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Patriarchy and Paternalism in Intimate Partner Violence
A Study of Domestic Violence in Rural India

Niveditha Menon and Michael P. Johnson

Violence against women is a social phenomenon that crosses age, culture, and national boundaries. In all societies, women have been subjected to cultural and familial institutions that result in physical, sexual, and psychological harm. These acts of violence have worked to subjugate women and have contributed greatly to the gender inequality that is prevalent all over the world. In India, this violence takes the form of rape, sexual harassment, female infanticide, widow burning, dowry deaths, and domestic violence. The focus of this chapter will be on domestic violence in India.

As with family violence in Western societies, violence within the Indian home has long been considered a 'private matter'. Beginning in the 1970s with a focus on the problem of dowry deaths, the Indian women's movement has brought attention to the wider problem of domestic violence, redefining dowry deaths and other violence against women as a product of unequal relationships between men and women in India (Pande, 2000; Omvedt, 1990). Many women's organizations were formed to examine the problem of domestic violence at the local and national level. The movement not only gave rise to new laws specifically to address dowry and domestic violence (Bloch and Rao, 1997), but also sparked an explosion of research in this area by social scientists, social workers,
and policy makers (Daga, et al., 1998; Datar, 1996; Jaiswal, 2000). Official estimates from the Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs speculate that over 60 per cent of urban households experience domestic violence (defined by the Indian legal system as physical or mental torture), out of which five per cent report the matter to the police and prosecute the perpetrator of the abuse (Jaising, 2001). As for domestic violence more narrowly defined in terms of physical assaults, a number of studies suggest that the rate of domestic violence in households ranges from 33 per cent to 66 per cent (Magar, 2001; Mitra, 1999; Rao, et al., 2000; Bhatti, 1990; Visaria, 1999; Poonacha and Pandey, 1999, Martin, et al., 1999).

The diversity of India’s population (Katzenstein, 1989) has led researchers and activists to broaden their focus to a more contextualized view wherein the effects of the intersection of caste, religion, and class on the prevalence and form of violence could be recognized (Vindhaya, 2000; Abraham, 1995). This broader view has mainly focused on patriarchy as the primary lens through which domestic violence is addressed (Mies, 1988). Many researchers see prevalence of domestic violence as a manifestation of patriarchal values in the family (Krishnaraj, 1989; Vindhaya, 2000; Visaria, 1999; Ganesh, 1989; Moore, 1994) and as “an instrument of power used by... men to keep... women in their place” (Ray, 1999). Therefore, regional differences and associated cultural differences preclude a ‘universalist’ approach, requiring researchers and activists alike to examine patriarchy as it is manifested in every class, caste, language and regional category.

Central to this discussion of the relationship between patriarchy and the use of violence against women is the site of such violence – the home. Women’s position in Indian society has been partly shaped by the ideology of the Indian family. Although the family is theoretically a sanctuary for women, it also has the potential of acting as a prison with a restrictive code of conduct (Abraham, 1995). The hierarchy of relationships that typically characterize a patriarchal home “develops along age and gender lines” (D’Cruz and Bharat, 2001), so that young women entering a patriarchal household are vulnerable to acts of violence from their marital family. In fact, research indicates that if the new member of the household is unable to adjust to the household, violent means are sometimes used to elicit obedience from her (Mukhopadhyay, 1998; Ghadially and Kumar, 1988). Also, when a woman does not succumb to traditional socialization and does not conform to traditional gender roles, she is more likely to be beaten by her family (Goode and Tambiah, 1973). These acts of violence also tend to be socially accepted (Agnes, 1990; Srinivasan, 1998). Although violence against women is generally frowned upon, there is a cultural acceptance of men disciplining or taming their women, so that “when a man cannot tame his wife in any other way, he uses force” (Agnes, 1990). Bhatti (1990) also reports that most of the respondents in his study agreed that men beat women because they have to be controlled and kept in their place. Therefore, feminist theories of heterosexual intimate partner violence are rooted in the assumption that such violence, or at least some such violence (Johnson, 1995), is deployed in the service of men’s interest in controlling ‘their’ women (Johnson, 1995; Kurz, 1989; Pence and Paymar, 1993).

