sexual and reproductive capacity. The foundation
  of private property actually lies on its objectification.

- Patriarchal form was the structure of the ancient states. As such, the states
  were primarily concerned about perpetuating the patriarchal system.

- Men were led to dominate over other people and impose hierarchy after
  experiencing success in dominating the women of their own groups. Learner’s
  view is that the exploitation of women of vanquished groups led to the
  institutionalization of slavery.

- In Mesopotamia, between 18th and 8th century B.C.E sexual subordination of
  women was not only institutionalized in the ancient low codes but also
  imposed by the full authority of the state after the laws had been enacted.
  Various means were adopted to get collaboration of women. Some such
  means were: applying force, taking opportunity of woman’s economic
  dependence on the male head of the family, bestowing class advantages upon
  consenting and dependent women of the upper classes, creating artificial
  division among women as respectable and non-respectable table.
• Man’s class is and was determined by his relation to the means of production. A man believes that if he owns the means of production he also owns other who does not possess it. A woman acquires her class through her sexual links to a man who can provide her with economic resources. A woman who adheres to one man is considered to be ‘respectable’ and a woman, who does not do so, is not considered to be ‘respectable’. This categorisation of women is institutionalised in laws that veil women.

• Even long after women had become man’s subordinates both economically and sexually, they used to play active and respectable conciliatory roles between Gods and humans as priestesses, seers, diviners and healers. The female power of giving birth to a new life came to be worshipped by both man and woman in the form of a supreme Goddess even though women had long ago come to be subordinated by man in almost all aspects of their earthly lives.

• The supremely powerful Goddesses were overthrown but the establishment of a strong and imperialistic kingship and a dominant male god came to be worshipped in most Near Eastern societies. The function of controlling fertility was formerly attributed to the Goddesses. Gradually it came to be signified through the mating, both symbolic and actual, between the male God or God king with the Goddess of her priestess. Finally sexuality (eroticism) and procreativity were attributed to different deities. The Mother Goddess lost her original, revered position and was transformed into the consort or mate of the principal male God.
As Hebrew monotheism grew, attacks on the cult of worship of variant fertility Goddesses became widespread. The Book of Genesis bestowed upon the Almighty or all powerful God creativity and procreativity. The epithet ‘Lord’ or ‘King’ established God’ sex as male. Female sexuality without procreativity came to be looked upon as evil or sin.

Women had no place in the metaphysical as well as earthly covenant community; as the establishment of the covenant community denotes a contract between God and humanity, women are excluded from this community because of their subordinate position. Only through their function as mothers they can have access to God and the holy community.

Women’s loss of place in relation to the covenant may be looked upon as a symbol of how the divine devalued women. Similarly, women were devalued by the Aristotelian philosophy, too, as it considered woman as incomplete and damaged human beings. Western philosophy imbibes these two metaphysical constructs. Consequently, subordination of women comes to be seen as something “natural”. This helped establish firmly patriarchy not only as an ideology but also as an actuality. (Lerner,1986)

Thus, it was not a single cause or one historical moment that led to the establishment of male supremacy but a number of factors were responsible for it. Though some consider patriarchy as a natural phenomenon, this idea suffers from number of flaws and so far there has been no historical or scientific evidence in support of this view. Moreover, explanations which regard men as biologically superior and the chief provider of families have also been rejected on the basis of study on the hunting- gathering societies. In these communities, both the sexes
enjoyed tremendous equality. There are even many tribal societies where women command respect and enjoy equal status with man, an example of perfect egalitarian societies (Rachna, 2008). According to Learner (1986), economic self dependence marks the most egalitarian societies. In such societies the relative status of men and women, in general is ‘separate but equal’.

