

BODY, PATRIARCHY AND VIOLENCE: A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY OF FEMINISM

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SIDDHI CHAUDHRY



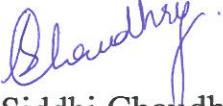
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DECLARATION

I, Siddhi Chaudhry, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled, "Body, Patriarchy and Violence: A Philosophical Study of Feminism," submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University, is my bonafide work and it has not part submitted by me or by anyone else, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of this or any other University.


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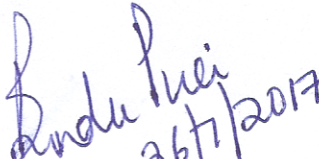
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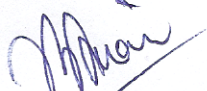
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**Body, Patriarchy and Violence: A Philosophical Study of Feminism**” submitted by **Siddhi Chaudhry** in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is her original work and has not been submitted by her in part or full for any other degree or diploma of this or any other university to the best of our knowledge.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. Bindu Puri
(Chairperson)


Prof. Bhagat Oinam
(Supervisor)

For thinking about thinking

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INTRODUCTION

The thesis entitled, “*Body, Patriarchy and Violence: A Philosophical Study of Feminism,*” seeks to examine, analyse and understand the nature of violence inflicted on women’s bodies in a patriarchal set-up from a feminist perspective. Of course, this feminist perspective is my own position, but it is by no means an individual voice arising in isolation. Rather, it is the voice of the masses emerging in endless conversations regarding the existing strands of feminist theories and practices which have been drawn from the vast field of knowledge and politics outlined by feminists globally over the years. Before commencing into the structure of the thesis, it is paramount to understand the ideology of feminism, since a lot many people confuse feminism with just women and women’s rights. In reality, the ideology behind the concept of feminism is much vast, it not only focuses towards women’s right but also puts equal emphasis on men’s rights and rights of the people belonging to sexual and gender minorities in a patriarchal society. In other words, feminism struggles amount for equality among all sexes and genders equally. Feminism is not about only women, but about understanding the ways in which people are produced, fashioned and inserted into a patriarchal society as proper “men” and “women”. Therefore, feminism is nothing but a fight against discrimination and violence inflicted on the lived-bodies belonging to the lived-world who are forced to conform to the social norms and traditions of a patriarchal society. Really, thats it!

Although, the definition of feminism is as simple as that, yet, there are some grossly wrong perceptions regarding feminism and feminists. Let me narrate some “feminist jokes” that I have come across in my life which reflect the wrong perceptions: Q. What do you call a happy feminist? A. I’ll let you know if I ever see one; Q. What is the difference between a baby and a feminist? A. At some point, a baby will grow up and stop crying; Q. Why do we have feminists? A. Because not all women can be beautiful; Q. How many feminists does it take to change a light bulb? A. None, feminists only shout, they can’t change anything, b. 10, 1 to change to light bulb and 9 others to make a documentary of how they did it without men and finally, the one joke which keeps repeating, Q. What is the difference between a cow and a feminist? A. Cow is at least a useful animal. I find such jokes very sexist and when I do not laugh at them, I am very casually told, “have a sense of humour!”. As a result, feminists have suffered and continue to suffer till date due to some common, terribly wrong perceptions

regarding the concept of feminism. Some of the incorrect perceptions are: feminists hate men and are opposed to marriage and babies; they are a bunch of angry lesbians; they are not feminine; feminists treat women as victims always and the most strikingly unpleasant one, feminism is no longer necessary in modern times. None of it is true, feminists do not hate men, not even close. They do not want to castrate and eradicate men from the society because men too are feminists. There are men who are aware of the apparent violence and discrimination in the society and support the cause of feminism. Feminists only voice out their opinion for a just, discrimination free society, nothing else. Similarly, they are not opposed to marriage since marriage is a personal choice. Feminists however try to bring out to light the socio-cultural evil practices related to marriage where women are oppressed in their everyday lives (for eg. patriarchy teaches women to aspire towards marriage as their only goal in life due to which educating a girl child is always considered secondary as she is inclined/forced to learn the household chores, domestic violence is a prevalent socio-cultural evil practice which affects a woman's physical and psychological well-being, etc.). Likewise, feminists do not have a problem with babies, they support abortion because although a human right, most women are kept bereft of it. Feminists understand that there are certain circumstances when abortion is mandatory for saving women's lives, hence, they support it. Of course, there are lesbians that are feminists, but that doesn't mean anything at all. It is like saying, some women are lesbians, therefore, all women are lesbians, which is a fallacy we all know. Moreover, it is a misconception to say that feminists focus on women alone as they fight against subordinate position of sexual and gender minorities in a patriarchal society for they firmly stand against biological determinism and gender essentialism. Lastly, no, feminism is not a thing of the past, we need it more than ever now for the people of the 21st century who can exercise the rights which were never available to anyone before do not feel safe and harboured in their lived-world. Therefore, if feminism is a redundant cause then, why do we still have gender based violence? Why are boys still taught to be tough, stern, aggressive and scolded, chided when they show any other feeling besides being masculine? In short, why does inequality and discrimination still exist? I have come across a lot of people who say that they are not feminists but they believe in equal rights and are more of an equalist. Hence, it is the need of the hour to understand and teach the real meaning of feminism after which I hope people would not have a problem with the term feminist and would only join the cause.

A feminist perspective perceives patriarchy as a problem because it recognises the hierarchal organising where gender is the key used to maintain the social order. Menon aptly describes the efforts behind maintaining the social order in a patriarchal society with the

metaphor of “nude make-up tutorial”.¹ Have you heard of it before? if not, I shall explain the exercise. For nude make-up, all you need is an eyeliner, a mascara, a nude lipstick and a skin highlighter that would make your skin look fresh and dewy with a natural glow. Most importantly, it will give your skin a make-up free look. The whole point of the exercise is to paint the face in-order to make it appear untouched. The efforts put behind maintaining the social order in a patriarchal society are just like that. It requires faithful performance of the orthodox, unjust prescribed rules and rituals over and over again throughout one’s lifetime. The ultimate goal behind such never-ending activities is to produce the untouched naturalness in the society. Most women and minorities are not even given a chance to question “the norms” and “the values and traditions” if, however, one gathers the courage to do so, the result leads to violence which is inflicted in symbolic and physical form under patriarchy. Thus, a feminist perspective reveals this strenuous, strict, complex formatting that goes on below the apparent surface of what looks like natural, untouched and complete. In-order to explain patriarchy, I shall draw support from George Orwell’s famous statement in the *Animal Farm*: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”² In the book, the male pigs as a whole exploit other animals in the farm by keeping better and more food for themselves, they live in a better place (the farm house), while the others reside in the stable. They also claim exemption from physical labor required in the farm for they perform the so called “brain-work” of the farm. The female animals are regarded most unimportant, insignificant (although, they are depicted doing most labour in the farm) actors in the fable. It has also been shown that male animals are wrongly rewarded for the labour they have stolen from women animals. The book’s closing lines state, “The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.”³ It is intriguing to note how closely the picture depicted by Orwell in the *Animal Farm* fits with the nature of men in a patriarchal society which oppress, subordinate, marginalise and exploit women in both, the domestic arenas and the private domains of life. In-order to understand the power of men in a patriarchal society, change the word animals to people, so, all people are equal, but some people (men) are more equal than others (women).

Women’s subordination and oppression can be traced in the Western philosophical discourses. When feminists started studying women vis-a-vis men in the society, they came to know more about women's history and how they have been subordinated by the patriarchal,

¹ For more information, see, Menon (2012), p. viii-ix.

² George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, p. 90.

³ Ibid., p. 95.

sexist philosophers of the West who very systematically and secretively excluded women by associating their role and status with bodies alone. Hence, the purpose of the thesis is to start with understanding the nature of body in philosophy. Body has been long approached from numerous philosophical perspectives and there is no one readily available account which is free from contestation. Western philosophers have understood the human being by making a very clear distinction between mind and body, where mind has been regarded as much superior in role and nature than the body. As a result, mind has been associated with reason, consciousness, recognition, etc. Whereas, body with negligible significance has been only defined as unreasonable, unruly, imperfect, disruptive, etc. On the other hand, with the advent of phenomenology, consciousness (mind) and body were together seen as two aspects of an integrated unity. Phenomenology as a philosophical theory investigates about a lived body and its relation and association with the lived-world. A lived-body is thus not just mind or just body but a recognition of the inseparability of these two. In doing so, phenomenology moves far away from the dogmatic ideas regarding the bodies held by the Western philosophers and focuses instead on the experiences of the body-subjects/ lived-bodies in the lived-world. The aim of the thesis is to re-figure and re-examine the concept of body in philosophy. Hermeneutics as the methodology of interpretation is concerned with the problems that arise when dealing with the texts, so in-order to trace the genealogies regarding the concept of body, the study will attempt a hermeneutical reading of certain key texts that will include: Bertrand Russell's *The History of Western Philosophy*, Elizabeth Grosz's *Volatile Bodies*, Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*, Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and The Invisible*.

Even though phenomenology articulates the significance of body, feminist philosophers have criticised the philosophical theory for being ignorant towards the phenomenology of women in a patriarchal society. Feminists analysed the position of women in both, orthodox philosophical theories and in phenomenology, and deduced that women on the whole have been understood by the patriarchal traditions as objects (rather than subjects), the "other" of men (subjects). They have pointed out how in patriarchal, sexist philosophical theories, gender and sex are not only understood widely as complementary to each other which reduces the individual to their anatomical aspects alone but also how violence is inflicted on those individuals whose identities do not comply with such an understanding. A hermeneutical reading of the key texts and articles for understanding women and violence under patriarchy includes: Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Nivedita Menon's *Seeing Like A Feminist*, Young's "Throwing Like a Girl," Irigaray's *An Ethic of Sexual Difference*, Nussbaum's

articles “Women Education: A Global Challenge” and “Women’s Bodies: Violence, Security, Capabilities, etc.

The proposed study prepares itself to be inter-disciplinary in orientation as the questions raised in the thesis are thematic, rather than thinker specific. In addition to brief introduction and conclusion, the study comprises of three chapters that tackle body, patriarchy and violence which according to me are interrelated themes. The study begins with the first chapter titled, “Nature of Body” which in depth discusses the concept of body in the Western philosophy. It will be examined as to how and why the history of western philosophy has given negligible significance to body in comparison with mind. The chapter encompasses a brief sketch of the negative conceptions held towards the role of the body by discussing some of the prominent philosophers of the West such as, Anaximenes, the Orphics- Pythagoras and Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato and Descartes and aims to bring into light the profound somatophobia (fear of body) which is evident in the philosophical theories of the West. It also discusses the view of the Christian tradition, including Augustine’s philosophy where the distinction between mind and body has been highly influenced by the works of the early philosophers. The second section of the chapter discusses the philosophy of Gilbert Ryle which critiques not just the philosophy of Cartesian Cogito but also the entire Western philosophy based on the assumption of the two distinct, mutually exhaustive and mutually exclusive substances called the mind and body. Ryle analyses the official theory of Descartes in *The Concept of Mind* and calls it as “Descartes’ Myth”. Thus, the aim of the section is to show with the help of Ryle’s philosophy that the mind is not isolated from the body. The last section of the chapter attempts to explain body as the way it has been understood in phenomenology. Phenomenology is among the few philosophical theories that articulate the significance of the body. Yet, some phenomenologists have prioritised mind (consciousness) over and above body in understanding the world and reality around. Sartre serves as a classic example and how he does it will be understood through examining his work in *Being and Nothingness*. The focus will however be on Merleau-Ponty’s works which deal with the issue of body extensively. Unlike other phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty does not treat consciousness as the hallmark of defining subjectivity because according to him, the actions performed by the subjective beings in the lived world are not always consciously performed and cannot always be consciously verified. He discusses at length the inseparability of consciousness and body in the conceptualisation of the self in the lived-world by the famous

statement “we are our body”⁴ in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Body-subject is a subjective being who has the first person subjective experiences of being in the world. According to him, body has its own mode of being and does not require any spiritual principle to support its existence in the world. It is a subject for it transcends its thing like character and exists as a lived body in the act of seeing the world. This way of articulating the self as a thinking body privileges the lived body over mere body or mere conscious act. Thus, Merleau-Ponty spent most of this time in understanding the role of body in *Phenomenology of Perception* which shall be closely studied. Although, for Merleau-Ponty, the lived-body overcomes the divide between the mental and the physical, the external and the internal, the subject and the other, etc. Yet, many feminist philosophers have raised criticisms against his notion of the lived-body which shall be analysed in the next chapter.

In-order to understand the criticism raised by feminist philosophers on Merleau-Ponty, it is first important to understand a woman’s position in a patriarchal society. The second chapter titled, “Phenomenology of the Feminine Body” attempts to understand and examine the role and status of women in a patriarchal set-up. Feminists argue that the binary opposition between mind and body has been correlated with men and women under patriarchy. The coupling of the mind with maleness and body with femaleness shows that the correlation is not accidental but has been secretively done by the Western philosophers over the years which can be best understood by analysing the manner in which they have written about women in their philosophical theories. The study will encompass a brief sketch of the misogynist views held by the prominent philosophers of the West in their discourses. It includes, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and Freud. Also, it will be shown how women's subordination, oppression and marginalisation was and still is primarily due to the influence of patriarchal ideologies which includes biological determinism (which has been extensively used by the Western philosophers). The concept of biological determinism is based on the assumption that men are naturally superior than women and patriarchy practices this ideology because of which women have been and still are being subjected to violence. Hence, a patriarchal set-up values masculine characteristics higher than the feminine characteristics and ensures, regulates and monitors that men and women act in accordance to their gender appropriate role and behaviour only. Any act of going against the prescribed behaviour is disciplined by both mild and strong means of violence. The criticism to biological determinism and the sex-gender continuum has been discussed in relation with Simone de

⁴Merleau-Ponty, M., *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xii. 1986.

Beauvoir and Judith Butler. According to de Beauvoir, the difference between the two sexes is established and propounded right from the childhood where girls and boys are brought up and trained for different gender appropriate behaviours. The cultural practices of a patriarchal society ensure that each one conforms to their gender appropriate behaviour only, always. Thus, de Beauvoir claims, “One is not born a woman, but, rather becomes one,”⁵ theorises a crucial aspect of gender that it is a social construct. Judith Butler in her book, *Gender Trouble* criticises de Beauvoir’s stance and puts forth some startling arguments by explaining how the available vocabulary used for defining the gender-sex relation overlooks and conceals the fact that sex in itself is perceived through the lens of gender in a society of a patriarchal, heterosexual kind. According to Butler sex does not exist outside social and cultural meanings because it is a social construct. Butler’s attempts to explain gender as an act of performance, a doing rather than a secondary attribute which one acquires as a result of one’s biological sex shall also be explained. Thus, the concept of gender, sex and women will be re-examined at length under patriarchy. The last two sections will address the criticism and challenges posed by feminists philosophers on Merleau-Ponty’s works for failing to understand the concept of being a woman under patriarchy. Simone de Beauvoir in the book, *The Second Sex*, argues that Merleau-Ponty fails to understand the constitution of the subjectivity of a woman and how it is different from that of a man in a patriarchal society. Also, Merleau-Ponty refrained from creating and believing in dichotomies (for instance, mind and body polar opposition, subject and the object, material world and the spirit, etc.), he believed in the “entwinement of forces,” the entwining of the invisible and the visible where the invisible is marked by the absence of positing consciousness. He proves the entwining of the self with the other in the inter-subjective world through telepathy but he fails to understand that the gaze of a man has a very different meaning for a woman in a patriarchal society. His gaze signifies power and control over a woman’s bodily being, it crushes her freedom, her resistance and her meaningful existence by objectifying her body as an irrational, unruly product in the society. Philosophy of Luce Irigaray provides a strong theoretical base to my understanding of the male gaze on women and the influence it brings forth. Irigaray believes that the reason why violence has been inflicted on women has much to do with the understanding of the sexes as first (men) and second (women), rather than as “two” in a patriarchal society. Her criticism on Merleau-Ponty’s concept of “entwinement of forces” for lacking the scope of recognising the “sexual difference” will be discussed at length. In the last section, the neutrality of the lived body is questioned. Iris Marion Young captures the everyday behaviour, spatiality and

⁵ Salih, *Judith Butler*, p. 301.

motility of women's bodily being and finds it to be in stark opposition from the experiences of men. She shows through her work that the manner in which Merleau-Ponty describes lived-body's engagement in and with the world does not hold true for women under patriarchy because the socio-cultural norms limit and govern their bodies which inevitably results in posing hindrances to their pre-conscious engagement in and with the world around them. Hence, it will be understood and examined as to how the situation of women under a patriarchal ideology leads to different bodily experiences for men and women in the society. Thus, how the lived-body is not neutral in the lived-world will be examined. Lastly, Judith Butler examines through her work that there are sexual differences in embodiment which Merleau-Ponty ignores in *Phenomenology of Perception*. Butler's critique of Merleau-Ponty's neglect towards the female sexuality will be discussed thoroughly and at the same time, it will also be examined how the universal feature of sexuality (such as heterosexuality) is maintained by ideal norms in a patriarchal society which not only results in sexual normalcy but any other way of being is treated with strict means of violence and discrimination.

The third chapter titled, "Violence and Body" discusses the nature of gender violence in a patriarchal society at length. Gender based violence is experienced as a ubiquitous existential social phenomena in the inter-subjective lived-world where one is not only affected by one's family, religion, caste, community, etc. but also by the pre-established structures of the society which are formulated and sustained by the ideologies practiced in the society, for instance, the social, economic, cultural and political institutions play their respective roles. Being born in a commonly shared lived-world, human beings realise themselves as a part of a particular socio-cultural milieu which determines their way of being in the world. But if the socio-cultural milieu works in accordance with a patriarchal, heterosexual ideology then violence is experienced differently by its embodied beings.