Armed with this feminist theoretical understanding of the relationship between patriarchal attitudes and violence against women, we set out to investigate the more general argument that social contexts that are more patriarchal will produce more intimate partner violence against women. Support for this seemingly straightforward extension of feminist theories of intimate partner violence is surprisingly limited. Early work in the United States by Yllo and Strauss (1983) found a curvilinear relationship between a state-level index of the status of women and state rates of assaults against wives. In a more global study, however, Levinson (1989) found positive relationships between a number of measures of gender inequality and wife beating for the cultural groups documented in the Human Relations Area Files. As you will see, our investigation of intimate partner violence in contemporary India has led us to revise that hypothesis and to frame our interpretation of the data in terms of Jackman’s (1994) work on paternalism. We will present this extension of feminist theories of intimate partner violence following the presentation of our original hypotheses and the data that led us to revise them.

Hypotheses

Region

While the pervasiveness of domestic violence goes unquestioned, the extent of the violence and the manifestation of the violence are different for different regions (Miller, 1999). The research on regions has usually concentrated on the north-south cultural dichotomy
(Miller, 1999). While this comparison is useful, it does not recognize the diversity among areas within the north or the south. Thus, we examined differences among various regions and hypothesized that because the north-eastern and southern parts of India have documented high-status for women (Miller, 1999; Srinivasan, 1998), they would report a lower incidence of violence compared to the northern regions.

**Family Characteristics**

*Non-nuclear family structure*

One of the more common forms of the patriarchal family form in India is the joint family, in which married couples move into the husband’s family household, and the wife comes under the patriarchal control of the head of the household, typically a senior male member of the family. We hypothesized that because of the ‘traditional’ nature of the joint family system, a woman is more susceptible to abuse from joint family members (Fernandez, 1997; D’Cruz and Bharat, 2001). Because the dataset that we used for this study (Demographic Health Survey, 1999) provides limited opportunity for constructing the complex relationships that represent joint family systems, we had to be satisfied with indirect indicators of the ‘jointness’ of respondents’ families. So while we hypothesized that there would be more violence against women in traditional joint families than in nuclear families, the categories of comparison are in fact non-nuclear (which would be predominantly joint) and nuclear.

*Joint decision-making*

We also hypothesized that if a woman has autonomy in the household, she is less likely to be beaten by her husband (Visaria, 1999). In other words, we expected that if there are other members in the household who make decisions for the woman, be it her husband or other family members, she will be more likely to be abused.

*Natal family violence*

Apart from these factors, we also examined the woman’s history of abuse. Because marriages are usually endogamous in India, women are very likely to transfer to households similar to their own (Das, 1975; Madan, 1975; D’Cruz and Bharat, 2001). If the ideology of the threat of violence was present in her natal family, it is likely that the belief systems of the marital family would be similar. Thus, if the woman experienced physical assault in her natal home, chances would be higher that she would experience physical assault from her husband.

**Socio-economic status**

Research in India has documented that women from lower socio-economic status experience more physical violence than women from higher socio-economic status (Bhatti, 1990; Visaria, 1999). While non-physical forms of abuse are prevalent in higher socio-economic categories, reports of physical assault are substantially higher in the lower classes. So we hypothesized that reports of physical violence will be less likely for families with higher socio-economic status.

**Religion**

The variability reflected in a region may be related to variations in religious affiliation. Because there is a politically charged religious propaganda that suggests that some groups might be more violent than others, we chose not to hypothesize too broadly about effects of particular religions on domestic violence. In India the effects of religion are also complicated by the fact that because the states are divided on linguistic bases, religious groups are likely to adhere to some extent to the cultural norms of the region, rather than the general norms of their religion (Ray, 1999). The only specific prediction that we were willing to make was that there would be a lower prevalence of violence amongst religions that advocate peaceful ways of living, i.e., Buddhism and Jainism.

**Personal Characteristics**

**Education**

One of the major predictors of domestic violence is education. The risk of being beaten is substantially reduced if the woman is educated. Many policy recommendations therefore concentrate on the education of women as a key factor in reducing violence (Ray 1999). Thus, we proposed that women will report a lower incidence of violence if they are highly educated.
Labour force participation and financial independence

Labour force participation and financial independence are important factors. Because working women typically contribute to the family income, it is hypothesized that the self-reliance of these women will lower the chances of abuse (Levinson, 1989; Mencher, 1989; Arora, 1999). Therefore, the chances of experiencing abuse from their husband are reduced for women who are engaged in the work force. However, in many parts of the country, women engaged in the labour force are likely to give their entire income to their families. Thus, work force participation might not automatically make them financially independent. To gauge the effect of financial independence of women on the experience of domestic violence, we have included the variable in the study. We proposed that women’s financial independence, apart from their labour force participation, will lower the incidence of violence (Mencher, 1989).