She even argues that,

Most of the evidence for female equality in societies derives from matrilineal, matrilocal societies, which are historically transitional and currently vanishing; while matriliny and matrilocality confer certain rights and privileges on women, decision-making power within the kinship group nevertheless rests with elder males; patrilineal descent does not imply subjugation of women nor does matrilineal descent indicate matriarchy; and seen overtime that, matrilineal societies have been unable to adapt to competitive, exploitative, techno-economic systems and have given way to patrilineal societies (Lerner 1986).

Further in objection to any explanation based on the view that patriarchy is naturally and biologically determined, many social scientists believe that there is no doubt that there are biological differences between man and woman but woman’s lower social status on that ground is man- made. It has evolved historically owing to various socio-economic and socio-political factors.

3.3 Structures of Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold the primary power. Men being the supreme member of the society not only control women’s sexuality, labour or production but also involve themselves in the issue of reproduction and mobility of women. This circumstances created by male dominance are manifested through various structures of the society. The family is one of such institution which is most visibly patriarchal where the father or a senior male plays the role of the patriarch or ‘the head of the family’. The family is the basic unit of the society that helps the child
socialize that teaches him or her sexually differentiated roles are normal. Socialization that starts quiet early in life makes the girl child feel different from the boy child. The boys are taught to be aggressive and domineering and girls to be submissive, caring and loving. Even the toys gifted to them by their parents enhance the idea of patriarchy. The parents buy toy cars, bicycle, puzzle games for the boy child which require both physical energy and mental ability, while the girl child is given dolls and kitchen utensils to play with. This urges the boy child to become socially stronger and powerful and in turn they are taught to view themselves as breadwinners. The girl child is trained to become soft, emotionally sensitive, and to acquire all features of motherhood and submissive housekeepers. Women are assessed always on their terms of differences from men; they are considered to be dependent on and subordinate to men so that they can please men all the time. This comes to be so because of the fact that women are looked upon by the society more as sexual beings than human beings (Charvet, 1982). Gender stereotypes make women vulnerable, expose them to prejudice and crimes and injustice. The family as a social institution playing a vital role in perpetuating the patriarchal system by initiating the younger generation to its norms through socialization.

Apart from the family, other social institutions like religion, education, politics, economy, and the media also reinforce patriarchal norms and values. Religion, a system of beliefs and practices, is found in all human societies in one form or another around the globe. Most religions and religious institutions reveal their patriarchal motive by exhorting that male authority is divine. Religion plays the most vital as well as crucial role in legitimizing patriarchal code of conduct in the society. Religious beliefs take the role of an ideology for spreading and strengthening
patriarchy that legitimizes domination by males and subordination of women. There are many patriarchal practices defended in the name of religion; for example preference for sons; female foeticide; female genital (FMG); selling daughters in the name of marriage; forcing a girl child for marriage; acquiring husbands for daughters by offering dowry; patriarchal marriage arrangements allowing the husband unlimited power in managing household affairs and giving control over land, property and finance. Such practices also give the husband full control over the wife leading to acts of violence against the wife including heinous ones like marital rape; honour killing is another offshoot of such practices allowing fathers and brothers to kill daughters and sisters in the name of the family’s honour if a daughter or a sister who falls victim to sexual assault or falls in love with a boy from another caste or religion. Witch hunting, imposing restrictive and compulsory dress code upon women, making customary divisions of food, confining women to the private sphere are some other consequences of patriarchal practices sponsored by religion (Raddy, 2003).