In the chapter, gender based violence is understood phenomenologically as an experience, as an act of intentionality where the perpetrator inflicts injury upon the subject on purpose with a desired intention which destroys not only one's pre-given sense of the world but also destroys one's way of making sense in the world.⁶ The first section will aim at understanding the nature of potential violence inflicted on women in the form of oppression, exploitation, discrimination and marginalisation in the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of a patriarchal society. The section will discuss the institutions at length. In the

⁶ Staudigl, "Towards a Phenomenological Theory of Violence", p. 233.

second section, body shame as an existential concept will be discussed in relation to a woman's body. It will be demonstrated as to how shame in a patriarchal society restricts a woman's possibility of autonomy, dignity, and fulfilment of life. Simone de Beauvoir argues that body shame leads to oppression for women in a patriarchal society where their embodied existence is looked down upon as shameful things (objects) right from adolescence till their last breath. She argues women are naturally associated with shame because their anatomy is different from that of men. As a result, menstruation and development of breasts are apparent body changes which deviate girls from the generally accepted form of appearance (that is a man's body). Hence, they are seen as object capable of inviting shame. de Beauvoir's analysis of body shame on women for being objectified by the male gaze all their lives in a patriarchal society has been further discussed in the section. After discussing de Beauvoir's concept of shame in a patriarchal society, the philosophy of Bartky and Wolf will be examined in-order to understand women's subordination and oppression in association with the ideology of beauty in which they have to take care of their body (age, weight, colour, clothing, etc.) as per the guided norms of the patriarchal society which has defined femininity. They theorised the connection between women's oppression and shame by discussing the ideology of beauty in a patriarchal set-up. According to them, the ideology of beauty is a violent tool used by men against women objectively and universally in the modern times. It oppresses women by creating competition within them and divides them into categories of age, weight, colour, etc. The study will explore how shame causes threats to life by examining some of the cruel practices of reshaping or reconstructing the woman's body according to the beauty and body ideals in a patriarchal setup. The reshaping and reconstructing a woman's body will be examined by three principles: by practicing the discipline of dieting and exercising, by inculcating beauty habits and by turning in to the procedures of cosmetic surgery. Also, how the various institutions of a patriarchal society work in accordance with the definition of beauty will also be discussed. Thus, the prominent question that arises from the section is, why is beauty a gender related category? The third section aims to examine the concept of honour and the relation between shame-honour in association with a woman's body in a patriarchal society. Honour is understood as a social and an economic value which is highly prized in a patriarchal society. Arun Pal in *Honour Killing: Culture, Dilemma and Ritual*, argues that an essential component of man's self-esteem and his community status in a patriarchal society is dependent on the social and sexual behaviour of his women in the society because honour is seen to be residing in the bodies of women in a patriarchal set-up. Hence, men are expected to uphold the honour by disciplining women's bodies and appointing gender appropriate behaviour for them. Whereas, women are expected to preserve

the honour by showing allegiance to only the set norms and principles in their behaviour. Since it is a social value, the perception of the society also plays an important part. How the society perceives the women of a particular family also adds or decreases a man's worth and honour. At the same time, Johanna Bond in *Honour as Familial Value*, argues that honour is also seen as an economic value. In other words, it is seen and protected as an asset which depends primarily on the social and sexual behaviour of the female members of the family in the society. When a female family member shows transgression (or even if when she is wrongly perceived so) in social or sexual behaviour the value of honour of the family as a whole decreases. In this case, the familial value is regained by inflicting violence on the female family member. Hence, the gendered nature of honour in a patriarchal society will be discussed in the light of these two prized values. The section analyses and examines the types of shameful and dishonourable acts in a patriarchal society which are specifically forbidden acts for women. Prem Chowdhry claims that the most common source of shame and dishonour is through love marriages or disapproved marriages where honour killing is directed on women who challenge the scripted behaviour in a patriarchal society. As a result, the definition of honour killing and the types of disapproved relationships which inevitably lead to honour killings will be understood (this will also include violence inflicted on people belonging to minorities). Also, the plight of the couples who choose to runaway in order to overcome the orthodox rules and traditions in a patriarchal society have been thoroughly discussed in the section with the help of Prem Chowdhry's article, "Private Lives, State Intervention: Cases of Runaway Marriage in Rural North India". Their situation is worsened not only because the family and the community (*khap panchayats*) acts together in-order to catch the eloped couple and kill them (specially a woman) in the name of honour but also because the laws fail to provide them the due protection which in-fact is their legal right. Thus, the perpetration of honour based violence will be considered as a public display of patriarchal power in the society where violence inflicted on a woman is not an individual's act, also not a crime of passion but a systematically planned and socio-economically approved violence which takes innocent lives in obnoxious numbers.

Chapter One

Nature of Body

If they see breasts and long hair coming, they call it woman, If beard and whiskers, they call it man. But look, the self that hovers in between is neither man nor woman...⁷

Body occupies an ambiguous role in philosophy. From the cosmologies of the archaic philosophers to the concepts and practices of modern Western philosophy, body has been approached from numerous philosophical perspectives. Yet, there is no one readily available account which is free from contestation. Although, body is the most apparent, visible “thing” perceived, yet it tends to disappear in the very act of knowing, or relating to the world. Feminist discourses have been dedicated to provide a better articulation of various categories, for instance, it is concerned with gender, sex, sexuality but most importantly with women and body, and adapts various modes of inquiry for the analysis of these categories. Such an inquiry is crucial for it lays the foundation for several further theoretical and political goals feminism is engaged with. There are numerous ways of comprehending these categories. In the present chapter, the inquiry into the category of body will be done by examining the ways in which the history of Western philosophy has formulated the concept of body. The aim of the chapter is to re-figure and re-examine the nature of body in philosophy.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will inquire into the nature of body by examining its role and position in the light of Greek literature and early Greek philosophy, philosophers such as, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato will be discussed at length. The purpose of the first section will be to demonstrate the lowly status given to body on mere metaphysical assumptions or probability in relation with mind or soul. The second section will discuss Descartes’ notion of body and mind which has for centuries influenced the philosophers to study mind in isolation of body. Descartes’ position will be challenged through the work of Gilbert Ryle who claims that mind without a body is like a ghost, he calls this idea “the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine.”⁸ Also, with the help of Ryle’s work it will be established that mind is not isolated from the body and Descartes was wrong with his formulation. The third section will discuss the influence

⁷ Ramanujan (1973) in Nivedita Menon, *Seeing Like A Feminist*, p. 51.

⁸ Ryle, *The concept of Mind*, p. 5.

phenomenologists brought in philosophy by which body came into the forefront by dismissing the dogmatic ideas propounded by Western philosophers as a whole which for centuries kept body in the background as a useless counterpart of the mind. Also, with the help of phenomenology it will be understood how the entire formulation is based on excessive emphasis provided to the mind or consciousness alone all these years across various philosophical theories. Phenomenologists also argue that the manner in which a lived-body engages with the lived-world is in complete opposition to the manner in which early philosophers have understood body and its engagement with the world in their various philosophical discourses.

I. Philosophy and Body

Elizabeth Grosz, in *Volatile Bodies* argues that the history of Western philosophy little significance has been given to the body, whereas the highlight has largely been on mind or soul. She writes, “Western philosophers seem to share a common view of the human subject as a being made up of two dichotomously opposed characteristics: mind (or soul) and body, thought and extension, reason and passion, psychology and biology.”⁹ This dichotomous thinking necessarily ranks the two terms, mind and body in a hierarchal manner where mind becomes the significant, privileged term and body its insignificant, unprivileged counterpart. She argues that the significant term, always the former one expels the other term and establishes its own boundaries and borders, and creates a separate identity for itself. The subordinated term, on the other hand is always the latter one whose identity is established in only being the term which denotes lack or absence of the primary term. Grosz writes,

The problem of dichotomous thought is not the dominance of the pair; rather, it is the *one* which makes it problematic, the fact that the one can allow itself no independent, autonomous other. All otherness is cast in the old of sameness, with the primary term acting as the only autonomous term. The one allows no twos, threes, fours. It cannot tolerate any *other*. The one in order to be a one, must draw a barrier or boundary around itself, in which case it is necessarily implicated in the establishment of a binary- inside/outside, presence/absence.¹⁰

⁹ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 3.

¹⁰ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 211.

As a result, mind has been associated with reason, consciousness, recognition, imagination, etc. Whereas, body with negligible importance has been mostly defined as unreasonable, imperfect, unruly, chaotic, etc. Unlike mind, body has also been seen as a mere instrument which is always in a dire need of direction (for it inherently lacks reason), hence body has been regarded as a capable source of causing disruption so, it needs to be controlled, always. Thus, a very prominent question arise at this point, can we epistemologically conceive of human self without a body?

Philosophy is regarded as a discipline which primarily concerns itself with only reason, concepts, judgements, truth, etc. In other words, it is only been coupled with the terms that are clearly associated with the mind which marginalise or exclude the considerations of the body. Hence, philosophy has established itself on the foundations of a profound “somatophobia” which believes in body at best being irrelevant or useless. Somatophobia within the Western philosophical tradition can be best explained by examining some of the negative conceptions held towards the role and status of body by the Western philosophers. The first fully articulated difference in the relationship between psyche (soul or mind) and soma (body) can be traced in the works of Plato, but, however, even in the pre-Socratic thought, there was a tendency to separate the soul from the body. The notion that a man is something greater than his mortal body, greater than the strength of his limbs and the appearance of his physique, is as old as Greek literature, which seems to have influenced the Western philosophy on a massive level. In the earliest writings we have from ancient Greece, in the Homeric epics, the psyche signifies the ‘life’ that is lost at death and the “shade” or “wraith” which remains after death.¹¹ According to Homeric literature, a man’s true essence is his immortal soul (or mind). While living, the psyche remains constant in the mortal body, it remains unchanged even when the body changes its form or frame with the passage of time. On the other hand, at death, psyche leaves the mortal body (soma) and flies away by continuing to exist as a wraith or a shadow in the house of Hades (heaven, place of God). The psyche in the Homeric literature has also been identified as the air or breath which never dies and continues to live as an image in Hades.¹² Thus, for Homer, psyche was the essence of life that departs at death from the body and returns to the divine. In the ancient period, the Milesian Anaximenes too endowed soul as the principle of life which possesses the potentiality of life and is much superior than the mere body. For him, psyche was

¹¹ B. Claus, *Towards the Soul*, p. 1.

¹² Beate Gundert, *Soma and Psyche in Hippocratic Medicine, Psyche and Soma*, ed. by John P. Wright and Paul Potter, p. 13.

associated with air.¹³ Air is associated with soul (the breath of life) also because the standard etymology of psyche connects it to the verb *psychēin* which means “to breathe or to blow”¹⁴ so, just as the breath gives life to an individual, similarly, air for Anaximenes was the potent source from which all things come into being, existence. Thus, for Anaximenes air was the nature of soul. The great Greek religion, Orphism too influenced the thinking of some prominent philosophers such as, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Socrates and Plato. Orphism believed in soul as having a better claim than the body to the title of one's real self.¹⁵ The Orphics believed that the soul never dies, it only migrates into another body; they held that every soul is of an immortal nature which gets confined in the body due to the sin/sins committed by the latter. Hence, the aim of the religion was to free the souls by the performing certain observances which would help the soul in purifying themselves in-order to move away from the shackles of the body. For Pythagoras, psyche was indestructible, immortal and divine in nature. Against the Homeric background, as we have observed, the soul was understood as something which never dies and continues to exist as a shadow in Hades. Pythagoras got much influenced by the familiar Homeric use of soul but he did not restrict himself to just the given denotation. For him, psyche was much more than the powerless image/shadow flying in house of Hades because it was free from death. Pythagoras through his teaching taught that soul is an immortal thing which gets transformed into other kinds of living things.¹⁶ Body, on the other hand, according to his teachings was understood as a kind of exile, a dungeon, a tomb which impedes the freedom of the soul by creating various endless desires. Pythagoras’ doctrine of transmigration of souls can be illustrated through a story about Pythagoras, reported by Xenophanes in Russell’s book, *History of Western Philosophy*, “Once, they say, he (Pythagoras) was passing by when a dog was being ill-treated. ‘Stop,’ he said, ‘don't hit it! It is the soul of a friend! I knew it when I heard its voice (soul’s voice).”¹⁷ Heraclitus associated psyche with fire.¹⁸ He believed that fire not only gives structure to the world, but also is the primary principle from which everything else is made. Likewise, soul is not only held to survive the body, it is deemed to be that whereby we are both both physically and rationally alive as responsible agents,¹⁹ therefore, soul as a ground for

¹³ Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 47.

¹⁴ Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of Soul*, p. 21-23.

¹⁵ Robinson, “The Defining Features of Mind-Body Dualism in the Writings of Plato,” p. 37.

¹⁶ Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 51.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 59.

¹⁸ For more information, see Russell (1946), p. 61.

¹⁹ Robinson, The Defining Features of Mind-Body Dualism in the Writings of Plato, in *Psyche and Soma*, ed. by John P. Wright and Paul Potter, p. 36.

the rational self is written about for the first time by Heraclitus. Thus, Heraclitus believed that fire or soul is immortal: the world “was ever, is now, and ever shall be, an ever-living fire.”²⁰

For Socrates too, soul was immortal and he regarded it much more important than the mere body. Burnet in her lecture, “The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul”, writes that Socrates urged the young and old alike around him to not care for the bodies but to care for the immortal soul. Throughout his teachings he implied that each one of us have something within ourselves which alone is capable of acquiring wisdom and righteousness, and can alone take us away from ignorance, this something for Socrates is not body but soul.²¹ Therefore, Burnet writes, “Socrates combined the Orphic doctrine of the purification of the fallen soul with the scientific view of the soul as the waking consciousness.”²² Thus, “care of the soul” has been defined as the very heart of Socratic philosophy. Plato’s dialogues are all about goodness and knowledge in which he praises the soul and regards it much above the body. According to him, body entices us to move away from the world of reality by riveting us in the world full of demands, desires, temptations and material things (much like Pythagoras’ views on body). On the other hand, he believes only through the soul we can have the real knowledge which can help us to move towards the real world, the world of Forms. According to him, soul like the world of Forms is the place where the perfect knowledge resides which is not only eternal but is also intelligible, invisible and free from decay. Hence, for Plato, death is nothing to be afraid of, it is most definitely not an eternal sleep but rather the moment where the soul is released from the prison called body. Thus, according to him, immortality of the soul is a real possibility which should be desired by us all. I shall now prove a brief sketch of his dialogues where he is seen to be propounding the above mentioned metaphysical theories. In the *Cratylus*, Like Pythagoras, Plato claims that the concept of body was first introduced by the Orphic priests who believed that body was a dungeon, a tomb which trapped the immortal soul.²³ Socrates, in Plato’s *Symposium and the Death of Socrates*, maintains that body fills us with all kinds of lusts, desires, fears, phantoms and compels us to acquire the money which inevitably leads us to war, faction and fighting. As a result, body causes chaos, confusion and also prevents us from seeing the truth because it gives us no time to think about anything apart from the material world which shackles each one of us by endless temptations and desires. Thus, according to him, we become slaves in body’s service, he writes, “It has been well and truly proved to us that if we are ever going to gain pure knowledge of

²⁰ Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, p. 65.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

²³ *Cratylus*, 400c in *Plato: Complete Works*, p. 118.

anything, we must get rid of the body and must look at things with our the soul.”²⁴ Plato, in *Phaedo* writes, “Soul is most like the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself, whereas the body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble and never consistently the same.”²⁵ He provides four arguments for immortality of soul where he shows that soul is more much important than the body.²⁶ In short, Plato believes that one can understand the true nature of knowledge, reality and goodness if one becomes aware of the distinction between soul and body which will only happen when one frees oneself from the shackles of the foolish, vulgar body. A philosopher, according to Plato, is someone who is just committed to that, and that is why, he believes, a philosopher goes willingly unto death because he understands it is only the death of the body for once the soul is released philosophical realisation is attained. It is very important to note that the entire premise of the above mentioned philosophical theories depends on two main premises. First, a dualistic relationship is formulated between soul and body. Secondly, soul without any contestation has been taken as superior than the body.

Within the Christian tradition too, the separation of mind and body was a prevalent practice. Grosz in *Volatile Bodies* gives an apt example explaining the distinction with the help of the figure of Christ himself. She argues, Christ was a man whose soul (immortality) derived from God but whose body was of a mortality human person.²⁷ Christianity saw body as the symbol of Fallen Man and irrational denial of God, in short, corruption. Which is why within the tradition the punishing and rewarding of the soul is administered through bodily discipline and delectation. For example, in the Middle Ages, leprosy was regarded as the diseased consequence of lechery and covetousness, a corporeal signifier of sin.²⁸ Saint Augustine, following Plato, treated soul as immaterial and far superior to body. He writes, “When we shall have reached that peace, this mortal life shall give place to one that is eternal, and our body shall be no more this “animal body” which by its corruption weighs down the soul.”²⁹ According to him, body carries the burden of bodily sins, hence the only way a human being can avoid evil or sins is by focussing on the soul or mind.

²⁴ Plato, *Symposium and the Death of Socrates*, trans. Tom Griffith. p. 146.

²⁵ *Phaedo* 80b in *Plato: Complete Works*, p. 70.

²⁶ For more information, see, *Phaedo* 70c-107b in *Plato: Complete Works*, p. 61-92.

²⁷ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 5.

²⁸ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 6.

²⁹ Augustine, *The City of God*, book XIX, p. 629.

Among the following meanings of psyche, we have discovered mind or soul as the essence of life, the life principle of body, the morally significant part of the self, the intellectual part of the self and a force that leads to the teleological process of the living organism. On the other hand, body has always been contrasted with soul, it has been discovered as the dungeon/prison of the soul, the un-actualised potentiality of a living being and a mechanism which is in a constant state of corruption. Thus, since the inception of philosophy in ancient Greece, the discipline has established itself on the foundations of profound somatophobia by making a distinction between mind and body, acknowledging mind alone and ignoring body by giving it the status of something as good as irrelevant.

II. Mind is not Isolated from the Body

If one begins to re-read philosophers' distinctions regarding the mind and body, it soon became evident that the distinctions are framed only on metaphysical assumptions without a logical premise where there are no logical, systematic connections between the philosophical concepts (such as, reason, knowledge, freedom, etc.) and the distinction between mind and body. One would expect that the way a philosopher understands the distinction between mind and body should have essential ties with how he understands other philosophical concepts but there are no systematic ties and in most cases the distinction reverberates through philosophers' work without a reason to support it. This however was also noted by Descartes. He understood that the philosophers who preceded him worked with traditions and metaphysical assumptions in finding what is true, hence he began his search to seek not what is true according to the tradition but what is true in itself. Descartes came up with the indubitable maxim, *Cogito Ergo Sum*. Meaning, I think, therefore I am- here I is not the body but mind, the mind alone is capable of thinking for thinking is its essence which confirms the fact that one exists. The inescapable conclusion that Descartes thusly came to was that he is his mind, a thinking being, distinct from his body. The separation of the mind from the body was long done in the theories of Greek philosophers which shaped the conventional doctrines regarding the nature and position of the two concepts. Hence, Descartes only reformulated the already given theological doctrines of the soul by distinguishing between two kinds of substances: a thinking substance called mind and an extended substance called body.