Attitudes towards domestic violence

There is considerable variability in women’s own attitudes towards domestic violence. Some women believe that there are conditions under which a husband is justified in beating his wife. They do not consider such ‘punishment’ to be violent (ICRW, 1998). Therefore, we predicted that attitudes endorsing the use of violence will be reflected in higher incidence of spousal violence. The more positive a woman’s attitudes towards domestic violence, the greater the likelihood that she will experience abuse from her husband.

Methods

Sample

The dataset used in this study is the Demographic Health Survey conducted in India in 1999, otherwise known as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-1999). The main objective of this survey was to obtain state-level and national-level information on various aspects of health such as fertility, family planning, nutrition of women and children, and quality of health and family welfare services. NFHS-2 is a nationally representative household survey, covering over 99 per cent of India’s population living in all 26 states. The overall target sample size of the survey was approximately 90,000 ever-married women between the ages of 15 to 49.

Because of the complexity and diversity involved in the examination of domestic violence in India, we narrowed the focus of this study to rural women. We further narrowed the sample to women who were currently residing with their husbands, to ensure that the absence of the husband in the household did not compromise the rates of domestic violence reported by women. Thus, the sub-sample for this study consists of married rural women who are living in the same residence as their husbands. These two specifications reduced the size of the sample to approximately fifty thousand women.

Questionnaires

The NFHS-2 survey used three questionnaires – the Household Questionnaire, the Woman’s Questionnaire and the Village Questionnaire. Only the first two are used in this study. The Household Questionnaire collected information from the head of the household and in the absence of the head of the household, from any other member of the family, on various characteristics of the health of all its members, such as the presence of asthma, tuberculosis, malaria, etc. It also collected information on characteristics of the household such as number of members living in the household, religion of the family, ownership of property or house and other information. The responses to the household questions established household members’ eligibility for the Women’s Questionnaire.

All women in the household aged 15 through 49 who were currently married, formerly married, or widowed were interviewed using the Women’s Questionnaire. Eligible women from the households were asked about age, marital status, education, and employment status. The majority of the questions in the survey were focused on the reproductive behaviour of the women, addressing issues of use of contraception, sources of family planning, reproductive health, and knowledge of AIDS. As women’s reproductive health is closely related to their physical well-being, women were also asked about their experience of domestic violence in the household and their attitudes towards violence.

Measures

Dependent Variable: Husband Violence

A series of two questions assessed intimate partner violence. The first whether the woman has experienced violence from anyone:
Since you have completed 15 years of age, have you ever been beaten or mistreated physically by any person?

If the respondent answers in the affirmative, she is prompted by the next question:

Who has beaten or mistreated you physically?

Interviewers were instructed to record all the persons the respondent disclosed. The answers to these questions can include members of the natal family, marital family, and also strangers. We coded women who were beaten by no one or only someone other than their husband as 0 and those beaten by their husbands as 1.

Independent Variables

Region. The Women’s Questionnaire begins with questions regarding the place of residence of the respondent, including the state in which the respondent resides. We have collapsed the 25 states into six broad regions as follows:

North (Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan)

Central (Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh)

East (Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal)

Northeast (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim)

West (Goa, Gujarart, Maharashtra)

South (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu).

We were guided by the Census of India and NFHS-2 to use these categories, which tap into the cultural, social, historical, and physical proximity of the states within each regional category.

Family Characteristics

Non-nuclear family structure. In the Household Questionnaire, there are a series of questions that inquire about the number of persons living in the household; their individual relationship to the head of the household; and the age, place of residence, literacy levels and marital status of each member of the family. The researchers working with the raw data manipulated this information into a variable that describes the household structure of the family, focusing only on adults. The categories are as follows:

- No adults
- One adult
- Two adults, opposite sex
- Two adults, same sex
- Three+ related adults
- Unrelated adults.

Because this study examines only women who are currently residing with their husbands, only two categories of this variable were relevant, ‘two adults, opposite sex’ and ‘three+ related adults,’ corresponding to nuclear and non-nuclear families, respectively. According to this variable construction, a nuclear family is defined as a family structure that consists of the husband, wife and perhaps some children. A non-nuclear family consists of a husband, wife and other adults, which could include their adult children or other adults, any of whom may have families of their own living within the same household and extended family members of the head of the household.

