

Rereading R.K. Narayan's *the Financial Expert*: The Imposition of Patriarchal Gender Standards Leading to the Social Alienation of Women

Muztaba Rafid¹

¹(Department of English, Northern University Bangladesh, Bangladesh)

Abstract

This study seeks to explore the manner in which patriarchal programmed gender roles alienate women as a minority by taking its cue from the ideology of patriarchal programmed gender roles inherent in *The Financial Expert* of R. K. Narayan. It illustrates the passages and situations in the book where the female characters serve as symbols of masculine status. Additionally, it exposes some of the tools patriarchal programming utilized in its endeavor. Using examples from the text, it also illustrates how patriarchy exploits sexual differences to oppress women. This study also discusses how women are objectified by developing a hierarchy in which women are devalued due to certain circumstances in the novel. The study also demonstrates how patriarchy aids the ruling class in using women as instruments in their endeavors. Additionally, the study uses passages from the text to illustrate how patriarchal programming of gender norms puts pressure on women's capitulation.

Keywords: Gender Roles, Patriarchy, Patriarchal Standards.

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I. Introduction

This paper seeks to demonstrate the alienation of women in R. K. Narayan's *The Financial Expert* as a result of patriarchal gender norms. With the assistance of patriarchal programming, these age old gender norms have become unspoken regulations. These societal unwritten norms have a greater impact on individuals than the legal system's laws. Due to patriarchal training, women who have internalized the rules and values of patriarchy are referred to as patriarchal women. In patriarchal societies, women are constantly expected to fulfill certain tasks.

The objective of these traditional gender roles is to represent males as rational, powerful, and decisive, and women as irrational, weak, nurturing, and passive or submissive. In his novel, R.K. Narayan paints a male-dominated society. In that society, men are more powerful than women. This world denies women the ability to surpass males. His female characters can be comprehended better by examining their relationships to his male characters due to the fact that female characters are all minor characters with supporting roles.

II. Literature Review

According to French feminist and philosopher Lucelrigaray, women live in a world where patriarchal language has dictated nearly every meaning. Through the mediation of this patriarchal discourse, the subordination of women occurs on a cognitive level. A language programmed by patriarchy will deliver the meaning that it thinks appropriate. The users of this language will only comprehend the meanings for which they have been programmed. In the first section of the narrative, Meenakshi is introduced while their mischievous toddler, Balu, is crying from a burnt finger. She seemed to be really anxious about her son. Margayya's comments to her to cease being "hysterical" (Narayan 9) demonstrate his inability to comprehend her. Margayya is irritated by Meenakshi's feeble objections and mutterings against her husband's quirkiness, so she exclaims, "It appears that she is determined to irritate me — she is becoming strange!" (Narayan 43) He is the finest example of patriarchal programming on show.

According to another French feminist, Hélène Cixous, the subject of sexual difference is addressed by juxtaposing action with passivity. (Sellers 38). The patriarchal worldview holds that women are born passive and males are born active. She refers to it as Patriarchal Binary Thinking (Moi 102). Therefore, a woman who is not passive is not a woman. As a patriarchal man, Margayya enjoys his wife's passivity when he dons his new clothing and sits down for breakfast at the opening of the novel. She served him silently and with a sort of submissiveness. (Narayan 20) Margayya "rose magnificently" (Narayan 20) following breakfast. When Margayya comes late from the priest's, he does not answer his wife's questions. He believed himself to be "the

master in his own home, with no one to challenge him." He disregarded her (Narayan 30) When Margayya was performing religious rites to alter the monetary situation, "He was pleased at the notion of the wife's obedience" (Narayan 56) because she did her best to obey his directions. She even prevented their mischievous toddler from approaching Margayya. Margayya simply acknowledges the submission of the wife. His wife responds submissively to every order from Margayya. Margayya referred to the actresses who accompanied Balu and Dr. Pal as "whores" (173) when he was beating Dr. Pal, an opportunist for using Balu. It is apparent that patriarchal society has labeled them with this derogatory term since they are gregarious and freely mingle with the opposing sex in defiance of conventional gender roles. Patriarchy undermines the assertiveness and self-assurance of women. They are not submissive as a woman "should be" and they freely associate with males, making them odd in the eyes of patriarchal culture and causing them to lose some of the prestige and respect that comes with being a woman.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to examine how women are alienated in a society controlled by men. In addition, the research demonstrates that women are oppressed because men maintain their status as "women," which demonstrates their inferiority. The paper looks forward to comprehending concepts such as patriarchy, patriarchal logic and how they become an obstacle in the progression of a woman's development.