Ryle in *The Concept of Mind* calls the dualistic theory of mind by Descartes as the official theory. He writes, "There is a doctrine about the nature and place of minds which is so

prevalent among theorists and even among laymen that it deserves to be described as the official theory.”³⁰ According to him, Descartes believed that every human being possessed a mind and body but in the case of idiots or infants the presence of mind was doubtful but they were for sure (or had) bodies. Ryle says, for Descartes the body is an automata, a mechanical being which functions according to the mechanical laws of the space because it belongs to the physical world. As a result, body and its activities can be inspected by the observers of the physical world. On the other hand, mind (or soul, consciousness) is a thinking being which is not subjected to the mechanical laws of the space because it does not exist in space, it belongs to the mental world. Hence, the workings of the mind are inscrutable to other observers. Therefore, one maybe not always know of what is happening around in one’s surroundings in the physical world but will have a direct and incontrovertible knowledge of what is going on in one’s mind and never in others. Thus, Descartes links the opposition between mind and body to the hierarchal formation of knowledge regarding the superiority of the mind over and above the body.

The exclusion of the mind from the body is the prerequisite for the knowledge that the principles of the body exclude and are indifferent to the considerations of the mind or consciousness. According to Ryle, the use of the terms “the physical and mental” gives rise to the assumption that there are two kinds of existence. Physical existence that has the necessary feature of being in space and time, and is composed of matter. Mental existence that has the necessary feature of being in time, but not in space, and is composed of consciousness. As Ryle writes, “Somewhat like the faces of coins that are either heads or tails, or somewhat as living creatures that are either male or female, so, it is supposed that some existing is physical existing, while the other existing is mental existing.”³¹ Therefore, Ryle criticises Descartes’ antithesis of external and internal for he makes mind become a disembodied being or “the myth of Ghost in the Machine.”³² The major problem that Descartes’ dualism faces is the fact that it does not account for the interaction between the body and mind but in reality, the two “so called” incompatible substances in everyday life and experience manifest various connections. For instance, how the body executes that which the mind wills, how perception of mind affects the sense organs, bodily pains which result in moral transformations and fake smile and frowns. Also, according to Descartes, all consciousness can be sure about is its own self-existence, its present state and the workings of one’s own mind but people also act

³⁰ Ryle., *The Concept of Mind*, p. 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³² *Ibid.*, p. x.

according to their mere impulses and desires which have no logical reasoning behind them.³³ Also, according to Descartes one can infer the existence of other's mind by the help of the body they possess but if the minds are private, invisible and subjected only to the first person knowledge then we can never have a guarantee that our inferences about other minds are justified. Other bodies could simply be an illusion, or an automata (a machine) with no consciousness. Also, one cannot deal with logical consistency even for oneself because there can be no comparison of one's performance with others. It is possible that a person acting lunatic-ally is completely sane while the one acting sane is a complete lunatic. Thus, dualism poses irresolvable philosophical problems.

Ryle maintains that Descartes was confronted by conflicting motives. As a scientist he could not help but endorse Galileo's mechanics of reason and logic, but as a man of God, he could not accept the human nature in terms of the mind/mental alone. Hence, Descartes and the early philosophers have specified that since mental words don't signify the occurrence of bodily processes, therefore they must signify the occurrence of some "special" non-bodily processes. The problem that Ryle finds with Descartes' theory is that the grammar of the physical world was still used for we talk about the mental or mind in the same manner in which we talk about the body or physical. For instance, for both mind and body we use words like, "cause," "thing," "effect," "stuff," etc.³⁴ Thus, Ryle says that Descartes' doctrine is entirely baseless because it is a category mistake. Before we proceed further, it is important to understand what a category mistake is. It is a mistake which occurs when a person does not recognise an entity, and only recognises the parts. For instance, someone asks a friend to see the pictures of their family, and after done showing the pictures of their sister, brother, mother and father; the person asks so which of these people is your family? This is a category mistake, it arises by not understanding a concept in language.

According to Ryle's definition, "a category mistake is committed when the facts of mental life are represented as if they belonged to one logical type or category (or range of types or categories), when they actually belong to another."³⁵ A perfect example would be, if a student visits University of Delhi for the first time and after being shown the library, the various colleges, the VC lawns, the canteens, and other properties, the student still asks, "But, where is the University?" That would be a category mistake because the University in itself is

³³ For more information, see, Ryle, p. 4

³⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

nothing but amalgamation of all the listed things above. Likewise, the three citizens who pay taxes belong to the same category but the average taxpayer is a term they do not understand. In this case, the citizens will continue to interpret the “average taxpayer” as some peculiar additional taxpayer, a ghostly figure who is always around but never to be seen. Therefore, Ryle says that the mind-body dualism is an illusion produced by this type of misuse, misinterpretation and misconstruction of our ordinary language. According to him, there is a logical absurdity in the concept of the mind having a non-material existence of its own corresponding to the material existence of the body. If one were to suppose that the mind does have its own parallel existence to the body, then how can the following questioned be answered: how is the mind supposed to affect the body? for instance, he questions, how can a mental process, such as willing, cause the spatial movement of the tongue?³⁶ How is the body supposed to affect the mind? for instance, he questions, how can a physical change in the optic nerve have among its effects a mind’s perception of a flash of light?³⁷ and how is one mind supposed to affect another? Also, if the mind were a substance as a body then it must be governed by certain laws. If it were then there would have been no space for free-will. The problem is how do we make space for free-will (responsibility, choice, merit and demerit) while agreeing that the mind is a substance. These questions show the apparent absurdity regarding Descartes’ concept of mind.

Grosz, in the book *Volatile Bodies* says that the Cartesian dualism establishes an unbridgeable gulf between mind and body.³⁸ Ryle aims to solve the problem by cashing his positive arguments out in terms of behaviourism. He argues that Descartes makes a mistake by thinking that there is something called the “mind” over and above a person's behavioural dispositions. For instance, when we see a person strumming their chin, eyes turned towards the ceiling, we say the person is “thinking”. We commit a category-mistake because we suppose that there is something going on *other than* the strumming of a chin and eyes looking upward, something called “thinking”. For Ryle, thinking is nothing more than a certain set of behavioural dispositions (to strum one's chin and look upward), there is no further mental event called “thinking”. According to Ryle, mind cannot be regarded the *cause* of behaviour because it *is* behaviour in-itself. Therefore, minds do not belong to a special category of “thing”. Minds are not special or different “things,” because people learn and use mental concepts such as belief, pain, anger, etc. with a great amount of ease because they refer to a

³⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

³⁸ Grosz., *Volatile Bodies*, p. 7.

pattern that includes bodily behaviour which we all know and can easily observe equally (Russell's abductive reasoning). Ryle in explaining the nature of mind accepts the fundamental notions of the behaviouristic psychology, hence, his theory is called the theory of Logical Behaviourism. Thus, Ryle shows that the mind is not isolated from the body.

III. Understanding the Lived-body

With the advent of phenomenology, consciousness (mind) and body were together seen as two aspects of an integrated unity. Phenomenology as a philosophical theory investigates about a lived body and its relation and association with the lived-world. A lived-body is thus not just mind or just body but a recognition of the inseparability of these two. In doing so, phenomenology moves far away from the dogmatic ideas regarding the bodies held by the Western philosopher and focuses instead on the experiences of the body-subjects/ lived-bodies in the lived-world. The history of Western philosophy has been concerned with discovering the questions of "truth" such as: What is truth? What is knowledge? What is the world? What is man?³⁹ These questions were thought to be universal, indubitable and uncorrupted by the human inconsistencies and irregularities. Phenomenology does not seek to investigate such traditional questions and attempts to question, What are we in our actuality?⁴⁰ The answer to the question according to phenomenology and phenomenologists is we are the lived-bodies of the lived-world. In short, phenomenologists believe that our lived-world was taken for granted by the Western philosophers through their suppositions and prejudices. Their suppositions and prejudices only come into light through the discipline of phenomenology. The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, referred to subjectivity (first-person perspective) as the wonders of all wonders. Thus, subjectivity is the very ground of phenomenology which it attempts to articulate by understanding the manner in which we come into contact with the lived-world.

Merleau-Ponty through his extensive philosophical works articulated the nature of embodiment and explained how embodied beings engage with the lived-world in depth. Merleau-Ponty overcame the Cartesian duality of the intellectual mind and the mechanical body by introducing the concept of "body-subject". Body-subject is a subjective being who

³⁹Foucault, "Technologies of the Self, " p. 145.

⁴⁰Ibid.

has the first person subjective experiences of being in the world. According to him, body has its own mode of being and does not require any spiritual principle to support its existence in the world. It is a subject for it transcends its thing like character and exists as a lived body in the act of seeing the world. For Merleau-Ponty, body is a subject in itself and has an attitude towards things and interpersonal relations in the world.⁴¹ Before him, consciousness of an individual had been playing a prominent role in the understanding of the natural world and the socio-cultural world. Merleau-Ponty does not take the role of the consciousness in making sense of the world because, according to him, the sum of actions performed by the subjective being are not always consciously performed nor can they be consciously verified. Therefore, for Merleau-Ponty consciousness or mind cannot be the central characteristic of human subjectivity. It is the pre-consciousness of the human subjectivity which should be acknowledged. For instance, pre-conscious acts are: opening the door; sipping a cup of coffee; lifting a pen, etc. According to him, the human subject is in a continuous dialectical relationship not only with the environment, the world around but also with other subjects who inhabit the same world with oneself.⁴²

The subject is always situated and therefore by its surroundings; we may even say that it owes its being to these surroundings. Nevertheless, the subject is a privileged point because everything else is a meaning for this subject... Accordingly, the subject is a meaning-giving existence. It is privileged because everything else is meaning for and through the subject.⁴³

For Merleau-Ponty, it is the body-subject that gives meaning to everything around itself. One is not always conscious when one ascribes the meaning to these things and the inter-subjective relations. It is at the pre-reflective level (pre-conscious) level that an individual develops some form of understanding which may not be the reality but which gets sediment in the consciousness while performing the mundane activities. The space in which one finds oneself in the world imposes a necessity on the consciousness of the being but it is understood and modified accordingly, depending upon the bodily possibilities of movement. For example, take the everyday experience of moving about in one's home. My body knows its way around my apartment, I know of what is kept far away, or nearby. I know of things placed high or low in the apartment. I know of what is to the right or left of my body, etc. One orients the space according to one's bodily placement in the world and thus makes it one's own world. This kind of body knowledge is our bodily understanding of the world and

⁴¹ Barral, *Merleau-Ponty: The Role of the Body-Subject in Interpersonal Relations*, p.17.

⁴² Barral, *Merleau-Ponty: The Role of the Body-Subject in the Interpersonal Relations*, p. 17.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Merleau-Ponty calls this the idea of “operative intentionality”. This basic orientation in the world is the background which sustains the meaning of movement and gives the movement its pre-condition as a possible projection into a meaningful world. Therefore, for Merleau-Ponty, this idea of operative intentionality under no circumstance subscribes prioritising thought over the body because he redefined the concept of intentionality through this work.

This dialog, however, takes place at such a depth that we are unable to penetrate it through our reflective consciousness. It is likewise impossible for us to influence this dialog by the means of our free decisions. Below me, therefore, as conscious subject, there is another subject that is pre-conscious and pre-personal.⁴⁴

According to Merleau-Ponty, body and the lived-world share an intertwining relationship with each other where anonymous body is at constant work of engaging with the world. The ideas about the world and the interpersonal relationships with the other are formed in a pre-personal state which a being itself does not realise. It creates a phenomenal field for the being based on perception and bodily capacities. There are numerous activities that keep occurring simultaneously in our body at the preconscious level which are taken for granted by our consciousness or which cannot be verified consciously. When a being is engrossed into some tedious work, it becomes unconscious or unaware of the bodily activities like breathing or blinking of eyes, while hand and other body organs work as an instrument in completing the work. There are so many neural activities taking place in the body which react to the stimuli given by external factors and about which causal and scientific explanation can be given. But while one is engaged in the mundane activities of life all such activities become experientially absent and the being is non-consciously aware of them. Body according to Merleau-Ponty is experientially absent, anonymous and pre-personal in the “hidden form of being ourselves.” This experientially absent body remains absent for the reflective-consciousness but is always available in an un-owned general way. Merleau-Ponty was chiefly concerned with the individual’s mode of being in the world. Body according to Husserl is “in consciousness or constantly in a perceptual field” whereas for Merleau-Ponty, if one is always conscious of one's own body then it loses its anonymity and limits its pre-reflective bodily experiences. For him, perception is a bodily phenomenon, it is the ground of subjective and objective experiences of being in the lived-world. Since, perception is a bodily phenomenon it cannot be explained by the scientific, causal explanations. It has to be understood thus as a sensory

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

state of one's body. Thus, the structure of perception, we might say, just is the structure of the body. As Merleau-Ponty says, "my body is my point of view of the world".⁴⁵

Body is the pre-condition of all kinds of experiences of the lived-bodies in the lived-world. It does not share a causal relationship between the physical objects of the world and one's own mental states. Perceiving or seeing an object of perception does not mean to know about the physical attributes of the object observed but to give meaning to its existence in the lived-world. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty says that my body is my point of view on the world. According to him, a being's perception is not only conditioned by the body but also constituted by the body. When one perceives an object the structure of the perception is such that the object towards which one is intentionally directed emerges out in the field of perception (comes in the foreground) and all the other things go in the background. This is not to say that the things in the back cease to exist but they remain in the periphery along with the object of perception. All perception has figure/ground structure to make sense of what is perceived. In phenomenological figure/ground contrast one can see an object better by putting the surroundings of the object at abeyance because to see an object is to anchor in the object. this process is very different from seeing the object physiologically. The phenomenal field of perception is not only the space of sensory data but is a transcendental field of possibilities, impossibilities and necessities. World according to Merleau-Ponty will always be the "transcendental-field" of perception for the lived body.⁴⁶ Hence, the world is a field of possibilities, impossibilities and necessities in which one orients oneself according to the given situation. Therefore, body-subject or lived-body is the mode of being in the world. Body shares structurally very different relationship with oneself than any other object of perception in the world. one cannot observe one's own body completely like it can perceive other objective things in the world. One's own body cannot become an object of contemplation for oneself and if it tries to do so then it would require another unobservable body which would inevitably lead to an infinite regress. This is to suggest that rather than making oneself an object of reflection, one can simply take oneself as an intentional being comporting oneself towards the world. The field of possibilities in the theory of perception is called as "body schema" by Merleau-Ponty. Body schema is neither an image of the body nor the representation of the body but is the capacity of the body in anticipating its situation and being in the lived-world in advance at pre-conscious level. This ability of the body is called

⁴⁵ Carman, *Merleau-Ponty*, p. 81.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 102-105.

“habit” by Merleau-Ponty. It is the habitual act of comportment of body towards a situation at pre-personal level that makes the structure of awareness of objects possible in advance.⁴⁷

Body schema this constitutes our precognitive familiarity with ourselves and the world we inhabit: “I am aware of my body via the world,” Merleau-Ponty says, just as “I am aware of the world through the medium of my body.” My body is not an extraneous container or instrument of my agency, but comprises “stable organs and pre-established circuits” that operate according to their own logic, as it were, below the threshold of self-conscious intention.⁴⁸

According to Merleau-Ponty, human being’s perception is essentially normative, in the sense that the bodily capacities and attitudes guide the perceptual orientation of the being in the world which makes it an intentional act of perception. What makes our approach towards the world around right and wrong depends on the “equilibrium” that our body draws through our acts of perception and bodily capabilities. In drawing the equilibrium with the world, our bodies try to adapt with the given conditions of the world by intentionally or unintentionally adhering to them.⁴⁹ It is this felt rightness or wrongness of the pre-reflective intentional acts of perception which is taken for granted and play a crucial role in the formation of bodily attitudes towards the world. It is a kind of feeling always at work at the pre-conscious level in making the sense of the world. No science so far has been able to give a scientific explanation of this left character of our intentionality which has a major role to play in our understanding and behaving in the world.⁵⁰

Although, for Merleau-Ponty, the lived-body overcomes the divide between the mind and the body. Yet, many feminist philosophers have raised criticism against his notion of the lived-body. Often criticism is mated out against the singular ontology based on the neutrality of the lived-body. The neutrality of the lived-body is questioned by the feminist philosophers by criticising the notion of gaze and the way in which it has been understood within the discourse of body by Merleau-Ponty. Feminist philosophers claim that the phenomenological intelligibility of various kind of bodily experiences are understood in “gender-neutral” manner due to which the constitution of subjectivity of a woman becomes oblivious in making sense of the world. I shall be dealing with the philosophical ideas of Simone de Beauvoir, Marion

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.106.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 107.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 107.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 110.

Young, Luce Irigaray and Judith Butler on the phenomenology of the feminine body in the next chapter by examining not only Merleau-Ponty's neglect, but also philosophy's neglect of the female body.

Chapter Two

Phenomenology of the Feminine Body

There is a good principle that created order, light, and man
and a bad principle that created chaos, darkness, and woman.⁵¹

As noted in the previous chapter, before the advent of phenomenology body played a negligible role in Western Philosophy. It is important to note that, on the one hand, the Western philosophers have recognised the body in the sense that most prominent philosophers have written about it and have discussed its role. In other words, body has not been ignored by them. On the other hand, philosophers have unanimously failed to recognise the fact that body has only been addressed in a short, problematic, insignificant manner. When feminists started analysing the Western philosophical discourses they came to find out that the philosophers have on the whole emphasised on the importance of mind over body, the thinking has prevailed over centuries only on the grounds of mere metaphysical assumptions, lacking logical demonstrations. As a result, philosophy has only been considered a discipline concerned with the mind and its characteristics such as reason, imagination, concepts, ideas, etc. With the introduction of phenomenology, the status of body improved within the discipline of philosophy, specially with the works of Merleau-Ponty who brought body back into philosophy. Yet, many feminist philosophers have raised criticism against his notion of the lived-body. The purpose of the chapter is to explain and analyse the criticism raised by feminist philosophers against Merleau-Ponty's lived-body.

Feminists such as, Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Marion Young, etc. have argued that the constitution of the subjectivity of a woman is very different from that of a man precisely because women right from their childhood have found the society around them structured upon the hegemony of the masculine over the feminine where their position and role has only been defined to them by the significant other, the man. For the sake of a detailed discussion, the chapter will be divided into three sections. In the first section, the role and position of women under Western philosophical discourses will be examined by providing a

⁵¹Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, p. 104.

brief sketch on the prominent philosophers such as, Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Kant and Freud. Also, it will be explained how the philosophers have only propounded misogyny secretly and systematically within the discipline by accepting the concept of biological determinism. In the second section, Merleau-Ponty's concept of the lived body will be re-examined from a feminist perspective. Merleau-Ponty through his works offer a universal account of how humans experience embodiment but with the help of feminist discourses by Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray it will be argued that his universal account of embodiment has been set-up from a man's perspective alone. In the third section, with the help of philosophical works of Marion Young and Judith Butler it will be examined that Merleau-Ponty dealt with the concept of lived-body in a gender-neutral manner. In other words, he failed to recognise the sexual difference in relation to the lived-body in the lived-word. The purpose of the chapter is to explain how right from the time of early Western philosophy, philosophers on the whole have been oblivious to the understand the female body and her experiences in the world.