To measure women’s autonomy in the household, the NFHS-2 requests information about women’s participation in making household decisions. The question in the original survey was formulated as follows:

- Who makes the following decision in your household?
- What items to cook
- Obtaining healthcare for yourself
- Purchasing jewelry or other major household items
- Your going and staying with parents or siblings
- The answer choices were:
- Respondent
- Husband
- Jointly with husband
- Others in household
- Jointly with others in the household

Another question that related to autonomy was about freedom of movement. The respondent was asked if she needed permission to visit relatives or go to the market.

The complications of creating a scale out of these items led to our final decision to choose one ‘best’ item to tap autonomy. Because the owner of jewelry in an Indian household is identifiable, we hypothesized that the possession and purchase of jewelry gives women ownership and a modicum of control over that resource (Jacobson, as cited in Leonard, 1979). Jewelry is a piece of property that women can claim rights to and the decision-making process for
purchasing such a valuable resource is indicative of women’s position and autonomy in the household (Leonard, 1979).

Socio-economic status of the household: We used the presence of basic amenities and possession of commodities in lieu of income levels. In the Household Questionnaire, inquiries were made by interviewers about consumer goods that the household possesses. The question is worded as follows:

Does the household own any of the following:
- A mattress
- A pressure cooker
- A moped, scooter or motorcycle, etc.

The Household Questionnaire also asks about the use of amenities by the household. For example, the households were asked about the type of fuel that they used for cooking. The question is worded as follows:

- What type of fuel does your household mainly use for cooking?
- Wood
- Crop residues
- Dung Cakes
- Coal/Coke/Lignite
- Bio-Gas, etc.

The choices given are an indicator of the standard of living of the household. For example, households that use wood for fuel are less likely to be wealthy compared to households that have access to electricity. Similar questions such as source of drinking water and type of toilet facility are also included in the original questionnaire as an indication of socio-economic status.

After reliability tests were performed using all the indicators of socio-economic status, we identified the following final set of 15: the use of electricity, radio, television, bicycle, motor cycle, mattress, cot/bed, table, clock/watch, pressure cooker, sewing machine, water pump, source of drinking water, type of toilet facility and main cooking fuel. We dichotomized the responses to indicate the presence and absence of consumer goods and amenities, and created a scale of socio-economic status by taking the sum of the dichotomized variables. The range of the scale is thus 0 to 15, the lower numbers indicating lower socio-economic status (alpha = .82).

Natal family violence: As mentioned before, women who reported they were beaten after the age of 15 were asked the identity of the perpetrator. We constructed a scale of natal family violence by taking the sum of the dichotomous responses for each of the following relationships: mother, father, stepfather, stepmother, brother, or sister of the respondent. Thus, the potential range of the scale is from 0 to 6. The actual range of the scale is from 0 to 3. The lowest value, 0 indicates that no member of the natal family had abused the respondent and the highest value 3, indicates that three types of natal family members had beaten the respondent since the age of 15.

Personal Characteristics

Education

Education of the respondent is measured by various questions in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked if they ever attended school, what was the highest grade they completed in school, and whether they could read or write. Researchers handling the raw data combined the answers to all the education questions into a number of simpler formats for easier investigation. Out of the many choices, we used the following variable for its ability to capture the variation in the sample. The categories are:

- Higher Secondary complete or more (equivalent to completing senior high school in the United States)
- High School complete (equivalent to completing sophomore year of high school in United States)
- Middle School complete (equivalent to finishing 8th grade in United States)
- Primary School complete (equivalent to finishing 5th grade in United States)
- Literate, < Primary school complete
- Illiterate

Labour force participation

In the Women’s Questionnaire, the working status of the respondent was addressed in a variety of questions and although analyses of all of these factors may be useful in assessing the impact of labour force participation on the experience of violence, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, we analysed only one critical aspect of working status. Women were asked whether they worked for family or outsiders. The question was worded as follows:
Do you do the work for your family's farm or business, for someone else, or are you self-employed?
- Family farm/Business
- Someone else
- Self-employed.

This aspect of women's work was chosen for two reasons. It gave an indication as to the autonomy of women's work, and also of the physical mobility of the women and interaction with the outside world. For example, women working for someone else were more likely to work outside the vicinity of their households, whereas women working on a family farm were more likely to interact only with family members. Also, women who worked for someone else or were self-employed were mostly paid in cash whereas those who worked on the family farm/business were not paid at all.