The education system also plays a significant role in perpetuating patriarchal ideology in the society. The education system, too, has sustained the patriarchal stream of thinking by prescribing text books with content that shape the young learner’s mind to support and sustain the patriarchal ideology and values. Sensitive issues like gender, class, race, etc. are discussed without sensitivity; they are full of stereotypical images of feminine behaviour: women are caring, soft hearted, kind and gentle; on the other hand men are machos. The projection of men in such books are always in the public sphere; they are professionals, rulers, traders, soldier, religious heads and the like; women are projected as wives and mother and sisters who not only take care of household chores and the male members but also enjoy what they
consider to be their duties. There is hardly any mention of women’s spectacular achievements in many other fields like management, medicine, legal and scientific profession. In fact, patriarchal ideas are passed on in subtle ways: myths and legends highlighting the self sacrificing, self-effacing images of women who uphold the patriarchy imposed values of a faithful wife and loving mother (Desai 2004). Even games are presented stereotypically in such books. Girls are shown playing indoor games that do not need much physical exertion and enable them to play at home, thus driving home the point that girls are physically weaker and they are safe indoors. In sharp contrast, boys are shown associated with outdoor games like football, cricket, hockey etc. that demand physical vigour. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) document stated that ‘we must use text books as one of the primary instruments for equality, since for a great majority of school going children, as also for teachers, it is the only accessible and affordable resource for education’. In reality, school text books are doing just the opposite. Instead of promoting equality, they are promoting gender inequality and gender discrimination among young students. The school curriculum should adopt the policy of gender sensitization and thus be structured in a such way that reduces the inequalities between men and women instead of reinforcing them.

Most of the political institutions are also male dominated. Male domination is a significant feature of politics; political parties are among the most important institutions affecting women’s political participation to a great extent. Male dominated political parties often have a male perspective on issues of national importance; this disillusions women as their perspective is often ignored and not reflected in the political programmes of the parties. Women are also usually not elected
to the position of power within party structures because of gender bias of male leadership (Makama, Godiya Allanana, 2013). Electoral laws and processes along with internal structures of the political parties discriminate against women by privileging male candidates over female aspirants. Many political parties do not favor selecting women as candidates for elections as they are doubtful of their success. They regard women as good voters but not as good candidates. Women are usually used by political parties to provide relief services during natural calamities and to carry out election campaigns. Politics is a power game that is decided by subtle calculation. Political power in a democracy comes through the ballot boxes. Hence, the selection of the most suitable candidate is crucial. Because of women’s confinement to the public sphere – a corollary of the patriarchal system - political parties do not find women to be suitable for the game of politics that belongs almost wholly to the public sphere. Therefore, patriarchy is one of the major factors that determine the level of women’s political participation globally. In the word of Roc (1977) patriarchy is a familial - social, ideological, political system. Elaborating his ideas, he states that in this system men determine the roles to be played by women in such a manner that women can be subjugated by men everywhere. In determining women’s role, men use force, pressure, ritual, tradition, law, language, customs, etiquette, education and division of labour. The constitutions of various countries around the world guarantee equal rights to men and women to participate in politics but the level of representation of women in law making bodies is not satisfactory. There is no doubt that a few women have been able to hold powerful political positions. However, they need to function within the framework laid down by men. Another fact is that women’s participation in politics has remarkably increased and

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the presence of women representatives of people in political forum has become visible in many parts of the world. Even then, it is a fact that women are politically under represented all over the world.

Patriarchy also influences the legal systems of most of the countries. The legal system is a set of legal rules, legal institutions and machinery that regulate the social behaviour of a particular country. Even laws are made conforming to patriarchal norms and values, leaving loopholes; consequently, crimes against women increase as the culprits go scot free because of legal loopholes. The judiciary is peopled by males who have patriarchal prejudices and go against women’s interest. Thus even judiciary is very often found to be perpetuating oppression of women. In this way, the patriarchal attitudes of the legal systems push women to live at the mercy of men, who exercise unlimited power over them. Mackinnon (1983) observes that laws are based on male norms, experience and dominance. The ‘male stream’ law totally excludes women’s experience. The effect of the ‘neutrality’ of law, therefore, is not the same on both man and women. As the ‘neutral’ law treats women differently, its effect on them is also different.