I. Rethinking Woman, Gender and Sex under Patriarchy

As noted in the first chapter, Western philosophers have understood the human subject as a being made up of two dichotomously opposed characteristics: mind and body. This dichotomous thinking necessarily ranks the two terms in the manner that mind becomes significant over the body. As a result, mind has been defined with characteristics of reason, consciousness, judgement, thought, imagination, recognition, etc. Whereas, the body with negligible significance has been defined as chaotic, unreasonable, imperfect, frail and disruptive. Therefore, the philosophers of the West understood the body as something which is definitely not mind. Grosz in her book, *Volatile Bodies*, argues that the polar opposition between mind and body has been correlated and associated with the opposition between men and women under patriarchy.⁵² The coupling of the mind with maleness and the body with femaleness shows how the correlation is not accidental but has been secretly and systematically performed by the philosophers over the years. As a discipline, philosophy has secretly and systematically excluded women from its practices by coding them with unreason and body. Hence, philosophy remained associated with reason, thought, consciousness, in short men alone, with no space for body or women.

⁵² Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 4.

When feminists started studying women vis-a-vis men in the society they came to know more about women's history and how they were hidden and subordinated by men. They realised that women's subordination was primarily due to the influence of patriarchal ideologies in the society which can be best understood by exploring the sexist, misogynist philosophical discourses of the West. The various answers within the philosophical tradition to the simple question, who is a woman? have provided consistent denigration and strong hatred or dislike. Philosophers' attitude towards women can be understood in two ways, some propounded blatant misogyny, while others have described women with "apparent" positive terms. I shall discuss both the attitudes in a brief sketch.

In defining a woman, some of the prominent figures of the Western philosophy have formulated their views in a pure negative terminology, propounding blatant misogyny. A woman has been understood and defined in the following ways: firstly, women are incapable to reason, Aristotle regarded reason as the defining mark of human beings. For him, rational capacity alone differentiates humans from animals. Or rather, men from animals. According to Aristotle, the basic difference between men and women lies on the fact that women unlike men are incapable to reason. In the book, *On the Generation of Animals*, Aristotle propounds misogyny in the process of reproduction. According to him, male is the potent source of life through which generation takes place for he provides the formless, shapeless matter shape, form, contour, specific features and attributes it otherwise lacked. Aristotle goes far enough to suggest that whenever there is a flaw in the process of reproduction, a female is born. As a result, he understood a woman as a "misbegotten male". His scientific enquiry into the process of reproduction concludes with women being inferior to men and the same attitude can be observed in his structuring of political life. In *Politics*, Aristotle places the patriarchal family as the central concept of the state. He argues for women's submission to men on the premise that like the mind (or soul) must rule the body, similarly, the male must rule the female because a woman's nature suffers from natural defectiveness.⁵³ In the Western philosophical tradition, a woman has been understood and defined in association with body, not mind. She lacks reason or her capacity to reason is fairly limited. She works by inclinations and opinions due to which she is inferior to a man who is associated with mind, reason and thought. Secondly, a significant way of defining women was adopted by the Western philosophers by making a distinction between reason and nature. The men were

⁵³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 15.

equated with reason and women with nature, primarily because of their bodily functions, mainly reproduction and its 'natural' corollary, child-rearing. Grosz writes, "Relying on essentialism, naturalism and biologism, the prevalent misogynist thought within the philosophical tradition regarded women as somehow more biological, more corporeal, and more natural than men."⁵⁴ Therefore, a woman's sole concern is reproduction, her sensuality, her appearance, and physical beauty which is not the case for those who live in accordance with reason (men). Therefore, she is only defined in terms of her powers of reproduction, which becomes her only destiny. This ideology can be found in the writings of Sigmund Freud, since for him, one's anatomy determines one's destiny, hence, a woman according to him can only be understood in terms of her biological functions.

The other approach adopted by the western thinkers was to describe women in "apparent" positive terms. Plato serves as a classic example. In *Republic*, an egalitarian approach towards the sexes is practiced. Plato writes, "There is no way of life concerned with the management of the state that belongs to a woman because she's a woman or to a man because he's a man, but the various natures are distributed in the same way in both creatures. Women share by nature in every way of life just as men do."⁵⁵ Plato believes the only difference between men and women is that the latter possess weaker bodies but this for him is no sign that something is amiss with their souls. Therefore, to some extent he proposes equality between men and women in *Republic*. In *Meno*, Plato believes that it does not make sense to talk about women's virtues or men's virtues separately because virtues are virtues, they are always the same whether it happens to appear in the life of a woman or a man. Yet, Plato's dialogues reveal an "apparent" positive understanding of women. In *Republic*, Plato also believes that in-order know when the body is ruling over the soul just look at the lives of women. He avers,

The worst possible model for young men would be to imitate either a young woman or an older one, or one abusing her husband, quarrelling with the gods, or bragging because she thinks herself happy, or one suffering misfortune and possessed by sorrows and lamentations, and even less one who is ill, in love, or in labor.⁵⁶

In *Laws*, Plato believes that to have more concern for one's body than one's soul is to act just like a woman. He writes, "The most appropriate penalty for a soldier who surrenders to save his body, when he should be willing to die out of the courage of the soul, is for the

⁵⁴ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Republic* 455d-e, *Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, p. 1083.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, *Republic* 395d-e, p. 1033.

soldier to be turned into a woman.”⁵⁷ Plato in *Timaeus* believes that souls can go through many different embodied lifetimes, he writes, “If a man fails to live righteously now, he would be born a second time, as a woman and if he still does not behave then he would be changed into some wild animal which would resemble his wicked character.”⁵⁸ Plato here suggests a hierarchy of lives in the process of creation where women are much closer to animals than men. In short, on the one hand, Plato seems to articulate egalitarianism and on the other hand, he just cannot do without misogyny. Thus, women have been defined in “apparent” positive terms in Plato’s philosophical works. Similarly, Kant’s writings offer “apparent” positive terms for women. He denies that men and women share a common nature, rather believes that male and female characteristics compliment each other. According to him, in his book, *Of the Beautiful and Sublime*, men have the potential to embody masculine qualities, for instance, nobility, depth, strength, the ability to be principled and so on. Whereas women have the potential to embody feminine qualities such as beauty, delicacy, sympathy, compassion, love, etc. Kant seems to argue that both qualities are equally important but the “difference” indirectly implies a hierarchal understanding of male values for the feminine qualities of love and compassion are given a low status in comparison with the virtues necessary for a moral life. Thus, indirectly he regards women to be incapable of acting morally. Moreover, if feminine values of emotions, sympathy, etc. are to be conquered by obeying the values of moral life then once again, women are subdued by men (reason). Thus, both the attitudes go by a polar opposition in understanding the relationship between the two sexes, making women inferior to men. As a result, women’s valuable existence in history of philosophy has been totally neglected. Women have been pushed to the background to the extent that their participation in society and their vital role in civilisation has been completely ignored. However, when feminists started studying women vis-a-vis men in the society they came to know more about women's history and how they were hidden and subordinated by men in the patriarchal society. They realised that women’s subordination was and still is primarily due to the influence of patriarchal ideologies in the society. Hence, in-order to understand the position of women in a detailed manner it was paramount for feminists to understand and question what the philosophers had said about mind-body distinction for mind has been conveniently associated with men and body with women.

According to Walby, patriarchy is more than just a term, she writes, “It (patriarchy) is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit

⁵⁷ Ibid., *Laws* 944e, p. 1594.

⁵⁸ Ibid., *Timaeus* 42b-c, p. 1245.

women.”⁵⁹ She explains patriarchy as a system because it helps feminists reject the notion of biological determinism which has been extensively used by the Western philosophers. Biological determinism asserts that men and women are naturally different because of the difference in their biology, as a result both of them get different roles to play in the society, they have different places assigned to them on the premise of their roles due to which their behaviour varies. Biological determinism ties gender necessarily with sex and fixes both the notions as naturally coextensive in nature, for instance, the body of a man is solidly built because of which the outside world belongs to him, he becomes a hunter, a provider, protector and his behaviour is masculine in the sense that he is aggressive, competitive, non-emotional, active, etc. On the other hand, the body of a woman is regarded as weak because of which she is limited to the household and her behaviour is shy, emotional, passive, loving, caring, etc. Patriarchy practices this popular model for understanding the gender-sex relation within men and women in the society asserting masculinity as a natural outcome of male body and femininity as a natural outcome of female body. Nivedaita Menon writes, “Biological determinism is based on the assumption that certain groups of people are superior by birth, and that they are born with characteristics, such as greater intelligence and special skills, that justify their power in society.”⁶⁰ Thus, biological determinism is a kind of philosophical reasoning which legitimises women’s subordination as natural and inescapable because of the apparent biological differences between men and women.

Biological determinism is based on the assumption that men are superior than women and patriarchy practices this ideology because of which women’s oppression continues till date. A patriarchal set-up values masculine characteristics higher than the feminine characteristics and ensures that men and women act in accordance to their gender appropriate role and behaviour only. Patriarchy also ensures that men and women who do not conform to gender appropriate behaviour are at once corrected by both mild and strong means into it. For instance, boys and men when found crying or expressing sorrow publicly are often humiliated by the taunt, “why are you crying like a girl/woman? boys/men do not cry” and girls and women have been often corrected about their postures, sitting style, talking style, walking style, etc by being told that, “act like a lady”, or “that’s not very lady-like”, or “ladies should sit with their legs crossed”, or “do not speak like a man, speak politely”.

Simone de Beauvoir challenged the ideology of biological determinism and emphasised the gender-sex relation by understanding sex as the natural bare biological fact of the body

⁵⁹ Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, p. 20.

⁶⁰ Nivedita Menon, *Seeing Like A Feminist*, p. 61.

and gender as a social construct which is shaped by factors apart from the sex. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir questions the ideals of masculinity and femininity formulated by the patriarchal society that results in establishing and perpetuating the differences between the two sex which inevitably leads to a naturalised inferior status for women in the society. de Beauvoir writes,

Little girl continues to be cajoled, she is allowed to hide behind her mother's skirts, her father takes her on his knees and pats her hair; she wears sweet little dresses, her tears and caprices are viewed indulgently, her hair is done carefully done, older people are amused at her expressions and coquetries- bodily contacts and agreeable glances protect her against the anguish of solitude. The little boy, in contrast, will be denied even coquetry: his efforts at enticement, his playing-acting are irritating. He is told that 'a man doesn't ask to be kissed... A man doesn't look at himself in mirrors... A man doesn't cry'. He is urged to be 'a little man'.⁶¹

The difference between the two sexes is established and propounded right from the childhood days where boys and girls are trained in separate behavioural treatments. The socio-cultural practices of the patriarchal society ensure that each one conforms to their gender appropriate behaviour only, always. Thus, de Beauvoir's famous claim, "One is not born a woman, but, rather becomes one"⁶² theorises a crucial aspect of gender that it is a social construct.

Judith Butler in her book, *Gender Trouble* criticises de Beauvoir's stance and puts forth some startling arguments by explaining how the available vocabulary used for defining the gender-sex relation overlooks and conceals the fact that sex in itself is perceived through the lens of gender in a society of a patriarchal, heterosexual kind. According to Butler sex does not exist outside social and cultural meanings because it is a social construct. We do not understand a body by the constitution of various patterns of chromosomes but rather perceive them within the rigid binary, only within the male and female frame. The demarcation of two sexes, male and female is not descriptive but normative in nature. A patriarchal set-up makes it imperative that there are only two natural sexes in the world and excludes or marginalises those whose anatomy does not adhere to the binary parameters of heteronormativity. For instance, intersex bodies possess several variations in chromosome, gonads, sex hormones, genitals that do not fit into the typical definition for a man's or a woman's body. They are

⁶¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 276.

⁶² Salih, *Judith Butler*, p. 301.

either disciplined into normalcy through medical and surgical intervention into one of the two sexes, or are declared abnormal or illegal.⁶³

Butler attempts to explain gender as an act of performance, a doing rather than a secondary attribute one acquires as a result of one's biological sex. Gender acts deal with bodily activity involving corporeal behaviour, gestures and practices which seek to adhere to ideals of masculinity and femininity in a patriarchal society. According to her, gender produces the rigid sex binary through a series of performances, right from the time when an infant is born, it is either called a boy or a girl which is a normative claim because in the act of naming the infant (as a boy or a girl), we construct infants within the binary by which one inadvertently becomes a part of the set of existing gender norms which define masculinity and femininity. For instance, the early most gender based act practiced by the society is the colour principle, blue for boys and pink for girls. The gender norms dictate the manner in which we should sit, walk, talk, interact and live with the individuals of the same or different gender. We incorporate gender based appropriate ways through society in our everyday existence, for instance, if a man behaves in a feminine manner, if he walks with a swish of hips, speaks softly or if a woman behaves in a masculine manner exhibiting aggression and strength in language and behaviour, the change is brought about by introducing corrective measures which range from mocking and shaming to death threats and killings. Bodies are forced over time by the reiterative, repeated practices of gender performance. What is told to be natural to us is actually constituted by the strict gender based acts imposed by the society of the patriarchal, heterosexual kind. So, femininity or masculinity is not a natural outcome of one's sex because sex is socially constructed by the gender appropriate acts. Thus, Butler states that gender is no longer the cultural interpretation of sex because sex itself is a gendered category.⁶⁴ By revealing the gendered nature of sex itself, Butler breaks the necessary continuum assumed between gender and sex, i.e. she reveals that the necessary "natural" link between the male body and masculinity, and the female body and femininity is a construct in itself.

A patriarchal, heterosexual society has no place for the people whose gender do not correspond to the sex that they were assigned at birth. This can be best understood with the

⁶³In fact, Anne Fausto-Sterling argues that on the basis of the range of bodies that exist in nature, that there are at least five sexes. The five sexes are male; female; true hermaphrodite; and two kinds of pseudo-hermaphrodites. A true hermaphrodite has one male gonad and one female gonad whereas pseudo-herms have either male or female gonads (not both) with ambiguous or inconsistent genitalia. In Nivedita Menon, *Seeing Like A Feminist*, p. 28.

⁶⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 10.

story of Moni⁶⁵. In a village in West Bengal, India, a few years ago, Moni, a sixteen year old girl was beaten, tortured and stripped naked for “dressing and behaving like a boy”, and for refusing to give up her friendship with a newly-married woman. Menon writes, that violence inflicted on Moni was not only about maintaining gender appropriate behaviour and looks but also about strictly maintaining the matrix of homosexuality in a patriarchal society. Therefore, Menon avers, “the question of gender-appropriate behaviour is inextricably linked to legitimate procreative sexuality.”⁶⁶ Patriarchy recognises that non-heterosexual desire and defiance of gendered appearance are, in fact, signals of a refusal to participate according to the protocols built by patriarchy itself, hence they are corrected with violence at once. Thus, patriarchy is institutionalisation of androcentrism. A system of male domination and privilege which has given men the authority to control, limit and restrict female lives, bodies and possibilities. The Western philosophical tradition has developed under the influence of such notions and regards women as the “other” of the man, someone who is “second” to a man since she is low on rationality. Although, Merleau-Ponty’s brings body back into philosophy yet his works have been challenged by the feminist philosophers for being oblivious to understand the bodily existence of a woman in a patriarchal society. After examining and understanding sex, gender and women under patriarchal ideologies, I shall now discuss the questions raised on Merleau-Ponty’s concept of lived-body by the feminist philosophers in the next two sections.

II. Male Gaze on Female Lived-Body

The aim of this section is to understand the concept of male gaze and how it influences the female lived-body. I shall also discuss as to how the gaze has been understood by Merleau-Ponty in a male-centric manner resulting in ignoring the bodily experiences of a woman in the male dominated world.

Merleau-Ponty gave philosophy a different approach for understanding the bodily presence of the being in the world by not investigating the structure of reflective consciousness where the body’s role is of little importance, but by articulating body-subject’s pre-reflective consciousness in the lived-world. His task in *Phenomenology of Perception* was to explore the pre-reflective domain of consciousness which is an implicit and first-order

⁶⁵ The story of Moni in Nivedita Menon, *Seeing Like A Feminist*, p. 2-5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

awareness where human beings act with unnoticeable bodily experiences. In the pre-reflective process of embodiment, the body-subject makes sense of the world that has been given to him which has its own structures in the form of social, economic, political, cultural institutions, symbols, codes and general idealisation regarding things in the world. He emphasised on the investigation of embodied beings in the pre-reflective domain of consciousness because according to him, lived-body does not have positing consciousness in regular everyday experiences.

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty asserts that it is only through perception that the being encounters the other onto the same world. He talks about bodily perception in the terms of realisation of the seen. According to him, in the process of unraveling the seen by the seer through perception, a gap, separation, deviation, divergence or *ecart*⁶⁷ is created which effects both the seer and the seen. This gap gives an anonymous visual meaning to the subject of perception which has not been consciously thought over. Merleau-Ponty refers to this relationship as inter-corporeal or carnal intersubjectivity where each of us is, in relation to the other, a visible-seer, audible-listener, tangible-toucher.⁶⁸ Inter-corporeal bond or intersubjectivity with the other means that the being is in sensible-sentient reversibility relationship with the other where one sees the other in a meaningful behaviour. Behaviour for Merleau-Ponty constitutes the very subjectivity of the being. It does not mean an outer representation of the inner self but it is what the being is. The other is accessible to the being through the conduct of one's visible body which displays expressions and gestures, for instance, love, hatred, happiness, etc. Therefore, the other is perceptible to the being in one's immanent natural attitude in a meaningful behaviour. Merleau-Ponty also acknowledges the presence of conflict amongst the intersubjective beings. Conflicts develop the feeling of alienation or estrangement not just towards oneself but also towards others in the world. The feeling of isolation is caused due to the 'gaze' or the 'look' of the other. For Merleau-Ponty, the base of the structure of inter-subjective relationships between the subjects is of communication and mutual recognition.⁶⁹ Whenever there is a rupture in the communication with the other or whenever one feels not recognised in the look or the gaze of the other, the being feels violated and objectified.

⁶⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 4.