Financial independence

Financial independence of women is usually tied to their working status. However, in a patriarchal household, this relationship is not inevitable. Women might be working full time, but not be in control of their own money. So, we used a question that gauged the financial independence of all women, working and non-working:

Are you allowed to have some money set aside that you can use as you wish?

Women were asked to respond in a yes/no format. One of the possible problems of using this question is that it does not give us any indication whether the woman controls the use of this financial resource for herself or for her family. It is quite possible that a woman's husband gives her some money for household expenditures about which she has enough discretion to respond affirmatively to the question. This use of money does not constitute financial independence on the part of the woman. However, given the lack of alternatives, and also the fact that this question was asked of both working and non-working women, we decided to include it in the analyses.

Attitudes towards domestic violence

In order to gauge the extent to which the respondent justified domestic violence, the NFHS-2 included the following:

Sometimes a wife can do things that bother her husband. Please tell me if you think a husband is justified in beating his wife in each of the following situations:

- If he suspects her of being unfaithful
- If her natal family does not give expected money, jewelry or other items
- If she shows disrespect for her in-laws
- If she goes out without telling him
- If she neglects the house or children
- If she doesn't cook food

The women were asked to agree or disagree with each statement and were also given the option of marking “I don’t know” as an answer choice. We dichotomized the separate variables such that agreement would imply a more permissive attitude towards domestic violence. We summed all the responses and constructed a scale that varied from 0 to 6 (alpha = .81). Low values indicate that women endorsed fewer statements, and higher values indicate that women endorsed more statements justifying domestic violence.

Results

All hypotheses were tested in bivariate and multivariate logistic regression models. The data are summarized in Table 8.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Zero-Order Relationship</th>
<th>Multi-variate Relationship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
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<td>Central</td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Christian</td>
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that the rates of husband violence would be lower in the southern and northeastern regions than in the northern regions. In fact, the odds of being beaten by one’s husband in the ‘liberal’ south were twice the odds of being beaten in the north (2.36), and the odds in the north-east were quite similar to those in the north.

**Family Characteristics**

Non-nuclear family structure

At the zero order, the odds of being beaten are actually less for women living in a non-nuclear setting than for those living in a nuclear household (odds ratio = .69). Although the effect is reduced somewhat by controls (.82) it remains significant (see Table 8.1).

**Joint decision-making**

When we examined decision-making with respect to purchasing jewelry as an indicator of patriarchal structure, we found that compared to respondents in families in which women made the decision themselves, those who lived in families in which the decision involved people other than their husbands had lower odds of being beaten. The odds-ratio for women who reported that these other individuals (apart from the husband) made the decision by themselves was .49; it was .37 for those who reported that ‘others’ made the decision jointly with the respondent (see Table 8.1). Looking across the categories of decision-making, we see that there is a systematic reduction of odds when decision-making is made by persons other than the respondent. Once again, these patterns are opposite to those that we predicted, and they hold up even after controlling for the other variables in the model.

**Religion**

At the zero order, the effects of household religion on the odds that a woman will be beaten by her husband are significant (see Table 8.1). Compared to Hindus, the odds of being beaten are slightly, but significantly higher if the woman is Muslim (1.15). Women from all other religions seem to fare better than both Hindu and Muslim women. As predicted, Buddhist and Jain households are the least likely to contain husband violence.

**Socio-economic status**

At the zero order, for every unit increase in the possession of basic amenities or commodities, the odds of being beaten by one’s

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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1.33**</th>
<th>0.61</th>
<th>1.15**</th>
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<th>1.15**</th>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>1.19**</td>
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Note: *p < .01, **p < .001. The dependent variable is Hit by Husband.
husband are reduced by a factor of .87, and although the effect is reduced by controlling for the other variables in the model (.97), it remains significant.

Natal family violence
At the zero order, natal family violence does have a strong relationship with likelihood of being beaten by one’s husband. For each additional type of natal family member who had beaten the respondent, the odds of being beaten by one’s husband increases by a factor of 1.73 (see Table 8.1). The effect is basically unchanged by controls.

Personal Characteristics
Education
As predicted, the zero-order relationship between education and husband violence is negative. The odds of being beaten decline regularly with each increase in the level of education until the odds of being beaten for women who have completed higher secondary or more are only about one-seventh (.14) those of illiterate women. These effects remain essentially the same in the multivariate model.