III. Research Methodology

This paper has used a qualitative method to achieve its objectives and the study has been conducted through a comprehensive analysis of the available resources. This research has used two sources of data, and those are primary and secondary sources. The primary source of the data and information in this study has been taken from the main text *The Financial Expert* by R.K. Narayan. Several relevant research articles, journals, and websites have been used as secondary sources and those sources were analyzed and presented through logical explanations to support the research goal.

IV. Discussion

Patriarchal programming has preprogrammed the novel's male protagonist's perspective on life, which may be discerned by observing his behavior. Everything in the work is narrated or observed from a male point of view. Margayya's experiences serve as the criterion for evaluating all the things and occurrences in the story. His worldview is shaped by patriarchy, rendering him incapable of comprehending the other sex. For instance, Margayya views Meenakshi's worry for Margayya and Balu as unreasonable. Programming of patriarchy renders him unable of perceiving this action as an act of love and caring.

According to French Sociologist and feminist Christine Delphy, "marriage is a labor contract that ties women to unpaid domestic labor, commonly trivialized as 'housework'." (Tyson, 97-98). She also adds, "the dominant classes make the classes in their power do the productive work – that the pre-eminent sex does less work." (Delphy, 61). In the novel, Meenakshi performs all of the household chores, and Margayya immediately rejects Meenakshi's suggestion that he help a little while staying at home, citing the "huge task" of the patriarchal role of earning a living, which, according to the ideologies of patriarchal programming, women cannot perform. According to her traditional gender duties, whenever Meenakshi is seen in the text, she is either caring for her son or performing housework. Meenakshi is left with the task of providing the items necessary for Margayya's rituals to attain material success, as well as running the home with so few resources. These responsibilities are now outlined in her work description or "labor contract" (Narayan 61). These things are also overlooked. Meenakshi, not Margayya, "had spent a whole week rushing between Vinayak Mundali Street and Lawley Extension, preparing the bungalow at Lawley Extension for Balu and Brinda" (Narayan 157) so that they might live there comfortably. Margayya believes that all housework should be left to women because they are uniquely suited for it. Therefore, he instructs Balu to take her mother to Balu's ailing child and leaves the decision of whether or not to fire the cook to Brinda.

The patriarchy undermines the knowledge and pragmatism of women. From a patriarchal standpoint, knowledge does not align with the listed feminine characteristics. Margayya tells Meenakshi about his disagreement with Arul Doss, a peon at the Co-operative Bank. Meenakshi responds, "That is not the way to speak to people earning five hundred rupees a month," (Narayan 18) In this context, Meenakshi is viewed as more pragmatic than her husband. However, Margayya disregards it as a programmed patriarchal man. When Margayya complains about the next-door neighbor's incessant spying, Meenakshi demonstrates her wisdom by stating, "Anybody will watch when there is something to watch" (Narayan 42). But Margayya disregards her and repeatedly requests coffee. When Meenakshi calls Dr. Pal's manuscript vulgar, Margayya responds, "It was probably too scientific for ordinary mortals" (Narayan 76). Like any other patriarchal man, Margayya constantly degrades Meenakshi. She understands Balu better than her husband. While Margayya has high aspirations for his

kid becoming educated and traveling abroad, she believes Balu does not have the aptitude to do so and does not have as many expectations for him. Margayya does not recognize Meenakshi's intelligence and practicality since patriarchal conditioning has made him this way. She is never regarded as the family's decision-maker, despite being more pragmatic than her husband and son.

In her book *The Second Sex*, famed feminist Simone de Beauvoir remarks that men are regarded as fundamental subjects whereas women are regarded as contingent beings. Woman is Man's counterpart. Women are viewed as non-essential beings who are occasionally objectified as instruments. According to Margayya, the greatest way to reform Balu would be to marry him off. This concept is still prevalent in the South Asian region. When a son is disagreeable, irresponsible, or unconcerned with the outside world, the only cure is to marry him off. The daughter-in-law is viewed as a means for the in-laws to reform their wayward son. No consideration will be given to the girl's decision in the matter or her future. Due to their gender roles, females lack the autonomy to challenge patriarchy and make their own judgments. And typically, the bride-to-be is deceived about the groom's attributes. Similar to how Sastri portrayed Balu in his letters to the fathers who wish to marry off their daughters. Margayya and Dr. Pal altered the horoscope in order to facilitate the wedding.