In the patriarchal society, men are the owners of most property and they are also in control of finances. As a result, the productive works that women perform are not counted; nor are they paid for. Their contribution to the creation of surplus through ‘shadow work’, a term used by Maria Mies (1998) is completely discounted; housework done by women is never evaluated. Women’s labour, both in the workforce and at home reveals only one dimension of their oppression by men. The 1980 United Nations Report sums up the global nature of this exploitation. According to this report, women represent 60 percent of the world’s population, perform nearly
two third of its work hours, earn one-tenth of the world’s income and own less than one percent of the world’s property (UN 1980). Moreover, most of the women in their workplace experience sexual harassment in one form or the other. Sexual harassment is the expression of male power and dominance over women that sustain patriarchal relations in the workplace. It is nothing but a glaring example of gender discrimination, exploiting the inequality in power position in professional life. A Study conducted by the ILO (International Labour Organisation) brought to light that sexual harassment was inextricably connected to positions of power; it occurs more frequently in cultures where women are looked upon as sex-objects and second class citizens (ILO,1992)

Media, the most powerful entity of the society, is a part of our everyday life. It not only gives information and entertainment to the public but also affects the lives of the people by shaping their opinions, attitudes and beliefs. However, the media is a pervasive and profoundly influential socializing force and widely known to represent and reinforce the ideology of patriarchy. The portrayal of women in films, television, magazines, newspapers, radio and advertisements is stereotypical and distorted though of late, efforts have been made to overcome this bias in some sectors. Messages in the media are framed in such a manner that the viewers get convinced about the superiority of men and inferiority of women. Films with rampant violence against women are offered as popular entertainment fare. Professionally, women are highly underrepresented in the media as in many other sectors; reporting coverage, advertising are highly sexist. (Mathu 2008).Though studies have revealed that the number of women employees have been increasing all over the world, the top positions like those of producers, executives, chief editors and publisher are still
predominantly held by males. (White 2009). The media’s effort, therefore, is to depict
the picture of women as weak and inferior, while that of men as strong and superior.
However, one cannot deny that the media’s role has been quite significant in
highlighting women’s issues though the overall image of women created by the
media has remained stereotypical; it is an image that makes them appear infirm,
helpless, dependent, conservative and above all an object of sex.

Moreover, Walby has identified six components of the patriarchal structure:
the patriarchal mode of production in the household; patriarchal relations in paid
work; patriarchal state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; patriarchal
cultural institutions that are independent as well as interdependent. The patriarchal
mode of production in the household stands for the undervalued or unpaid labor that a
woman contributes through performing household chores or childcare. The
patriarchal relation is another phase that refers to work done by women for which
they are paid. But traditionally the labor market offers women semi-skilled job for
which they are paid very less. The state comes in the third phase as a patriarchal racist
and capitalist institute that frames policies and priorities with patriarchal interest in
mind. Male violence against women is another phase in this structure that has a
pattern and a system that are routinely experienced by women. The patriarchal
relation in sexuality that comes as the fifth phase is demonstrated through the notion
of “compulsory heterosexuality” and the double standard in sexual behavior set
differently for men and women. The last phase of the structure, the patriarchal
cultural institutions deal with the male gaze within many cultural institutions and
gives an account the ways in which the mass media, religion and education have
Thus, all these structures constituting patriarchy operate in both the private and the public spheres of life, dominating the different zones of the lives of women.

3.4 Relationship between Patriarchy and Crimes against women

Patriarchy is a common phenomenon which is prevalent in all cultures throughout the world. Cobbert (1998) defines patriarchy as the rule of fathers; however, he further observes that to-day’s male domination includes the all pervasive domineering, man’s world that spreads across all spheres of life - social, political economical. Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices which reinforces male domination and justifies subordination of women. Women are not only considered as subordinate to men but also they are subjected to discrimination and unequal treatment, disregard, neglect, control, exploitation, oppression and violence within the family, at the place of work and in the society. Women experience such discrimination and abuse not because of their biological differences which are natural but because of their gender differences which are a social construct. It has already been stated that patriarchy is all pervasive and affects women’s lives beyond measure. It not only restricts their freedom and mobility but also stunts the growth and development of their personalities. They are subjugated to men through structural, juridical and social norms forms for women hood imposed by males, ‘which delineate how women should act and present themselves to the world, what they should value, and which activities they should and shouldn’t be "allowed" to partake in’(Calixte et al., 2005).