Labour force participation
The zero-order relationship between labour force participation and domestic violence reveals that the odds of being beaten are greater for women who work, especially so for women who work for someone outside the family (see Table 8.1).

Financial independence
At the zero order, the results indicate that the odds that women who were allowed to have money set aside would be beaten are less than those of women who do not have that independence (odds ratio of .91).

Respondent’s attitudes towards domestic violence
At the zero order, we see that each unit increase in the acceptance of justifications for violence increases the odds of being beaten by one’s partner by a factor of 1.19.

Discussion and Conclusions
Many of our most central findings, specifically those most relevant to our hypotheses about the effects of patriarchal contexts on the likelihood of intimate partner violence, were not only contrary to our expectations; they were in the opposite direction. We found that intimate partner violence was less likely in the ‘conservative’ north than it was in the ‘liberal’ south. We found that the likelihood of domestic violence was less in non-nuclear (joint) families than in nuclear families. We found that women were less likely to be victimized by violence if they were not in control of decision-making of the household, especially if that control was shared with someone other than their husband. We found that women were less likely to be beaten if they are not employed, and that the risk of being beaten is especially high for women who work for someone other than family. All of these anomalous findings, taken together, suggest that our seemingly straightforward application of feminist theory is inadequate as an explanation of variations in rates of domestic violence.

Although feminists have generally argued that family violence is about patriarchal power and that men use violence in the family in order to maintain control over ‘their’ women, less attention has been given to the argument that violence is likely in most cases to be the control tactic of last resort. We would argue that patriarchal control of women, especially within families, is virtually the prototypical case of paternalism, defined as “a system under which an authority treats those under its control in a fatherly way especially in regulating their conduct and supplying their needs” (Webster’s 1972).

Mary Jackman’s The Velvet Glove (1994) provides an extensive analysis of the role of paternalism in the maintenance of long-term, institutionalized inequalities. She argues that in any such relationship, it is in the interests of the dominant group to control without the use of “force [which] only structures the game in combative terms, making resistance the readiest response” (p. 9). Thus, “the abiding quest is to preserve an amicable relationship with subordinates and thus to preempt or subvert conflict” (p. 13). The argument for violence as a control tactic only of last resort is not new and, as citizens of two countries that are former colonies of the British Empire, we cannot resist presenting Edmund Burke’s
eloquent 1775 statement on this matter in his "On conciliation with the colonies" (as cited in Jackman, 1994: 62-63):

First, Sir, permit me to observe that the use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment, but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered.

My next objection is its uncertainty. Terror is not always the effect of force, and an armament is not a victory. If you do not succeed, you are without resource; for, conciliation failing, force remains, but, force failing, no further hope of reconciliation is left. Power and authority are sometimes bought by kindness, but they can never be begged as alms by an impoverished and defeated violence.

A further objection to force is, that you impair the object by your very endeavors to preserve it. The thing you sought for is not the thing which you recover, but depreciated, sunk, wasted, and consumed in the contest.

We would add that in the case of domestic relations of inequality husbands in most cases feel genuine affection (if not love) for their wives and want very much for that affection to be reciprocated.

Love is also, however, a powerful ideological force. As Jackman (1994) puts it, "by making love the very instrument of coercion, dominant-group members swathe the unequal exchange with subordinates in the warmth of personal affection even as they hem in subordinates' options with a taut thread" (82). When affection and love become the basis of a relationship between individuals in a family, the power relationships tend to be masked by a discourse of love that rarely addresses power dynamics, and violence can even be seen as symbolic of that love, as in a jealous rage. One of the primary reasons that paternalism is so invisible is because family relations are imbued with a rhetoric of love and harmony, affection and obligation.

This is not to discount that individuals feel genuine love, but merely to acknowledge that these bonds also contain power relationships within them, rendering family relationships into bonds of love, companionship, power, and authority. While researchers have tended to confound "violence with malice and the desire to control women with a hatred of women" (Jackman, 1999: 300), the systems of patriarchy and paternalism are in fact a more "complex set of values that include an exalted respect for the stability and privacy of the nuclear family unit...and the earnest belief that spousal love both permits and heals impulsive violence" (Jackman, 1999: 301). Although modes of resistance to authority, structure, and social control do exist within the family, the preferred strategy used by dominant members to deal with resistance is one of 'gentle' persuasion backed by patriarchal ideology, rather than active force. Therefore, while paternalism may have the appearance (or even the reality) of benevolence, it is still an ideology that serves to dominate and control subordinates, generally without the use of force.