⁶⁸ Crossley, "The politics of the Gaze: Between Foucault and Merleau-Ponty," p. 411.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

When the mutual recognition is not realised; when we feel that we are individuated and objectified in the gaze of the other, when we feel that our actions and expressions are ‘not taken up and understood, but observed as if they were an insect’s. The look ‘takes the place of a possible communication’. Such refusal is a ‘style of conduct’, it belongs to the world of the carnal-intersubjective, the inter-corporeal, and not to a mythical inner world.⁷⁰

According to Merleau-Ponty in-order to be certain that the other is gazing or looking, it is not necessary that the two people should actually look at each other. The consciousness of other’s gaze may take place without the exchange of looks between the two people. Being gazed reveals the other as the existence of a body, a being having an outside as well as an inside. Every individual realises that at most of the instances of our life there is a possibility of being ‘gazed at’ and this realisation is the ‘knowledge of the other people’s existence’. Therefore, these are the phenomena which assure us of the existence of the other. Each person thus exists not only for oneself but also for others. Merleau-Ponty avers,

This visibility of my body (for me-but also universal and, eminently, for the other) is what is responsible for what is called telepathy. For a minute indication of other’s behaviour suffices to activate visibility. For example, a woman feels her body desired and looked at by imperceptible signs, and without herself looking at those who look at her.⁷¹

Merleau-Ponty believed in the “entwinement of forces”, the entwining of the invisible and the visible where the invisible is marked by the absence of positing consciousness. According to Merleau-Ponty, the visible is marked by the corporeal existence of the being within the intersubjective world and the invisible is not the opposite of the visible, rather a “lining/depth of the visible”. Hence, the two cannot exist independent of each other. In short, reversibility entails the introduction of the invisible into the structurally closed realm of the visible, it is the acknowledgement that something beyond our conscious control participates in our construction.⁷² He proves the entwining of the self with the other in the inter-subjective world through telepathy by illustrating it with a woman’s body as desired but he fails to understand the constitution of the subjectivity of a woman and how it is different from that of a man in a patriarchal society. The “world-view” of women is very different from that of men because the world in which they are born and brought up has fixed generalised idealisation for them where they are made to follow a specific set of norms and values only throughout their

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 415.

⁷¹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 245.

⁷² Kozel, “The Diabolical Strategy of Mimesis: Irigaray’s Reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty,” p. 125.

lives. In short, a woman's way of being in the world is theorised by the rational being of the patriarchal world, the man. Hence, the manner in which a woman is aware of her bodily presence is very different from the way a man cognises his own in the patriarchal world. For instance, a woman staying out late at night would constantly be under the fear of getting harassed or molested because the patriarchal society has defined her body in association with vulnerability. On the other hand, a man never caters such fears. Merleau-Ponty fails to understand that the gaze of a man has a very different meaning for a woman in a patriarchal society. His gaze signifies power and control over a woman's bodily being, it crushes her freedom, her resistance and her meaningful existence by objectifying her body as an irrational, unruly product in the society. For instance, Simone de Beauvoir states, with the gaze of the other, as soon as a girl enters puberty her body becomes alien to her which she is told to discipline because it could bring her shame anytime. She writes, "She is accustomed to a head of hair quietly rippling like a silken skein; but this new growth in her armpits and at her middle transforms her into a kind of animal or alga."⁷³ Whereas the gaze of a woman on a man has no meaning, it is rather insignificant and brings no change at all. Due to men's gaze, women not only lose the immediate availability and nearness to their body but also lose the possibility of projecting themselves in the manner in which they are habituated in their pre-reflective engagements in the lived-world.⁷⁴ Therefore, victimisation fostered by men's gaze is a part of a woman's everyday life, this gaze also makes women anxious and forces them to think about how they should be dealing with it or confronting it. As a result, some women and girls often hold themselves to blame for unwanted advances and sexual assaults in a patriarchal society. They try to overcome this everyday violence by adapting it as a pre-condition of their existence in order to make sense of the world they live in. Such invisible form of violence encountered by women in their everyday lives not only modifies their bodily being but also their symbolic representation in the lived-world. Thus, in a patriarchal society, a man's gaze lacks mutual recognition for a woman which results in her feeling violated for she is throughout her life only understood as an object.

Philosophy of Luce Irigaray provides a strong theoretical base to my understanding of the male gaze on women and the influence it bring forth. According to her, women have always been represented as the 'second sex' and as the 'other' of the man. Irigaray believes that the reason why violence has been inflicted on women has much to do with the understanding of

⁷³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 308.

⁷⁴ Staudigl, "Towards a Phenomenological Theory of Violence: Reflections Following Merleau-Ponty and Schutz," p. 240.

the sexes as first (men) and second (women), rather than as “two” in a patriarchal society. She criticises Merleau-Ponty’s theory of “relation of reversibility” in her book *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. According to Merleau-Ponty in the relation of reversibility, the being while seeing the world becomes a part of the world through his body and the object of one’s own vision. This according to Merleau-Ponty is ‘seeing-seen’. Similarly, when one touches one’s other hand, the hand which is touching also gets touched by its other hand which is called, ‘touching-touch’. This means, the being is both the subject and the object not only for itself but also for the other as it has been seen and touched by the other. Therefore, for Merleau-Ponty, consciousness cannot enjoy the status of having independent existence without the body.

Irigaray finds a problem with Merleau-Ponty’s thesis of reversibility of ‘seeing-seen’ and ‘touching-touch’ in the constitution of the subjectivity of the being. She criticises his theory for lacking the scope of recognising the sexual difference. She explains that beings who are engaged in the routine activities of everyday life do not require any proof of the existence of the world or of the other because they are a part of one’s pre-given structures. One’s attention is grabbed only when there is an instance of rupture in the habitual way of living in the world, for instance, when the being is ‘seen’ by the other or being ‘touched’ by the other in an inappropriate, obnoxious manner. Being touched and seen in a habitual way holds a different connotation for a woman than being seen and touched in a non-habitual manner. The latter is offensive in nature and makes her existence ambiguous. The instance would make the woman angry and would make her question the socio-cultural practices of the society and the intersubjective relations between a woman and a man. Thus, while investigating the ways of being in the world, Merleau-Ponty remained oblivious to women’s bodily experiences of seeing and touching; how a certain kind of a gaze or a touch can be molesting in nature and can rob a woman of her dignity. He fails to make the sexual distinction between the self and the other. His investigation has been only mono-sexual in nature for he has simply assumed the other to be the same as oneself, a man. By doing this Merleau-Ponty totally ignored the presence of the sexually other from the lived-world and also evaded the whole discourse of violence inflicted through seeing and touching the other who is sexually different, who is not a man. Thus, Irigaray questions the ethical and ontological dimension of the interaction of the self and the other in Merleau-Ponty’s works by addressing the perspective of woman’s existence in the world.

Irigaray has criticised Merleau-Ponty for being oblivious to understand the gaze of men on the 'other' sex while conceptualising the intersubjective relationship amongst human beings but she agrees with Merleau-Ponty on affirming the task of philosophy in redefining the experiences of human beings without judging them on the premise of already given dichotomies.

If it is true that as soon a philosophy declares itself to be the reflection or coincidence it prejudices what it find, then once again it must recommence everything recommence everything, reject the instruments reflections and intuition have provided themselves, and install itself in a locus where they have not yet been distinguished, in experiences that have yet not been 'worked out', that offer us all at once, pell-mea, both 'subject' and 'object', both existence and essence, and hence give philosophy resources to redefine them.⁷⁵

Irigaray has used the method of mimesis in her philosophical texts and in her readings of all the other philosophers to bring out that invisible in their text which has been left out or was not made visible by them which according to her is 'sexual difference'. She has given a new discourse and a new ethics of sexual difference which says that sexual difference does not mean a distinction between a male and a female rather it should be understood as that discourse of philosophy which talks about the exploration of the self and other relationships. According to her, intersubjective relationships should not just be understood in terms of only a man and a woman but it can also be between a reader and a text, a woman and a woman, mother and a daughter and several other forms of relationships that human beings share with each other in the world.

III. Questioning the Neutrality of the Lived-body

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty describes the body as an agent in the world and explains how bodies are oriented in the world through one's use of perception. I shall focus on the chapter titled, 'The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility' from the *Phenomenology of Perception* to question the neutrality of the lived-body with the help of Iris Marion Young's philosophical works by introducing the problem of motility and spatiality among the two sexes.

⁷⁵ Irigaray, *An Ethic of Sexual Difference*, p. 151.

The basic premise of the chapter, “The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility” states that we understand spatiality and motility by incorporating our body’s orientation into our experiences of the world. And it is only through this process, according to Merleau-Ponty, we realise that our subjectivity comes not from the mind or consciousness but from how we inhabit the world through our body. Iris Marion Young in the chapter entitled, “Throwing Like a Girl” from the book, *On Female Body Experience*, discusses the motility and spatiality of the female body and its stigmas in comparison to the male body and criticises the male centred account of human motility and spatiality as illustrated by Merleau-Ponty. She primarily concentrates only on those bodily movements with which body aims to accomplish a definite purpose or a task, movements which relate to the body as a whole in the lived-world. According to Young, the sexist society makes us believe in the myth that according to anatomy and behaviour boys are strictly masculine and girls, feminine. Girls are attributed to some natural and “eternal feminine” essence and are taught to live their lives in accordance with the definition that the patriarchal culture assigns. As a result, they are both, physically and psychologically confined and objectified. This idea has been thoroughly and systematically discussed by the feminist philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir. According to de Beauvoir, every human existence is defined by its situation, therefore, the existence of the female person is defined by the cultural and social limits of her situation in the society. Due to which her existence in a patriarchal society is thusly defined by the basic tension between immanence and transcendence. The culture and society in which the female person dwells defines woman as Other, as the inessential correlate to man, as mere object and immanence. de Beauvoir writes, according to patriarchy, “It is said that a woman is sensual, she wallows in immanence; but she has first been shut up in it.”⁷⁶ Woman is thereby both culturally and socially denied the subjectivity and autonomy which are only accorded to a man in a patriarchal society. At the same time, however, because she is a human being, she will exhibit subjectivity and transcendence. Hence, women in a patriarchal society must therefore live a contradiction of being free subjects and also objects who have been denied subjectivity. Thus, the practice of explaining women’s existence in terms of an “eternal feminine” essence by patriarchy reduces her simply to unintelligibility and a state of constant confusion between immanence and transcendence.

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole

⁷⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 572.

that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.⁷⁷

However, in denying such an eternal feminine essence, according to de Beauvoir, we should not fall into the “nominalism” which ignores the real differences in the behaviour and experiences of men and women. Even though there is no eternal feminine essence, each woman’s experience, opportunities, and possibilities have a unity that can be described and made intelligible. This unity is due to the patriarchal social formation she lives in. Marion Young in accordance with de Beauvoir’s understanding, defines femininity as not a mysterious quality or an essence that all women have by virtue of being biologically female. She writes, “It (femininity) is, rather, a set of structures and conditions that delimit the typical *situation* of being a woman in a patriarchal society, as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves.”⁷⁸ However, according to Marion Young, de Beauvoir gives an account of the situation of women with remarkable clarity, depth and ingenuity but to a large extent, fails to provide a status and orientation regarding a woman’s lived-body in relation to its surroundings and actions in the lived-world. de Beauvoir only discusses a woman’s body and her physical relations to her surroundings by focusing only on the evident facts of a woman’s physiology. She discusses how women experience their body as a burden through out their lives, how during puberty and menstruation they see their breasts as burden and how hormonal imbalances create nervous and vasomotor instability in her.⁷⁹ Simone de Beauvoir claims that these phenomena weigh down woman’s existence by tying her to nature and immanence and tends to create the impression that it is woman’s anatomy and physiology *as such* that at least in part determine her unfree status. Marion Young explains that in a patriarchal society the modalities of feminine bodily motility and spatiality exhibit the same tension between transcendence and immanence between subjectivity and being a mere object, which de Beauvoir fails to provide.

In-order to investigate the neutrality of the lived-body, Marion Young states three modalities of feminine motility (which also affect their behaviour) that exhibit an *ambiguous transcendence*, an *inhibited intentionality*, and a *discontinuous unity* with its surroundings in a patriarchal set-up which will shows us how women experience her body both as thing and as a capacity at the same time (perplexed between immanence and transcendence). First, Merleau-

⁷⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 273.

⁷⁸ Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl,” p. 31.

⁷⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 939.

Ponty locates the subjectivity in the body. According to him, the subject as the body has the capacities to approach and grasp its surroundings in the direction of its intentions but Young argues that feminine bodily existence does not deal with transcendence but *ambiguous transcendence* (a transcendence that is at the same time laden with immanence.)⁸⁰ According to Young, the transcendence of the lived body that Merleau-Ponty describes is a transcendence that moves out from the body in its immanence in an open and unbroken directed-ness towards the lived-world in an action but Young says, rather than simply beginning in immanence, feminine bodily existence remains in immanence or, better, is *overlaid* with immanence, even as it moves out toward the world in motions of grasping, manipulating, and so on.⁸¹ Marion Young observes the basic difference in Straus' observation between the way boys and girls throw. She claims that girls do not bring their whole bodies into the motion, they do not reach back, move swiftly, step and lean forward as much as boys do. They tend to remain relatively immobile except for their arms, and even the power in arms is not used to its full potency as far as they could be. Only a part of the body moves out towards a task, while the rest remains rooted in immanence.⁸² Another example Young gives is that fact that women do not perceive themselves as capable of lifting and carrying heavy things (it also includes other types of physical labour, such as pushing, pulling, grasping, etc.). The reason being, women fail to summon the full possibilities of their muscular coordination, position, poise and bearing. Young writes, "Not only is there a typical style of throwing like a girl, but there is a typical style of running like a girl, climbing like a girl, swinging like a girl, hitting like a girl."⁸³ All these styles associated with girls alone have one thing in common, that is, a woman's motion tends not to reach through in the direction of fully performing the task because she remains in immanence. Young claims that there are indeed differences between men and women in the terms of their physical strength but these observed difference between men and women are not just on the premise of brute muscular strength but the way each sex differently uses her or his body in performing the tasks in the world where culture and social traditions play a dominant role.

Second, according to Merleau-Ponty, the possibilities that are opened up in the world depend upon the mode and limits of the bodily, "I can". He places intentionality in motility, thus he believes that an unaltered intentionality projects the aim to be accomplished and

⁸⁰ Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl," p. 36.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁸² Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl," p. 36.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

connects the body's motion towards the body's activity but according to Young, feminine movements often put an end to this mutual relationship between aim and enactment because they move in a state of contradiction or opposition. She writes, "The feminine bodily existence is an *inhibited intentionality*, because bodies project an aim to be enacted but at the same time stiffens against the performance of the task."⁸⁴ According to Marion Young, women lack an entire trust in their bodies, they very strongly feel that their bodies will fail before themselves in-order to carry out the desired aims. Apart from trust, the other reason behind such hesitation is Young says, the fear of getting hurt (which is much greater in women than men). For instance, while fielding in a cricket match, women tend to remain in one place, they neither engage in jumping in-order to reach the ball nor in running to approach the ball. They slowly and gradually respond to the motion of the ball coming towards them as it is coming *at* them and as the immediate bodily impulse they duck the ball or flee they field in-order to save themselves from getting hurt. As a result, the feeling of incapacity and frustration dwells up due to which women end up underestimating themselves. Young avers, "Women take themselves to be the object of the motion, rather than its originator."⁸⁵ Thus, they believe that the task is beyond them especially without even putting in their full efforts. At such a halfhearted level, women fail to perform the task and fulfil their own prophecy.

Third, according to Merleau-Ponty, body deals with the function of unifying and synthesising with both its surroundings and itself. The body synthesis is immediate in nature for Merleau-Ponty. Marion Young finds a problem with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy for being oblivious to women's experiences. According to her, "feminine bodily existence stands in *discontinuous unity* with both itself and its surroundings."⁸⁶ In movements which require the active engagement and coordination of the body as a whole, women fail to locate their motion in various parts of the body, they only tend to focus on one part leaving the rest of the body immobile. Such a movement fails to unify and synthesise with both, the surroundings and itself. Therefore, the part of the body that is transcending toward an aim is in discontinuous unity from the rest of the body which remain immobile. In short, all these three modalities of feminine movements and comportment have their root in the fact that a woman's body is both a subject and an object for itself at the same time and in reference to the same act. Feminine bodily existence is frequently not a pure presence to the world because

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 39.

⁸⁶ Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl," p. 38.

it is referred onto *itself* as well as onto possibilities in the world.⁸⁷ Lived-body exists as a material thing as well as a transcending subject but patriarchy makes the feminine existence experience her body as a just a “thing”- a delicate object which must be picked up and put into movement, a thing that exists as *looked at and acted upon*. Thus, Young states, “She remains rooted in immanence, she is inhibited, and retains a distance from her body as transcending movement and from engagement in the world’s possibilities.”⁸⁸

Young also criticises Merleau-Ponty by providing three modalities of women’s spatiality which exhibit her existence as *enclosed* or *confining*, as having a *dual structure*, and the woman experiences herself a *positioned in space*.⁸⁹ First, Young cites the famous study performed by Erik Erikson several years ago in which he asked several male and female preadolescents to construct a scene for an imagined movie out of some toys. The results suggested that girls typically depicted indoor settings with high walls and proper closures which defines their orientation as submissive, quiet and inwardly being. While boys (typically) constructed outdoor scenes which defines their orientation as open and outwardly directed being in the patriarchal society. Erikson concluded the results with psychoanalytic observations saying girls depict “inner space as the enclosed space of their wombs and vaginas while the boys depict “outer space” as projection of the phallus.”⁹⁰ Marion Young provides a different view for understanding this observation, she regards this as a reflection of the way in which the members of each sex live and move their bodies in space. According to her, the space physically available to the feminine body is of greater radius but she remains *confined* within the little space that she uses for herself. Another example of the *confinement* of feminine lived space while playing a sport has been observed in the previous section, women tend not to move and play along with the motion of the ball. She tends to move and react only when the ball has arrived within the space where she actually is (as noted above while discussing women's comportment and motility). According to Marion Young, feminine existence posits an existential *enclosure* within the space that belongs to her and the space around her, she only moves within the her space and believes that the space beyond is not available to her movement. Second, in Merleau-Ponty’s account, the body unity of transcending performance creates an immediate link between the body and the outlying spaces in the lived-world. According to Young the feminine existence exhibits *double*

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 38.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 39.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 39.

⁹⁰ Erikson in Young’s “Seeing Like a Girl,” p. 39. For more information, see, Erik H. Erikson (1964) p. 582–606.

spatiality, as in, the space of the “here” is different from the far off place. A woman believes that the latter space projects possibilities in the sense that she understands that “someone” could move within it but at the same time, she knows it is not for her, she knows that it is not linked with her own bodily possibilities because she only inhabits her space, that is “here” with her limited bodily possibilities. Young writes, “She believes “someone” could move within the “yonder” but not her.”⁹¹ Third, according to Marion Young, the third modality of feminine spatiality is that feminine existence experiences itself as *positioned in space* because female motility is laden with immanence, she lives as an object, therefore, the feminine body exists *in space*.⁹² Young believes that women react to motions as if they were the *objects* of the motions, they just fail to take themselves as the *subjects*. The tendency for the feminine body to remain partly immobile in the performance of a task that requires the movement of the whole body illustrates this characteristic of feminine bodily existence as rooted *in place*. Likewise, the tendency of women to wait for an object to come within their immediate bodily field, rather than move out toward it explains that her bodily existence is well *positioned* and *restricted in place* available to her.