The socio-culturally imposed roles, responsibilities, personality traits and behavioural patterns of male and female sex contribute to the inequalities and hierarchy in the various structures of the patriarchal society. Therefore, these inequalities between
men and women manifest itself in various forms of abuse and violence against women.

Violence against women is one of the main mechanisms used to control, dominate, exploit and oppress women in all spheres of life within the patriarchal society. Violence in the domestic sphere, the most widespread form of violence, is an expression of male power in patriarchal families. It is a phenomenon that women have to face in various forms and degrees throughout their lives. It is usually inflicted by the males who are or who have been the most powerful members of the family, although intimate partners are the main perpetrators of domestic violence. Intimate Partner Violence is the violence inflicted by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another partner within intimate relationships. The nature of this form of violence is ‘systematic and intentional’. It is referred to as ‘patriarchal Terrorism’ which denotes a form of violence by husbands that terrorizes wives and keeps them under control. The most significant aspect of this type of violence is that besides physical and other types of violence, it uses threats, isolation, economic subordination and many other suppressive measures. (Johnson, 1995). Most cultures uphold the belief that men are superior in position and power to women. The women with whom they are in intimate relationship, therefore, are their possession and subordinate to them. As such the women can be treated by men in a manner that they consider to be appropriate. The ‘systematic and intentional nature’ of this form of violence is maintained by referring to it as ‘Patriarchal Terrorism’ which is defined as a form of terroristic control of wives by their husbands that involves the systematic use of not only violence but economic subordination, threats, isolation and other control tactics (Johnson, 1995). This belief justifies the husband’s physical violence against wives.
who do not perform their household tasks or who are disrespectful to them. A study done on Arabian husbands from Israel reveals that 62% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that an unfaithful wife deserves beating; 37% of them strongly agree or agree that a husband has the right to beat his wife if she insults him in front of his friends. (Yahia, 1997, 1998) Another common reason offered by males in many countries of the world to justify violence against women is their disobedience to husbands. Refusing to submit to the wishes of a husband by a wife is thus found to be considered as a major offence that can be committed by a wife. For instance, 62.4% of women in Tajikistan justify wife beating if the wife goes out without telling the husband; 68% if she argues with him; 47.9% if she refuses to have sex with him (Clarke, 2011). It is found from a survey that 56% of Indian women also justified wife-beating on grounds like bad cooking, disrespect to in-laws, giving birth to more girls, leaving home without informing the husband, among others (Fareo Dorcas Oluremi, 2015). However, most men consider wives to be responsible for being beaten, for instance 57% of Palestinian men agree with the statement “if a battered wife knew her boundaries and knew how to avoid her husband, he certainly would not beat her (Yahia, 1998). In the words of Augustine, arguably the greatest post-apostolic theologian of the first thousand years of the Christianity, wives should treat their husbands as their ‘lords’ and if they are submissive to their husbands, they would not be beaten. But, if they were abused, it was their own fault for going against their ‘earthly lord’ (Tracy, 2007). His explanation clearly highlights the close link between patriarchy and domestic violence against women.

There are certain practices known as ‘harmful traditional practices’ and found to be popular in various societies worldwide. These practices, too, are rooted in
cultural and religious norms originating from traditional definitions of manhood which again is connected to male honour and male dominance. All violations of women’s right may be brought under the category of harmful practices but in certain communities, there are certain kind of violence against women which are justified in the name of tradition, culture, religion or beliefs and these are categorised as harmful practices. These practices not only legitimize but also maintain the subordination of women and subsequently perpetuate violence against them in the society. Such practices are harmful to the physical integrity of the women and often results in physical pain, disabilities, physical and psychological dysfunction and also cause death of millions of women globally.