The fact that force is generally not used does not imply that it is never a part of the discourse of paternalism, which is often couched in such a way that that the threat of violence is subtle but present. For example, the patriarchal ideology does not preclude the use of violence among family members in the Indian context. In fact, corporal punishment for children is still considered a valid and useful form of discipline. Therefore, it is not outside the purview of the ideology of patriarchy to use violence in certain circumstances. The threat lurs quietly in the background until "under extreme duress, [it] is moved to a more conspicuous position" (Jackman, 1994: 59). The payoff for using force in a relationship is to demonstrate unequivocally the power relationships between individuals (ibid.: 62), but it arises only after persuasion has failed, in circumstances in which individuals do not accept the gendered scripts of a society or culture.

In addition, compliance with the dominant group ideology is often rewarded with social and material favours and 'reasonable' advances (ibid.: 78). This 'conditional' love tends to be based on an idealization of a subordinate subject. For example, the definitions of the ideal 'woman,' 'wife,' and 'mother' are well-defined by role, function, and appearance and are often used to objectify women and place them in subordinate roles. The idealizations also enable dominant groups to 'reward' women who try to achieve these ideals - "with love, affection and praise" (ibid.: 79) - and punish women who reject them, through direct and indirect means. Women thus are moved to "subject their bodies to physical confinement or mutilation to gain acceptance, or better yet, win social admiration" (ibid., 1999: 309). Especially in a family setting, this system of reward
and punishment can be an extremely effective force. In addition, even men who repeatedly physical means to control their wives are also violating these structured and systematic forms of social control, often prompting condemnation on the part of other members of the society, or even from their own family members (Jackman, 1994). Applying these arguments to the case at hand, it would follow that when family power is heavily concentrated along patriarchal lines, the likelihood of using violence will be reduced because the structure effectively imposes cultural, social, and physical restrictions on family members. In such situations, because control over women is already well established, the use of violence is redundant.

In the joint family system, where mechanisms of control not only take the form of specific and rigid role expectations, but also encompass monitoring of behaviour by multiple family members, women’s lives are controlled to quite a degree by the institutional structure of the family system. Violence in this case is unnecessary. On the other hand, nuclear families, especially in this age of increased labour force participation of women, have very unclear role expectations and poor systems of structural control. In a nuclear family structure, unencumbered by additional members, women can use their limited authority to challenge and work around social roles and expectations, without the structural control of the joint family (Ray, 1999). In such situations, violence may be used as a ‘necessary’ means to control and subjugate the women (Singh, 1999).

In fact, Mahajan (1990) reports that one of the main reasons that men give for their wife battery is the assertion of their authority. When women acquire any measure of independence, via decision-making powers, labour force participation or from the structure of the nuclear family, they are more likely to be victims of violence from their partners.

Thus, we have to debunk the idea of “...conflict as the exclusive symptom of exploitative relations consensus as the indelible sign of function integration” (Jackman, 1994: 2), especially in social relations where dominant and subordinate groups have to live in close proximity and in family relations, where the narratives of love, romance, and marriage bind people in relationships of power. Open hostilities in these cases are not feasible. In family relationships bound by love and duty, control and power cannot be openly contested. This implies that patriarchy as an ideology does not always function in the same way in different contexts. In joint family systems where there is a systematic structure of power hierarchies and familial and spousal duties attached to each member of the family, resistance to power and control is much less likely to be resolved through violent means. In a nuclear family, however, where women are partly independent of structured roles, it is likely that violence is used as an effective means to control the mobility and freedom of women. Thus, the ideologies of patriarchy do not function in a unilateral manner; they encompass a broad range of principles, rules, and structures, the application of which are diverse and often contradictory.

In conclusion, three important characteristics of domestic violence emerge from the results of this study. First, patriarchy does not necessarily lead to the use of violence. Second, violence may be used primarily as a means of last resort, after all other control tactics have failed. Third, discourses of love have to be incorporated into our understanding of violence within the family. Summarily, it is not enough to understand that a patriarchal family system occasionally endorses acts of violence, or that violence is a man taking control rather than a man out of control. A deeper understanding of the conditions under which violence is used by patriarchal families to control recalcitrant women will enable us to more fully comprehend the complex ways in which patriarchy and paternalism control women’s lives.

References


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