The modalities of feminine bodily comportment, motility, and spatiality are common to the existence of women in a patriarchal society because women are limited and conditioned by the sexist oppressions in the society. A specific style of body behaviour, spatiality and movement is taught by patriarchy as soon as the girl comes to understand that she is a girl. As a result, she acquires subtle “feminine habits” which she is always taught to conform to. She learns to talk like a woman, sit like a woman, laugh like a woman, stand like a woman, etc. Thus, bodily timidity develops and only goes on increasing with age. Women who open their bodies to interact with the world in a free, active, and bold manner deal with the threat of inviting objectification as they are often objectified as, “loose women”. I would like to suggest that the reason why the spatiality of a woman is limited only to her confined space is because of such threats to her life. Therefore, the potent source behind all these modalities of a woman's bodily existence (in terms of spatiality, comportment and motility) lies in the fact that patriarchy considers her as a body, as an object and never a subject. Thus, Iris Marion Young criticises Merleau-Ponty for dealing with body in a neutral manner and shows how he only deals with a male centric perspective in his accounts by failing to provide the differences between male and female embodiment through his descriptions of lived-body's spatiality and motility in the lived-world.

⁹¹Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl,” p. 41.

⁹²Ibid, p. 41.

Where Iris Marion Young understands and explains the bodily behaviour, spatiality and motility in a practical approach while criticising Merleau-Ponty's idea of embodiment. Judith Butler on the other hand offers a theoretical approach to Merleau-Ponty's failure to recognise the "sexual difference" in reference to his chapter, "The Body in Its Sexual Being" from *Phenomenology of Perception*. I shall now discuss how Merleau-Ponty's idea of the lived body's sexuality is male-centric and how he fails to provide a female point of reference for sexuality.

In the chapter, Merleau-Ponty describes the man as a historical idea and not a natural species.⁹³ In other words, he describes man as a body which generates experience by interacting with others and its surrounding in the lived-world. According to Butler, Merleau-Ponty defines body as a place of appropriation and a mechanism of transformation and conversion.⁹⁴ In other words, according to him, body cannot be conceived as a static fact of existence but as a behaviour of existence, it can be understood as the place where the possibilities are realised in the lived-world. Butler appreciates Merleau-Ponty's idea of man and his views against the naturalistic accounts of sexuality which explicitly refute the normative (heterosexual) view. And yet, when she re-reads and re-examines the chapter from a critical point of view by asserting that sexuality is coincidental with existence that it is "referential" and not "solipsistic,"⁹⁵ she found Merleau-Ponty's theory of sexuality to be deceptive for it propagates contradictory approaches. This is important to mention because the normative description of sexuality that Merleau-Ponty offers in his chapter only speaks from a male reference point. The case of sexually disinterested Schneider is a good example to understand all her criticism. According to Merleau-Ponty, Schneider displays sexual incapacity and his state is regarded to be abnormal because, "obscene pictures of women, conversations on sexual topics, the sight of a woman body did not arouse any desire in him."⁹⁶ Butler refers to Merleau-Ponty's conceptualisation of the sexual relation between a man and a woman as the model of a master and a slave⁹⁷ because these pictures, conversations and sight that Merleau-Ponty talks about designate a concrete cultural situation, it is a situation in which the masculine subject is the viewer of an object, the woman's body. Just like Merleau-Ponty's

⁹³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 198.

⁹⁴ Butler, Judith. "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description: A Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*," p. 86.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

account of motility and spatiality were oblivious to the difference between the two sexes. Similarly, he fails to realise that all human sexual reference is not the same. In addition to this, Butler claims that, “Not only does Merleau-Ponty fail to acknowledge the extent to which sexuality is culturally constructed but his descriptions of the universal features of sexuality reproduce certain cultural constructions of sexual normalcy.”⁹⁸

We now understand that the conceptualisation of the being’s existence in the world from the perspective of a woman never found any place in the practical and theoretical discourses of knowledge in history. It is a question worth asking as to why the bodily presence and experience of a woman in making sense of the world has been kept out of the domains of knowledge. Isn’t this an act of violence in itself being historically done to women? A woman’s engagement in the world is very different from that of a man, therefore her perception regarding the world-view would naturally be different. If her perspective is not understood and ignored then the world will continue on following the set methods by the man in understanding the things around and will keep asking the same rhetorical questions about it. By understanding women’s perspective, a fresh sense of creativity will prevail in the form of new methods and frameworks towards the understanding of the lived-word and embodied existence.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 92.

Chapter Three

Violence and Body

“Female bodies have historically been significantly more vulnerable than male bodies. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that women, besides *having* bodies, are also *associated* with the body, which has always been considered woman's ‘sphere’ in family life, in mythology, scientific, philosophical, and religious ideology. The social manipulation of the female body emerged as an absolutely central strategy in maintenance of the power relation between the sexes ...”⁹⁹

Body is the source of all kinds of experiences in the lived-world. It implies mortality and vulnerability by exposing us not just to touch and gaze of the others but also to violence. Violence is experienced as a ubiquitous existential social phenomena in the inter-subjective lived-world. It is experienced by corporeal beings in various forms and at different levels in a society. Phenomenologically, violence is understood as an experience, as an act of intentionality where the perpetrator inflicts injury upon the subject on purpose with a desired intention which destroys not only one's pre-given sense of the world but also destroys one's way of making sense in the world.¹⁰⁰ Thus, violence as an act of intentionality not only influences the subject's openness to the world but also influences subject's openness to one's own self. Now, a very prominent question arises, is violence as a social existential phenomena experienced differently by the individuals inspite of their rootedness in the same lived-word?

In the lived-world one is not only affected by one's family, religion, caste, community, etc. but also by the pre-established structures of the society which are formulated and sustained by the ideologies practiced in the society, for instance, the social, cultural, economic and political institutions play their respective roles. Being born in a commonly shared lived-world, human beings realise themselves as a part of a particular socio-cultural milieu which also determines their way of being in the world. But if the socio-cultural milieu works in accordance with a patriarchal, heterosexual ideology then violence is experienced differently

⁹⁹ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, p. 143.

¹⁰⁰ Staudigl, “Towards a Phenomenological Theory of Violence,” p. 233.

by its embodied beings, for instance, gender based violence serves as an apt example. This sort of violence implies that discrimination and inequality between men and women is a prevalent practice in most patriarchal societies. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1994) defines gender based violence as, “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”¹⁰¹ It is usually understood as the female-victim violence where male is the perpetrator but the scope of this violence should not be limited to women alone. Violence inflicted on the individuals belonging to sexual and gender minorities should also be included.¹⁰² A society of a patriarchal, heterosexual kind practices sexism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia by using violence as a corrective measure on people belonging to the minorities and women. Although, gender based violence is a significant cause of morbidity and mortality in a patriarchal society, it is almost never seen as a public health issue. This chapter would investigate and examine the nature of gender based violence at length. It will be understood as to how gender based violence becomes the dominant factor in the process of embodiment which provides a new meaning in making sense of the lived-world for its embodied beings.

Gender violence is a case of structural violence because violence is systematically exerted through the various institutions of a patriarchal society. In the first section, the nature of ever-present potential gender based violence in everyday life will be examined. The aim of the section is to analyse the nature of potential gender based violence in the form of oppression, exploitation, exclusion, suppression, marginalisation, etc. which is systematically inflicted on women via the various structures of a patriarchal society. In the second section, body shame as an existential concept will be discussed in relation to a woman's body. It will be demonstrated as to how shame in a patriarchal society restricts a woman's possibility of autonomy, dignity, and fulfilment of life. At the same time, the nature of actual gender based violence will be analysed in the form of ideology of beauty which is associated with a woman's body alone in a patriarchal society. The third section aims to examine the concept of honour and the relation between shame-honour in association with a woman's body in a

¹⁰¹ Nussbaum, “Women's Bodies: Violence, Security, Capabilities,” p. 167-168.

¹⁰² By sexual and gender minorities, I mean individuals whose sexual orientation lies outside the heterosexual mainstream and individuals whose gender identity does not fit in the distinct category of male or female, or cisgender (gender identity that reflects the sex assigned at birth). The LGBTQI community, the term LGBTQI is widely accepted abbreviation for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders, Queer and Intersex people. However, it must be kept in mind that the term itself is in a growing state, there is a possibility of a multitude of gendered identities which we are oblivious to at the moment.

patriarchal society. The nature of physical and psychological violence on women and people belonging to minorities will be analysed with the help of the narratives of actual gender based violence. In short, the three sections will examine the nature of gender based violence exerted through the various structures of a patriarchal society under the hegemony of body politics.

Phenomenological understanding of violence has been taken into context in the chapter because gender based violence will be understood as a subject-centric study by putting emphasis on the subject's experiences of violence which is inflicted on purpose by the various structures of the lived-world. Violence can never be understood by distancing the subject from the very experience of it, therefore, narratives of violence will be taken up along with the sections for providing a detailed analysis on the nature of gender based violence. Narratives manifest human experiences, they act as a rich source in examining how embodied beings lived and continue to live within the social, cultural, economic and political structures of the lived-world. Thus, gender based violence will be understood as a phenomena experienced by the corporeal beings in the lived-world rather than as an objective isolated abstract concept.

I. Understanding Gender based Violence under Patriarchy

In the lived world one is not only affected by one's family, religion, caste and community but also by the pre-given structures of the society like the social, cultural, economic and political institutions. These pre-given structures of the society act as human conditions that either help in realising one's potentialities or act as hindrances to the freedom of the beings. In a patriarchal, heterosexual society, these social structures limit females' potentialities because they work in the interest of men alone and are by and large controlled by them. Therefore, the violence inflicted on women is understood as gender-based violence because it evolves from females' subordinate social status which is supported by the social norms. Potential gender based violence influences one's psychological well-being and will be examined in the form of oppression, exploitation, discrimination and marginalisation of women by the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of a patriarchal society. These institutions will now be examined in detail.

Firstly, I shall discuss the social institution. Family which is the simplest and most elementary social unit of a society is believed to be most patriarchal in nature. With our regular vocabulary, we define family as a group of people who love and support each other over good and bad times but just any group of people who do the same would not be

recognised as a family. The laws define family as an institution with a legal identity, which means only a set of people related in a “specific manner” can be called a family.¹⁰³ For example, a homosexual couple, a homosexual couple with adopted child/children, unmarried mothers, women living with their siblings, a single male parent with an adopted girl child, and so on cannot be recognised as family. Hence, a family can only be of a patriarchal, heterosexual kind where a set of people are related in a specific manner: a man, “his” wife and “his” children.¹⁰⁴ Thus, in a patriarchal, heterosexual society, family is all about the man and is established on the premise of hierarchies of gender and age, where gender overshadows age. An adult male in the family is most powerful and is regarded as the “head” of the family, then comes the older men and women, after which comes the wife and lastly, children.

Feminist philosopher, Sylvia Walby defines family in a patriarchal society as a “system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.”¹⁰⁵ She calls working of the women within the household as the “patriarchal mode of production” where women’s labour is expropriated by the husbands and others who live in the house which makes women the “producing class” and other members the “expropriating class”. A patriarchal family oppresses, exploits and marginalises women by keeping a strict control on the two key features, labour/production and reproduction. Domestic labour is one of the key features of this institution where women alone are responsible for housework, the labour that goes into making the members of the family capable of working day to day, for instance, cooking, cleaning, running the home, maintenance of livestock, animal husbandry, kitchen gardening, child care, and so on is solely dependent and provided by women. The woman of the house is either expected to perform all these tasks herself, or ensure that the work gets done by some house-help. In either case, domestic work or ‘women’s work’ is considered to be her primary ‘natural’ responsibility but there is nothing natural about this division of labour. Housework has nothing to do with one's biology, only the fact that women alone can bear children involves biology but child-rearing along with the household work is not a woman’s natural job for it can be done equally well by a man. Therefore, domestic work has nothing to do with one's biology and has everything to do with the prevalent sexist practices in a patriarchal society. The man in a patriarchal family is seen as the sole caretaker for he is believed to be the only bread winner which inevitably places him in a position where he has the supreme authority in both, personal and financial matters of the family. On the other hand,

¹⁰³ Nivedita Menon, *Seeing Like A feminist*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, p. 20.

women devote their lives to the domestic work which is tough and demanding, they perform the tasks out of sheer love and care without charging a single penny, the house help would perform the same labour for a wage yet her work is unrewarding, it not regarded as 'the work', something that men do outside the four walls of the house. The nature of her work is regarded as personal but not productive, hence throughout their lives they are addressed as the "non-working-class". Nivedita Menon avers,

The sex-based segregation of labour is the key, to maintaining not only the family, but also the economy, because the economy would collapse like a house of cards if this unpaid domestic labour had to be paid for by somebody...When you have an entire structure of unpaid labour buttressing the economy, then the sexual division of labour cannot be considered to be domestic and private; it is what keeps the economy going. If tomorrow, every woman demanded to be paid for this work that she does, either the husband would have to pay her, or the employer would have to pay the husband. The economy would fall apart. This entire system functions on the assumption that women do housework for love.¹⁰⁶

Apart from controlling women's labour, men also control women's reproductive powers. In a patriarchal society decisions about reproduction are generally under the control of men. Kathleen A. Lahey writes, "Most women, procreate and nurture under the conditions of such unrelenting male control that it is fair to say that all of women's reproductive arrangements are subject to some form of patriarchal domination."¹⁰⁷ Despite the legislative protection of reproductive rights in India, most women remain oblivious to the freedom to choose when and how many children to have. The role of a woman's body in a patriarchal, heterosexual family is valued on the ground of her ability to reproduce (women are often blamed for infertility, they are ostracised and subjected to various forms of violence). Early marriage and pregnancy or repeated pregnancies spaced too closely often due to the desire of a male offspring leads to hazardous results, it not only poses a threat to her life and health but also exacerbates poor nutrition, poverty and unhygienic living condition in the country. Therefore, the poor standards of antenatal, obstetric and post-natal care affects women's physical and psychological well-being in a patriarchal society. Thus, men not only control women's labour but also their fertility and reproductive rights.

In a patriarchal society, women right from their childhood learn to religiously follow their men and live under their authority, always. An example that helps in understanding this authority better is the phenomenon of the changing of a woman's surname post marriage.

¹⁰⁶ Nivedita Menon, *Seeing Like A Feminist*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ Kathleen A. Lahey, "Celebration and Struggle: Feminism and Law," p. 104.

Prior to her marriage she uses her father's surname (a man's surname is the family's surname-his 'own' surname but a woman's surname prior to her marriage never becomes her own, it is always her father's surname) and after getting married, she is expected to take her husband's surname. Although, there is absolutely no legal requirement for the same, it is a social tradition in a patriarchal setup which is widely practiced as an unquestionable, natural part of marriage. With a new surname, the woman qualifies to be a part of her new family.¹⁰⁸ Thus, family as a social institution maintains and perpetuates inequality. It is the first unit of a society from which patriarchy is both practiced and taught to the future generations for when children live in this particular set-up, patriarchal ideology alone is what they are most likely to grasp and bring the next generation into.

Secondly, cultural institution of a patriarchal society can be understood by examining the domains of gender ideology and educational system which have and continue to marginalise and oppress women. The gender ideology in a patriarchal society can be best understood with the well documented son preference phenomena which implies the neglect of the girl child. A reflection of this attitude is demonstrated in numerous old Asian sayings, for instance, 'birth of a son enhances one's status, while that of a girl lowers one's head' and 'raising a daughter is like watering the neighbour's garden'. The desire for a male child is backed by the ideology that male descendants are central for ensuring one's prestige or honour during the lifetime and even after death (for performing a series of funerary rituals).¹⁰⁹ For instance, in India, under the Brahmanical teachings, the lighting of the funeral pyre of the father by the son is accepted as a pre-condition for the salvation of the spirit. Apart from associating honour with the male child, the notion of immortality has also been linked with his birth. Immortality in a patriarchal society is understood in the form of having successfully left descendants to reproduce the social order. Without a son, a man would be recorded in genealogies as a loser whose family line died out, or worse would not be recorded at all and would be subjected to oblivion.¹¹⁰ Women also comply with the desire for a male child. Bearing a son is important for a woman in a patriarchal society because her main source of standing in her husband's family lies as the mother of the future man/men of the family. Her domestic life is often badly affected if she fails to bear a son, until recently it was a usual practice for men to take a

¹⁰⁸ Social norms are not just restricted to changing the surnames post marriage, in some communities in India, a woman's first name is also changed. It is viewed as a practice where a new name gives her a new identity which helps her to establish herself as a member/part of the new family.

¹⁰⁹ Das Gupta, M, Zhenghua, J, Xie Zhenming, L. and W. Bae Hwa-Ok, "Why is son preference so persistent in East and South Asia? A cross-country study of China, India and the Republic of Korea," p. 166.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 166.

second wife in the hope of begetting a son where the position of the first wife is the household was relegated to that of domestic help. Therefore, the son preference phenomena is prevalent in a patriarchal society. The discrimination between the two sexes is carried out in different ways: those with money undergo sex determination tests and perform sex-selective abortions; those who cannot afford continue child bearing until bestowed with a son or stopping only after reaching a desired number of sons. The discrimination towards the girl infant is also carried out through sex-selective infanticide and during early childhood through neglect and other mechanisms. All the above actions are motivated by the desire for a male child or to have more sons than daughters. This ideology is practiced by patriarchal societies around Asia, however, the situation is much worse in countries like India, Pakistan, China, Bangladesh, Vietnam etc. For instance, five blocks in the Satara district of Maharashtra, India naming Jwali, Mann, Patan, Mann, Khandala and Phaltan have a number of 222 girls under the age of 16 with the same name, "Nakusa"¹¹¹ but one would question, what is in a name? Perhaps, everything, when it specially means "unwanted". This shows the brutal reflection of the ground reality regarding the lowly status of the girl child in our country.

I shall now examine the educational system. Our identity as to who we are and how we think gets structured according to the nature of education prevalent in the society. In-order to explore the role of education in the lives of boys and girls in a patriarchal society, it is essential to first understand the meaning of education. Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Education for Critical Consciousness*, discusses the concept of education in relation with freedom which alleviates oppression and human suffering in the lived-world. For Freire, education is a cultural tool which helps the oppressed to critically understand the reality of the lived-world (which includes one's culture, history, religion, heritage, etc.). He argues that only through critical consciousness the oppressed will perceive the causes of social, cultural and economic oppressions and recognise the possibilities of transformation in the lived-world. He opines against the prescriptive/traditional style of education by referring to it as the "banking" concept of education which is seen as an instrument of oppression and human suffering in the world.¹¹² According to him, with the "banking" model exists the "culture of silence" where the patiently listening objects (the students) are taught to accept what is handed down to them by the subject (the teacher) without questioning. Hence, education becomes an act of depositing, where the students are the depositories and teacher,

¹¹¹ Freney Manecksha, "Renaming Nakusa," p. 19.