Women are exposed to a wide range of harmful traditional practices across their life including sex selective abortions and female infanticide, child marriage, marital rape, dowry related violence, polygamy, acid attacks, so-called honour killing, stoning, maltreatment of widows. Preference for a son is one of the most common forms of traditional practices which have led to widespread female foeticide and female infanticide in many countries where the position of women is low and subordinate to their male counterparts. A boy child is preferred to a girl-child in many countries because of the prevalence of the patriarchal system. It is interesting to note how the importance of the boy child becomes a part of the collective psyche of a community and gets into its language. For instance, the word ‘Abu Banaat’ in Arabic means ‘father of daughters,’ and it is used as an insult to a man. There is an Asian proverb which in English translation means, ‘It is good economics and good politics and as essential as taking food at least once a day to have a son. (Ine Nnadi 2013).
Such preference for a son ultimately leads to abuse and maltreatment of a girl child in both pre-natal and post-natal stages.

Other traditional practices like child marriage, female genital mutilation and honour killing are also often enforced to oppress and exploit women in a number of ways. Child marriage can be considered from a number of angles. It may be taken as a means of providing male guardianship for a minor daughter to protect her from sexual violence, unwanted extramarital pregnancy, and ensure long years of child bearing capacity besides obedience to the husband’s family. (Wadesango et al., 2011). It is perhaps the most pervasive form of abuse committed against women before they attain the age of maturity. It not only deprives the child of her personal aspirations and full potential in life but also exposes the child to serious health risks including premature pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and lifelong sexual and domestic abuse. In certain communities, where child marriage is prevalent, the bride’s family has to pay a sum of money that has been agreed upon as dowry to the groom’s family after solemnising the marriage ceremony. In case the bride’s family fails to pay the dowry, there is always a risk for the newly-wed, child bride getting murdered by the husband or his relatives. Two of the most brutal forms of traditional practices are female genital mutilation and honour killing. It is nothing but patriarchal values and man’s desire to control female sexuality to protect family honour that lead to such gruesome acts. Statistics related to these are staggering: Around 3 million women are subjected to genital mutilation and as many as 5000 girls and women are murdered in the name of saving family honour all over the world every year. (UNFPA 2000).

There is also causal relationship between patriarchy and sexual violence. Sexual violence is defined as, ‘any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act,
unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic women’s sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work (WHO, 2002). The terms ‘rape’, ‘sexual assault’, ‘sexual abuse’ and ‘sexual violence’ are generally considered to be synonymous and are often used interchangeably. Sexual violence is prevalent in all counties of the world, although it is more widespread in patriarchal societies. It is more likely to occur in societies with rigid and traditional gender roles: ‘in societies where the ideology of male superiority is strong—emphasizing dominance, physical strength and male honour—rape is more common’ (Jewkes, Sen, and Garcia-Moreno, 2002). For instance - The rate of sexual violence, for example, in South Africa, is among the highest in the world and it is a result of the deep rooted patriarchal psyche of the nation. From a study on sexual violence on men and women in Cape Town, it has been found that more than 40% of at least once in their lifetime. More than one man in five candidly said that they had been perpetrators of sexual assault against women (Kalichman, 2005). Apart from sexual gratification itself, sexual assault against women is often a result of unequal power relations between men and women and is also strongly influenced by cultural factors and values. We can take the instance of the Gusii or Kissi tribe of Kenya. Sexual aggression is culturally sanctioned in Gusii marriage. As such, members of the society encourage the groom to be sexually aggressive and inflict pain upon the bride during sexual intercourse. This is done in order to implant the macho image of a man upon the women.