Traditional gender roles were programmed by patriarchy to describe women as illogical or emotional and men rational. Then, it leverages this inequality to form a hierarchy and place women in a subordinate position. Meenakshi is continually pestering to demonstrate the women's emotional or unreasonable behavior. Meenakshi is constantly worried about her only son and on the edge of hysterics as a result, which makes Margayya unhappy. To him, worrying about their only child is ridiculous. After Balu's disappearance, Margayya's life has returned to normal. He is generating income as usual. Even after receiving the news of Balu's death, Meenakshi had to argue with Margayya in order to convince him to travel to Madras to investigate the situation. His brother's wife also assisted in this subject, which is the first to take center stage.

Those at the top of the hierarchy have a tendency to place blame on those at the bottom. The same holds true for men programmed by patriarchy. Margayya attributes the poor relationship between him and his brother to the women. "Margayya sighed at the memory of it; they had got on quite nicely, but their wives couldn't 'If women got on smoothly . . .' Half of the trouble in this world is due to women who cannot tolerate each other." (Narayan 19). Even wars are attributed to them. When Balu commits errors or engages in malicious behavior, it is Meenakshi's fault. During the time Balu was rushing with his register book, he says to her, ". . . that devil you have begotten." (Narayan 32) He further states, "She has spoiled him, beyond remedy; I must have him out of her hands and put him to school." (Narayan 43) When he contradicts Margayya over the Goddess's prostration, he again assigns blame to Meenakshi. Balu's S.S.L.C. exam failure is also attributed to Meenakshi. Even normal interaction with Balu includes at least one accusation against Meenakshi. When Balu tells him that his mother leaves the door of the house open when he goes home late so that he can enter freely, he says, "That's very careless of your mother" (Narayan 114). Meenakshi is once more accused of being a stereotypically unreasonable mother-in-law when she expresses concern for Balu and Brinda and objects to their relocation to Lawley Extension.

Luce Irigaray hypothesizes that women in patriarchal societies have two options. According to her, these are: "(1) to keep quiet (for anything a woman says that does not fit within the logic of patriarchy will be seen as incomprehensible, meaningless) or (2) to imitate patriarchy's representation of herself as it wants to see her (that is, to play the inferior role given her by patriarchy's definition of sexual difference, which foregrounds men's superiority)." (Tyson 101-102). In R.K. Narayan's world, women's acceptance of defeat is evident. Meenakshi keeps silent regarding Balu's smoking habit. Particularly after Balu's return from Madras, she devotes herself more to her family without doubt or question. She accepts all societally prescribed gender roles.

"She understood that the best way to attain some peace of mind in life was to maintain silence. . . she found that it was only speech made existence worse every time. Lately, after he had become affluent she found that her husband showed excessive emphasis, rightly or wrongly, in all matters; she realized that he had come to believe that whatever he did was always right. She did her best not to contradict him." (Narayan 112-113).

She serves food in silence and gives Margayya no advice or suggestions on how to deal with Balu, who has been neglecting his academics and has even begun to speak defiantly with his father. Balu tells his mum in advance that he would not retake the exam after failing it the first time. Meenakshi does not alert Margayya since she is aware that Balu will perform the action himself. She watches over her family in the background and, putting her ego aside, strives for the family's improvement. Brinda is ineffective. She attempts to halt Balu and inquires about his poor company. She is threatened by Balu that if she mentions these matters to his father, he would drive her out. She remains silent for four months out of fear. As a woman, she has no choice but to endure everything because oppressive gender stereotypes prevent her from speaking up. Even after four months, she is terrified to tell her father-in-law these things about Balu. Because patriarchal gender stereotypes prohibit her from doing anything other than remaining silent. She has internalized patriarchal views, like other female characters.

V. Conclusion

The universe depicted in *The Financial Expert* by R.K. Narayan is a patriarchal male-dominated society. In this universe, women are usually relegated to supporting roles and have no opinions of their own. Female characters are all subservient lesser characters due to patriarchal gender roles. The female characters are compelled to internalize the patriarchal ideals that marginalize them. Even in order to better comprehend the female characters, the reader must examine their relationships with the male ones. The patriarchal programming of gender roles transformed women into instruments for the dominant class to use and dispose of without regard. They are always the target of the blame game played by the dominant class of the illegally constituted patriarchal hierarchy, in which they are considered as the inferior class leading to their alienation.

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