¹¹² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Continuum, p.

the depositor. Therefore, the “banking” concept assumes a dichotomy between human beings and the world where the person is merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others.¹¹³ Therefore, for Freire, education is not reducible to a mechanical method of instructions. He avers, “Education is communication and dialogue. It is not the transference of knowledge, but the encounter of Subjects (both, students and teacher) in dialogue in search of the significance of the object of knowing and thinking.”¹¹⁴ Therefore, education is not about memorising information or a set of skills to be transferred to students, it is a phenomenon which involves mutual dialogue where both the educator and the educatee critically learn from each other and are treated as equal participants in the learning process. Thus, Freire’s philosophy of education focuses on the human potential for creativity and freedom in the midst of the oppressive structures of the lived-world. He regards education as a tool which empowers the oppressed to question the nature of society along with their position in it. Freire’s critical pedagogy influenced, inspired millions of students and teachers across the globe to live a meaningful life by unlearning the race, class and gender biases prevalent in the society and to engage in a dialogue to reach at a critical awareness of the lived-world which one inhabits. After examining the meaning of education and its role and relevance in the lived-word, I shall now analyse the nature of education imparted in a patriarchal society. The aim is to explain the degraded nature of education which is gender biased and at the same time orthodox and prescriptive in style.

In 2002, India placed the right to compulsory primary and secondary education as a fundamental right of all the citizens (irrespective of one’s sex) in the Constitution, yet, education is still a dream for most girls in India. Anita Rampal, in her article, “Barriers to the classroom, Barriers in the classroom” argues that the odds are stacked up against the young girls are willing to attend and stay in schools because both poverty and traditions play a dominant role in shaping their lives in a patriarchal society. Families that are not in a fortunate, privileged position choose to educate only the male child because his perceived net value is higher than that of daughters in a patriarchal set-up. The argument is, sons need education for employment opportunities through which they will take the family’s name ahead and provide old age support to the parents. While the daughters have much less to offer, they are generally not expected “to do something with their lives”¹¹⁵ and are regarded as a liability or a transient member of the family who are on their way to marriage and will cause a

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 75.

¹¹⁴ Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, p. 139-140.

¹¹⁵ Anita Rampal, “Barriers to the classroom, Barriers in the classroom,” p. 11.

major economic drain during their marriage expenses (in the form of dowry). So, the neglect of female education is a matter of survival for parents in a patriarchal society. Another significant cause behind the resistance to educating girls in a patriarchal society is the fact that a girl child's labor is used in both, schools and houses. School going girls are naturally expected to look after their younger siblings and perform the household chores. An illness at home, a ceremony, someone coming down for a visit means girls can't attend school for their labour would be needed at home.¹¹⁶ Hence, ensuring regular attendance and pursuing school with tenacity becomes a real challenge for them. As a result, girls find it hard to cope up with the pressure and their parents conclude that they were better-off grazing cattle or doing household chores.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Neera Burra focuses on the same point in her article, "Cultural stereotypes and household behaviour- Girl child labour in India" which draws my attention. She argues that girls rarely enter the school because subordination of the adult woman in the household runs parallel with a subordination of the girl child in a patriarchal set-up. Like the adult women are only expected to perform the household chores all their lives, similarly, the young girls are socialised into the pre-ordained role that they will assume as an adult.¹¹⁸ They are trained in the household chores right from her childhood for the expected, natural role she will take on as an adult. The implications of such unequal treatment result in limiting the opportunities and choices that girl children may have both in the present and in the future. She writes, "The capabilities of girls will be severely restricted by the denial of education. If freedom is the goal of education, it will be substantially restricted by the fact that illiterate girls will become illiterate women."¹¹⁹ Thus, within our educational scenario, the girl children are excluded from an equal educational environment, and their educational opportunities are oriented towards training them as cultural stereotypes.

Nussbaum in the article, "Women's Education: A Global Challenge," provides a strong perspective towards the resistance to educating women in a patriarchal society. She argues that resistance from sheer economic necessity only encourages the insensitivity towards the girl child. It cannot be regarded as a significant cause. According to Nussbaum, the real, potent resistance to girl's subordination in terms of education comes from the custom and traditional hierarchies of power in a patriarchal society where the concept of education is till date understood as a "Western or English" in nature. As a result, various superstitions and

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 10-11.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

¹¹⁸ Neera Burra, "Cultural stereotypes and household behaviour- Girl child labour in India", p. 484.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 484.

mysterious beliefs surrounding female education are cherished by both, women and men, for instance, an educated girl will soon after marriage become a widow, marriage proposals do not come to educated girls, etc. Nussbaum draws support from Bagchi's book *Loved and Unloved*, which records that in the year 1997, one-fourth of the school-age girls surveyed in West Bengal thought that women should have less education than men. "When we asked them why they felt so, the answers we received all pointed to the fact that from childhood most girls had been conditioned to believe that men were superior to women and boys to girls."¹²⁰ According to Nussbaum, such views, beliefs and superstitions are best examples of "adaptive preferences"¹²¹ - preferences where people simply adjust according to the traditional norms of a patriarchal society without critically evaluating them. According to Nussbaum, the patriarchal culture influences the lives of real people with its "the values" and "the traditions", especially the lives of little women who suffer the most through misery and injustice when school is replaced by long hours of grinding labor at home. Hence, the girl child in a patriarchal society is given no opportunity to cultivate her mind and imagination in the lived-world. Thus, she writes, "The uneducated woman is likely to be a woman whose human powers of mind have been seriously underdeveloped, in just the way that the starving and powerless workers whom Marx describes are cut off from the fully human use of their faculties."¹²²

Education is deemed necessary for a human being to evolve as a person. Yet, education needs to be critiqued, re-conceptualised and transformed when it is patriarchal and prescriptive in nature. An excerpt from class IX Hindi textbook reflects the poor quality of curricula and gender stereotyping in our educational system, it states,

A donkey is like a housewife. It has to toil all day and, like her, may even have to give up food and water. In fact, the donkey is a shade better, for while the housewife may sometimes complain and walk off to her parents' home, you'll never catch the donkey being disloyal to his master.¹²³

The excerpt not only demeans and devalues the unpaid labour that housewives perform, but also claims that women are worse than donkeys on the ground that they exercise their

¹²⁰ Bagchi (1997) cited in Nussbaum, "Women Education: A Global Challenge," p. 342.

¹²¹ Nussbaum, "Women Education: A Global Challenge," p. 342.

¹²² Ibid., p. 337.

¹²³ Class IX Hindi textbook, Rajasthan State Board mentioned in the article, Textbook likens donkey to housewife, *The Times of India*, April 4, 2006.

rights and leave possibly abusive relationships, which makes them disloyal for disobeying their master/husband. Scholars have analysed numerous such excerpts from our textbooks which set a precedent for a predominant male society and fosters children to look at the world with a gender-skewed vision. Anita Rampal in her article, “Barriers to the Classroom, Barriers in the Classroom” discusses a cluster of concerns regarding the inferior quality of teaching, poor infrastructure, gender biased textbooks, gender stereotyping in textbooks, and so on in our educational system. She argues that sitting in the same classroom, reading the same book, listening to the same teacher, boys and girls receive very different education since very few teachers have high expectations of their girl students. For instance, maths and science are two subjects where teachers invariably encourage boys far more than the girls.¹²⁴ Boys are pushed more in areas of maths and science because they are supposed to be “naturally” good at them and it is also assumed that these subjects will help them in the future. Girls who are good at mathematics and science are far less likely to be identified than the boys. Even if a girl does well overall, her presence is easily overlooked by the teachers in a patriarchal educational system. Although, it is well known and an established fact that critical and dialogue based pedagogies make for greater participation amongst students and teachers in the educational system. Yet, the Indian educational system till date practices the old model of teachers talking down to the class. In the Freirian sense, the students are regarded as passive containers of information which are to be filled by the teachers. Students take down the notes and learn, memorise them as told without an iota of doubt with zero critical questioning. Hence, the “banking” concept of education is followed in our society. To make matters worse, continuous attempts are made to rewrite school textbooks to “Hinduize” them, for instance, removing references to bad acts of Hindus in history (such as violence against Muslims), removing the evidence that Hindus ever ate beef, and so forth.¹²⁵ Therefore, under such circumstances, the concept of education becomes merely notional. Our textbooks reflect the prevalence of patriarchal culture within our educational system where the study of women’s lived experience of gender inequalities and subordination finds no place. Thus, the nature of education imparted in a patriarchal society justifies and perpetuates the inequalities between men and women.

Thirdly, the origin of women's oppression can be located in the economic institutions of a patriarchal society. For lived-bodies, wealth and private property are instrumental in

¹²⁴Anita Rampal, “Barriers to the classroom-Barriers in the Classroom,” p. 11.

¹²⁵ Nussbaum, “Women Education: A Global Challenge,” p. 347. For more information, see, In new Rajasthan textbooks, Veer Savarkar overshadows Gandhi and Nehru, *Hindustantimes*, June 9, 2017.

achievement of well-being in the lived-world. The role of wealth and private property in a good life has been discussed by Aristotle in *Politics*. He writes, “Property is a part of the household, and the art of acquiring property is a part of the art of managing the household; for no man can live well, or indeed live at all, unless he be provided with necessaries.”¹²⁶ According to him, private property and wealth are clearly implanted in man's nature. A man's love of self, of money, and of property, are tied together in a natural love of exclusive ownership.¹²⁷ Property and wealth provides psychological satisfaction by fulfilling the human instinct for possession and ownership. In a patriarchal society the concepts of wealth, property and ownership are associated with the man alone. This has been well noted by F.Engels in his work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. He postulates that women's subordination historically took place when accumulation of private property and wealth emerged in the society. According to him, in the earlier hunter/gather societies, before the advent of private property and wealth, the inheritance and lineage were drawn from the mother's side.¹²⁸ Although there was a gendered division of labour but the roles that women performed were considered equally valuable to those performed by men. However, after the societies began to be transformed from the hunter/gather to pastoral and agricultural societies, the wealth increased due to domestication of animals, breeding of flocks and owning of slaves. Surplus was now produced in areas controlled by men due to which the idea of private property became prominent. Men now wanted their wealth to be under their name and to be inherited by their sons. So, in order to secure the faithfulness of the wife for a reliable paternal lineage, monogamy for women and the bondage of women to men was insisted upon.¹²⁹ This is described as the “world-historic defeat of the female sex.”¹³⁰ Thus, women became instruments of the production and maintenance of the patriarchal ideology in the society which inevitably resulted in their oppression and marginalisation.

Hence, it is important to note that most patriarchal societies around the globe are also patrilineal and patrilocal in nature. Patrilineal system involves passing on the property (land and other productive resources) through the male line (from father to son), while women of the house may be given some dowry or inheritance at the time of their wedding only. This system is directly linked with the concept of patrilocal marriages where the married woman is isolated from her parental, natal home and is left entirely at the mercy of her husband and his

¹²⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, Book One, Part IV, p. xvi.

¹²⁷ Murray N. Rothbard, “Aristotle on Private Property and Money,” p. 13.

¹²⁸ F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, p. 60-61.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

family.¹³¹ The logic behind such ideologies lies at the root of discrimination against women in a patriarchal society where they are only understood as the means whereby men reproduce themselves or get their heir. Neither in the father's nor in the husband's lineage can a woman ever aspire to the central position which is the simple birthright of any male born into the lineage.¹³² Therefore, when women marry they leave their home and lineage, to be only absorbed into their husband's lineage where they are valued as vessels of procreation. However, women's position has been substantially enhanced by the laws, she has now has the legal right to inherit her property.¹³³ Yet, most women in the due process go through various hindrances in the form of emotional and social pressure which comes from the customary practices prevalent in the patriarchal society. Thus, the wealth gap or the wealth inequality amongst men and women is prevalent in patriarchal societies across the globe. Also, it is important to note that under patriarchy, patrilocality and patriliney are seen as the only two 'natural' systems of a society but there is nothing natural in these two systems. We need to recognise that there are matrilineal societies, like the Khasis and the Garos in the state of Meghalaya where women inherit the land and the youngest daughter along with her husband lives with her parents to look after them in their old age in her natal home.

I shall now examine women's role and status in the public sphere, the outside world within the economic structures of a patriarchal society. There are certain kinds of work which are considered to be 'women's work' in the public sphere for they are seen as an extension of the nurturing work that women have been performing for ages in their homes, for example, mostly women are teachers, nurses, secretaries, librarians, cosmetologists, etc. Women on the whole earn lower wages than men.¹³⁴ This is not just India's problem alone, in nearly every occupation women receive lower wages than their male counterparts even in the same job, with same work experience in most economies around the globe.¹³⁵ The potent source behind the gender pay gap is the prevalent practice of "gender stereotyping" in a patriarchal society.¹³⁶ Also, in a patriarchal set-up, motherhood is seen as a career whereas fatherhood is

¹³¹ Nivedita Menon, *Seeing Like A Feminist*, p. 32.

¹³² Das Gupta, M, Zhenghua, J, Xie Zhenming, L. and W. Bae Hwa-Ok, "Why is son preference so persistent in East and South Asia? A cross-country study of China, India and the Republic of Korea", p. 161.

¹³³ Women's right to property, *Deccan Herald*, June 22, 2017. Also, see, Menon (2012).

¹³⁴ For more details, see, Women in India earn 25% Less than Men: Survey, *The Economic Times*, March 6, 2017.

¹³⁵ Women are still paid Less than Men- even in the same Job, *Forbes*, March 31, 2016.

¹³⁶ The society stereotypes women as submissive and naturally accepts them to be not as good as men in fields of maths, science, engineering, technical work, and so on. Whereas men are seen as always in charge, tough and good at decision making due to which tech jobs and dirty jobs (like mechanics, plumber,

seen as a thing men do in their time away from being at the office. This particular reason is a significant source behind the difference between a man's and a woman's remuneration.

Lastly, whether a village council or a Parliament, male domination in the political institution is clearly noticeable. Women are grossly underrepresented in politics, the problems they face within the political institution have common roots with the problems that prevent the freedom of women in any other sphere. Susan Moller Okin in the book, *Women in Western Political Thought*, argues that the idea of contemporary politics has been obtained from the works of Western political philosophers such as Aristotle, Rousseau, together with Mill who had much brutish things to say about women and their place in politics. For instance, Aristotle held that women have a natural function: their purpose is reproduction and childrearing, so that men can be left free to pursue politics. In *The Politics*, he reasoned that women are unable to participate rationally in politics because they have no reasoning power. So, men must rule over women in a society for male is superior to the female inferior.¹³⁷ Likewise, Rousseau believed, "If all the adults of both sexes were to be as much preoccupied with civic activity as citizenship in a direct democracy requires, who would maintain the private sphere of life which Rousseau receives as crucially important?"¹³⁸ His argument against women's exclusion from politics was that women are essential to the well-being of the state as carers of citizens and should only be educated to that task. Even Mill's work cannot sustain the full equality of women for despite his liberal egalitarian aims because he condoned the differences in power and opportunity between men and women with children and household work. Okin argues that Western philosophers have laid the foundation of their political theories by asking different set of questions regarding the nature of men and women. "What are men like?" and "What is man's potential?" are the questions asked for men, whereas, for women, the only question asked is, "What are women for?"¹³⁹ Hence, women are "by nature" asserted unsuitable for the public political realm.

Okin argues that patriarchy defines women solely by their sexual, procreative and child rearing functions within a family which has been seen as a natural and necessary institution of a society. In other words, women have been given the extra burden of domesticity because of their capacity for gestation, parturition and nursing human offspring. As a consequence of the

construction workers) are their area of expertise. These are some common prevalent myths practiced in a patriarchal society. For more information, see, Nivedita Menon (2012).

¹³⁷ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, p. 6.

¹³⁸ Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, p. xii.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

above, women are placed in a constricted role in the society where they are dictated by their very own nature. Their nature is not understood as “human nature” but as something which is the opposite to that of men.

Yet, even in the 21st century, the position of women in politics has not improved much, for instance, according to UN’s report on “Progress of World’s Women”, women are grossly underrepresented in elected assemblies across the globe. Even the Scandinavian parliaments (in which the representation has always outstripped others) have shown slow progress towards full equality.¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the situation is much worse in developing countries. For instance, according to UN Women’s report (2017) on “Women in Political Map”, India ranks at 148th position in the representation of women in Parliament out of 193 nations.¹⁴¹ The restriction to women's access to high position in politics is still very much a global problem for the onus on them to maintain the households and take the major responsibility for childcare remains unchanged under patriarchy. Moreover, women find it hard to venture into the sphere of politics in a patriarchal society because economically also they have been kept dependent on the men, with no resources of their own, they have nothing to fall back on. As a result they are regarded with negligible social significance and are believed to be rather useless in terms of making a contribution in the society, for instance, it was only in the 20th century that women, the world over received the right to vote and were regarded as equal citizens like men. Thus, patriarchy internalises with the idea that women are inferior to men in every aspect of life which specially makes it hard for women to start and pursue their political career.

Gayatri Spivak, an important proponent of women in the third world maintains that the voice of woman is unheard even when she is speaking¹⁴² and patriarchy oppresses, exploits and marginalises women in both public and private sectors of life by controlling the social, cultural and economic institutions of a society. The United Nations report states that women are half the world's population, yet they do two thirds of the world's work, earn one-tenth of the world's income, and own less than one-hundredth of the world's property.¹⁴³ Yet, their situation has not improved much till date. In the next two chapters, I shall deal with direct or

¹⁴⁰ United Nations, “*Progress of the World’s Women*” p. 77.

¹⁴¹ India ranks low on women's representation in politics, Americas, Europe at top, *Indian Express*, July 12, 2017.

¹⁴² Spivak, *In other worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. p. 253.

¹⁴³ UN Women, *World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace*, 1980, NY: United Nations.

visible form of gender based violence inflicted by the patriarchal society through its various structures.