Trafficking of women is also directly related to the inferior status of women in a patriarchal society. Patriarchy denies women equal access to education,
employment and other opportunities and this makes them vulnerable to trafficking. There are a few cases where the women have stepped in the trap of the traffickers with full knowledge that they will be employed in the sex industry. But in most cases those who fall preys to such traps are seekers of jobs like those of dancers, waitresses, nannies etc. They later find themselves forced in to be the principal cause for trafficking in women and girls. Once these women are trapped into the sex industry, they are not only deprived of their basic human necessities but also fall victim to the traffickers’ use of many forms of physical, psychological and sexual abuse to dominate and control them in order to enslave them eventually. Violence can be seen as an ultimate expression of patriarchal values of sexual domination in society.

The prevalence of strict gender norms and patriarchal beliefs in Assam also influences crimes against women within the family and in the workplace and in the society. Violence in the domestic sphere is a reality in many Assamese homes. It is usually inflicted by the males and other female members who are the dominant member in the family, although husbands are the main perpetrators of domestic violence. As per collected data from the National Family Health Survey -3 conducted during 2005-2006, 39.5 per cent of the ever married women in Assam faced spousal violence. The gender role attitudes also have a great influence upon shaping the attitudes of the women to the perpetration of domestic violence. 45% of the women in Assam believe that it is justifiable for a husband to beat his wife, 32.5% say that wife beating is justified if the woman shows disrespect for in-laws 31.4 % say that if the woman neglects the house or children, 23.4% say that if the women goes out of home without permission of the husband, 16.4 % say that if the husband suspects the wife to be as unfaithful, 11.5% say that if the wife refuses to have sex with husband and
11% say that if the woman does not cooks properly (NFHS-3, 2005-2006). The harmful traditional practices driven by patriarchal values including son preference, child marriage, dowry related violence, polygamy and witch hunting are also common in the state. Sexual violence is pervasive in Assam and grounded in widespread social norms and gender disparities. Cultures that foster beliefs of perceived male superiority and social and cultural inferiority of women are likely to see frequent occurrence of sexual violence against women. (Gurvinder & Dinesh, 2013). The data reveals that rape, molestation and sexual harassment altogether constituted 24.98% of all forms of crimes committed against women in the state during 2013 (Crime Branch, 2013). Patriarchal traditions and gender inequities in the state have also exacerbated women’s vulnerability to labor and sexual exploitation. A steady increase in the reported cases of girl child being trafficked out of this region and forced into prostitution and other kinds of activities has become a serious concern in Assam. During the period (2008-2013), 158 cases were reported in the category of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956 in the state (Crime Branch, 2013).

Women are culturally, socially, economically, politically and legally being deprived compared to men and this subjugation and suppression made women fall prey into the hands of traffickers. Thus, there is a close relationship between patriarchy and crimes against women.

To sum up, patriarchy is found to be a social structure that has existed in human societies all over the world for millennia. Patriarchy is a social system where the male is the most powerful in all affairs of life and the female is relegated. There are social scientists who look upon patriarchy as natural, hierarchical order. However, their view cannot be supported owing to the lack of historical of scientific evidence.
There are others who believe that this is a man-made system which has evolved historically. In fact, the various structures of the society manifest and reinforce the circumstances of male domination. The nature of man’s domination over women gets expressed through means that vary from one community to another. But violence is used as a major means by all communities and societies universally to harass, humiliate, terrorize, control and subjugate women. Patriarchy and crimes against women are related in a manner whose causality is hard to deny. It is, therefore, the most significant factor in the widespread social phenomenon of crimes against women.

After having examined the relationship between patriarchy and crimes against women, it is found that it is the family where women primarily face violence in the hands of the most intimates and the family members. The present study, therefore, focuses on the problem of domestic violence against women and how it is influenced by patriarchy. But before taking up the role of patriarchy in domestic violence for detailed study, it becomes necessary to understand and enquire into the problem of domestic violence, and overview of which will be dealt with in the following chapter.
3.5 References


NFHS-3, (2005-06), *National Family Health Survey 3*.