II. Body Shame and Female Experience

Shame is a self-conscious experience and like all other affective experiences, occurs through the body. It overwhelms us physically, and the common physical response deals with a sense of wanting to hide, withdraw or runaway. However, while shame undoubtedly finds its expression through the body, shame is often also “all about the woman’s body”. As we have noted earlier, consciousness is embodied, no demarcations can be made between the subject and the body, thus, I am my body. Unfortunately, body shame opens up the distance between oneself and one's body, due to which one begins to feel uncomfortable in one’s own body. Therefore, body shame acts as a powerful force in human life but it becomes all the more powerful in a patriarchal society where the concept of shame is deeply entrenched in female experience and has profound consequences for women in terms of identity formation and subjectivity. I draw inspiration for this conception of body shame from the feminist thinker, Simone de Beauvoir. In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir, draws on insights from biology and socio-economic history to give a philosophical account of the process of becoming a woman in a patriarchal society. She notes in the introduction to *The Second Sex* that the position of women is constituted by the fact that they are positioned as the “other”. Due to which, they are more likely to be rendered as objects, for their status as subjects is very tenuous in a male dominated society. For her, body shame is an effect of oppression for women in a patriarchal society when their embodied existence is marked as shameful in itself right from adolescence and continues to be considered so till their last breath. She says due to anatomical difference between boys and girls, the latter because of their sexual maturation in the form of menstruation and breast development are naturally associated with body shame.¹⁴⁴ Menstruation, in particular is considered a potent source of anxiety and disgrace. Beauvoir says, the bodily changes in girls deviate from the male bodily appearance and are thus seen as shameful objects and in need of concealment. As a result, young girls feel that their body is getting away from them, on the streets men follow them with their gaze and pass lewd comments on their anatomy, since they are only rendered as objects, their social power to deflect or defy the gaze is minimal. Women feel ashamed and embarrassed about their body, hence the process of becoming a woman has been characterised by Beauvoir as the process of

¹⁴⁴ Beauvoir (1997), *The Second Sex*, p. 355.

an extended lesson in shame.¹⁴⁵ Simone de Beauvoir illustrates, “A man, sniggering, made a comment about my fat calves. The next day my mother made me wear stockings and lengthen my skirt, but I will never forget the shock I suddenly felt in seeing myself seen.”¹⁴⁶ Hence, de Beauvoir notes that women are encouraged to apprehend their own bodies as objects destined for an other because the male body coincides with his status as a subject where the female body is frequently overshadowed by the male ego and is readily reduced to an object of his gaze. She writes, “What peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she . . . finds herself living in a world where men . . . propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence”¹⁴⁷ Therefore, women are positioned as the other, defined in essential opposition to men, they are regarded to be incomplete, inessential and mutilated. However, at the same time, they are necessarily bound to men; they live “dispersed among the male, attached through residence, economic condition and social standing to certain men.”¹⁴⁸ Thus, being objectified by the male gaze is an ongoing and often compromising situation for women and obviously a key source of body shame in a patriarchal society.

Bartky and Wolf theorised the link between the social oppression of women and body shame by discussing the ideology of beauty in a patriarchal set-up. According to them, the ideology of beauty is a violent tool used by men against women objectively and universally in the modern times. It oppresses women by creating competition within them by dividing them into categories of age, weight, colour, etc. Women are expected to take care of their age, weight, colour, clothing, etc. as per the guided norms of patriarchy which have strictly defined femininity. As a result, the strict ideas of femininity and beauty imposed on women by patriarchy forces them to see themselves as objects for men’s gaze. Body shame is a process which can provide phenomenological insights on how the female body becomes a socio-cultural object shaped by the forces and demands of beauty in the patriarchal society. Hence, body shame is not only important, but paramount in understanding how shame can restrict one’s possibility of autonomy, dignity, and fulfilment of life. I will now explore body shame as a life threatening experience with respect to the concerns around the practice of reshaping or reconstructing a woman's body according to the beauty and body ideals of femininity in a patriarchal setup. My aim is to analyse the effect of patriarchal power structures on the female embodied experiences by examining the insecurities and anxieties that plague women for life.

¹⁴⁵ Guenther, “Shame and the Temporality of Social Life,” p. 11.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 11.

¹⁴⁷ Beauvoir (1997), *The Second Sex*, p. 29.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

The women of the twenty-first century, who can enjoy rights unavailable to any women ever before, do not feel as free as they would want to. This lack of freedom has something to do with shame regarding the apparent frivolous issues concerning with one's body (including, one's appearance, skin color, hair and so on). The ideology of beauty in a patriarchal society can be seen as a tool which controls women's bodies. Women relentlessly try to meet the requirements of being 'feminine' to fit into the definition of beauty in order to be accepted in the society. Naomi Wolf in her book, *The Beauty Myth*, argues that beauty myth is forced objectively and universally on women, it is a social reality where beauty is defined as young, white, slender and so on. The discourse of the beauty ideology forces women to feel that their body is not beautiful in its natural form; they can only achieve beauty if they meet the standards of beauty myth. For this purpose women are forced to reshape their bodies into the objects of male desire.

Wolf explains that the beauty ideals in a patriarchal society change with the passage of time, the society which once defined beauty as a woman with fuller breast and rounder hips, regards such women as distasteful now. In today's time, beauty is defined as the "tyranny of slenderness", a woman's current definition of beauty is taut, small-breasted, narrow-hipped slim body bordering on emaciation.¹⁴⁹ Since women normally have quite different dimensions, they fail to fit into the definition of beauty and are thus, widely body shamed. Beauty is a word related with femininity and its requirements apply to women alone, hence, shame regarding the bodies can vanquish by practicing the disciple of dieting and exercising, by inculcating beauty habits and by turning in to the procedures of cosmetic surgery.

There is a certain weight, age and colour of beauty which women should constantly aim at. The french proverb says, "one must suffer to be beautiful"¹⁵⁰ and suffering for the "tyranny of slenderness" as Bartky says, can be understood by the discipline of dieting and exercising. In-order to achieve the ideal body type women engage themselves with risky diet plans as dieting disciplines body's hunger and monitors appetite. As a result, the fear of body shame is sometimes experienced to such an extreme that we have anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and body dysmorphic disorder as female maladies. These two disorders cause both psychological and physical harm to the body.

Anorexia and bulimia are not just the problems of West anymore since it is rising at alarming rates in Asian countries too. Ten years ago, the cases of eating disorders were

¹⁴⁹ Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernisation of Patriarchal Power," p. 28.

¹⁵⁰ Proverb mentioned in Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, p. 218.

handful in India. However, psychiatrists claim that in the past few years, the figure has increased from anything between five and ten times. What is more alarming is that increasingly girls of a younger age are falling prey to anorexia and bulimia. "Television and internet have come to rule our world and with both full of super slim models, young girls end up idolising them. There is immense emphasis on being thin by the society as well," avers Dr Rajesh Sagar, department of psychiatry, AIIM.¹⁵¹ Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa can lead to severe nutritional deficiencies in young girls and women. Bones are the first to get affected, when young girls are supposed to be packing their bones with calcium and protein rich food, they actually lose bone mass due to the poor eating habits influenced by beauty norms and fashion. Hence, fifty percent of anorexic girls end up developing osteoporosis. Besides, most women on strict diet control get prone to heart failure and hormonal changes which can also lead to absence of menstruation resulting in infertility due to the various hazardous eating disciplines.

Women must labour to be beautiful¹⁵² and exercise is another discipline of labour. Although people exercise for the sake of physical fitness but in the case of women, it is not so easy to distinguish between what is done for the sake of physical fitness and what is done for overcoming the fear of body shame. Bartky argues that men and women both perform various exercises, lift weights, do yoga and aerobics but given the widespread female obsession with weight and food, women work out with an aim which is quite different from men's. Expectedly, there is a class of certain exercises meant for women alone which aim not at physical fitness but at reconstructing or reshaping the various no so beautiful, ugly parts of the body. At the same time, a woman must also not forget to inculcate some beauty habits. The ideology of beauty defines a woman's skin as soft, supple, hairless, and smooth; ideally, it should betray no sign of wear, experience, age, or deep thought.¹⁵³ A good skincare requires not only disciplined eating, performance of various exercises, it also deals with an array of care products too. For instance, lotions, toners, wash-off cleansers, soaps, face wash, day cream, night cream, nourishing cream, eye cream, feet cream, hand cream, astringents, moisturisers, sunscreens, suntan lotion, makeup removers, perfume and pomade, skin oils, etc.¹⁵⁴ If all these fail then there are "cellular treatment activators" which contain

¹⁵¹ Anorexia rising at an alarming rate, *The Times of India*, June 18, 2007.

¹⁵² A quote by W.B Yeats taken from Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, p. 218.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 31.

¹⁵⁴ Variety of facial masks are also available for women, ranging from a simple mask made with herbs or almonds or fruits to sulfur mask, oil or hot masks, tightening mask, 24-karat gold mask, pearl mask, charcoal

“glycosphingolipids” that can make older skins behave and look like younger skins, medical treatments like derma-erasion, chemical peeling and ‘total deep skin cleaning’ are also available.¹⁵⁵ Women must also learn to apply cosmetics which again deals with a variety of products. Hair must be removed from legs, thighs and arms, the removal of facial hair is a must too, eyebrows should also be regularly plucked out of the roots with tweezers or hot wax can also be used instead. Women who want permanent removal of body hair may opt for electrolysis which involves burning of the root hair completely. Like skincare, hair care also requires a variety of similar techniques and products. Thus, soap and water may be enough for a man but for a woman it is not.

The final resolve to reconstruct femininity is through cosmetic surgery. Cosmetic surgery when first emerged in the 19th century was practiced to treat the wounded parts of the soldiers. However, a different meaning was given to it in the 20th century where it was practiced to beautify women. One of the most striking thought in the contemporary times for cosmetic surgery is the claim that women may use cosmetic surgery for their independence for it is their choice to undergo one but this leads to a paradox. Women who choose to undergo a cosmetic surgery (or for that matter use beauty equipments) ignorantly or knowingly conform to the ideals of beauty which has been setup by patriarchy in the first place. For instance, South Korea is called the cosmetic surgery capital of the world, Asian girls wanting to have bigger eyes simply reflects the dire need to fit into the beauty ideology since bigger eyes result in more attractiveness according to the ideology of beauty. Therefore, the appearance stereotypes such as Asian eyes, Jewish nose, etc. are only pervasive because of the widespread notion of beauty across cultures. The other various forms of cosmetic surgery are liposuction (removes the excess fat from under the skin), botox (removes wrinkles by temporarily paralysing facial muscles), rhinoplasty or nose job (increases or decreases the size of your nose, changes the angles of your nose or changes the size of your nostrils), abdominoplasty or tummy tuck (makes abdomen thin and firm), breast augmentation, etc. Therefore, the hegemonic ideology of beauty forces women to see their bodies as ugly, unfinished and improper due to which they feel the need to reconstruct or reshape themselves through the various harsh disciplines which comply with the ideology of beauty constructed by the patriarchal society. Thus, as Wolf points out, “Beauty myth is about men’s institutions and

mask, snail mask, caviar sheet mask, bee venom plumping mask, red wine mask, ice cube mask, mud pack etc. for a good skin.

¹⁵⁵,Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity and the Modernisation of Patriarchal Power.” p. 32.

institutional power in the society.”¹⁵⁶ The myth oppresses women and will continue to exist as long as patriarchy does.

III. The Honour-Shame Connection in Violence

Honour based violence is increasingly becoming the most socially sanctioned repercussion and an all encompassing deterrent to the rural and urban youths (specially, young women), who bring dishonour and shame by daring to question the traditional, orthodox ideologies of a patriarchal society. Therefore, it becomes imperative to delve into the concept and contours of honour and examine the manner in which it is understood in a patriarchal/honour based society.

The term honour is derived from the Latin word “*honos*” and is often defined in the English language as a character trait or virtue associated with integrity and moral character.¹⁵⁷ However, honour is a symbolic and rhetorical construct, the meaning of which is constantly contested as it carries different connotations in different socio-cultural groups across the globe. For instance, the Urdu word *izzat*, often translated into English simply as honour, refers to a wide spectrum of socio-cultural relationships and ties that bind family and community groups together.¹⁵⁸ Hence, honour has overlapping meanings related to integrity, esteem, pride, reputation, etc. It encompasses not only a person’s estimation of their own worth, but also the acknowledgement of that claim by the community through the recognition of their right to respect.¹⁵⁹ In defining honour in a patriarchal society, Mandelbaum in her work, *Women’s Seclusion and Men’s Honour: Sex Roles in North India, Bangladesh and Pakistan*, emphasises on the power of the parallel concept of “shame”. According to her, honour and shame are dynamically interrelated, societies which regard honour as one of the most valued ideals are not only motivated by the desire to obtain and maintain honour but are equally concerned with avoiding shame. She writes, “Honour has to be continually reaffirmed in practice, reinforced in action, defended against challenge and re-won and advanced in competition.”¹⁶⁰ Therefore, honour relates to the expected behaviour of members of a

¹⁵⁶ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ The definition of honour has been taken from the Collins English Dictionary.

¹⁵⁸ Aisha K. Gill, “Honour and Honour Based Violence,” p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Mandelbaum, *Women’s Seclusion and Men’s Honour: Sex Roles in North India, Bangladesh and Pakistan*, p. 23.

particular community, while shame is associated with transgressions against the expected behaviour. Unfortunately, honour and shame have distinct practical implications for men and women in a patriarchal set-up, since, shame about the body, “is a cultural inheritance of women.”¹⁶¹

Codes of honour and shame serve to construct not only what it means to be a woman but also what it means to be a man, and hence are central to understand the social meanings of gender and how it is constructed in a patriarchal set-up. Quite a few scholars have linked the idea of honour to a “social quality” which maintains and regulates one's self and social worth in a patriarchal society. Arun Pal in *Honour Killing: Culture, Dilemma and Ritual*, argues that an essential component of man's self-esteem and his community status in the society is dependent on the social and sexual behaviour of his women in the society because honour is seen to be residing in the bodies of women in a patriarchal set-up. In other words, a man's honour gets reflected in factors such as, his integrity, wealth, generosity and so on but it is most importantly tied very closely to the reputation of women in his family, particularly his mother, sister, wife, and daughter. As a result, women, on the one hand are seen as the repositories of honour, of their own family as a daughter and sister, of their husband's family as a wife and mother and on the other hand, they are regarded as a source well capable of inviting shame. He writes, “The ideology of honour directly results from the patriarchal gender roles assigned to both the sexes, wherein conformity to the fixed roles is demanded as a source of status and acceptance within the community; and where deviance is censured.”¹⁶² Hence, men are expected to uphold the honour by disciplining women's bodies and appointing gender appropriate behaviour for them. Whereas, women are expected to preserve the honour by showing allegiance to the set norms and principles in their behaviour. Since it is a social quality, it also revolves around the public perception of the women more than their actual behaviour in the patriarchal society. According to Turner, for a man, loss of control of women's body results in shame.¹⁶³ Therefore, any breach or suspected breach of behaviour and sexual codes by the women is viewed as a shameful and dishonourable act which poses an assault on the man's honour and the family's/community's honour. To be rid of shame and restore honour, the female deviant is punished. A family's response to dishonour varies from minimising the shame by detaining and torturing her to forcing her to commit suicide, to murdering her and publicly lynching her. If a man refuses to punish the female relative, he

¹⁶¹ Bouson, *Embodied Shame*, p. 1.

¹⁶² Arun Pal, *Honour Killing: Culture, Dilemma and Ritual*, p. 49.

¹⁶³ Turner, F. “Shame, beauty, and the tragic view of history” *American Behavioral Scientist*, p. 1060-1075.

adds further shame to his honour for he is labelled as weak and unmanly by the men in his community because the patriarchal society naturally expects him to strictly respond to the dishonour and shame. Thus, honour is seen as a powerful social value which is lived out openly, before other people¹⁶⁴ and exists beyond reason in a patriarchal society.

In a patriarchal society, honour is also seen as a prized economic value. Johanna Bond in “Honour as Familial Value”, argues that honour is seen as a social currency, it is a highly valued and zealously protected asset which depends primarily on the social and sexual behaviour of the female members of the family in the society. According to her, women are not typically seen as holders of honour property but play a significant role in inflating, preserving or decreasing the value of familial honour in a patriarchal setup.¹⁶⁵ In other words, although the honour property is owned largely by male family members but it is located in the bodies of the sisters, daughters, mothers and wives of these male property holders. When female family members act honourably, the value of honour property increases for the family as a whole. However, when female family members act dishonourably, or are merely perceived as having acted dishonourably, the value of honour property decreases significantly. In this case, the familial value is so devalued that men in patriarchal family are triggered to reclaim the lost value by directing violence at the female family member.¹⁶⁶ The reason being, honour is seen as a measurable economic value because its absence can cause grave economic consequences. The human rights organisation Amnesty International describes the financial impact of familial shame, noting that, “the livelihood of entire families may be affected: a shopkeeper who does not “cleanse his family honour” may lose all his customers, for example.”¹⁶⁷ Similarly, shame for a family may result in fewer economic transactions with neighbours, in most situations families are ostracised by the community in the form of social boycott to the extent that they are forced to relocate their homes and even change their businesses, fines are also imposed in the form of punishment, the odds of marriage are decreased for the daughters in the family and financial beneficial alliances within the community are also compromised and tampered. So, even when familial honour has no direct connection to the market transactions, it resembles as a significant form of property. Thus, the value of honour property fluctuates on the bases of the transgression of women’s social and

¹⁶⁴ Bourdieu (1977) cited in Aisha K. Gill, Honour and Honour Based Violence, ed. Aisha K. Gill, “Honour” *Killing and Violence*, p. 3

¹⁶⁵ Johanna Bond, “Honour as Familial Value,” p. 89

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁶⁷ “Women Confronting Family Violence: Turkey”, p. 18.

sexual behaviour, as a result, women are aggressively monitored and they are strictly conformed to gender stereotypes all their lives in a patriarchal society.

Also, families in a patriarchal society use honour fraudulently for economic gains where honour becomes a proxy for selfish motivations. Male family members also kill their female relatives in the disguise of honour with whom they have legal disputes over inheritance. It is hence used as a pretence to secure an increased share of inheritance. Roy in her article, *A Challenge to Doing Gender Justice by Violence*, attempts to examine honour in the context of socio-economic relations in a patriarchal society. She argues that the issue of marital choice as a trigger for honour crimes is in fact, “a question of property rights.”¹⁶⁸ Most traditional, patriarchal families insist on getting their daughters married to far off places, outside their villages or cities on the assumption that daughters because of the vast distance will be able to lay less claim to their paternal inheritance. As examined in the first section of this chapter, patriarchal families follow strict patrimony for economic resources, therefore, daughters who choose to marry for love within the same villages or cities (by refusing to marry according to their parents’ choice) are feared the most for they are perceived as a constant danger who could lay claim on the family’s inheritance which according to patriarchy is the natural right of a boy child alone. Thus, it is important to note that patriarchal families bring up their women in accordance with the idea of familial honour where the female learn to live their lives by conforming to an elaborate system of commands and prohibitions.¹⁶⁹ Right from their very childhood, the family members start vigilantly policing the behaviour of the female in the family which goes on till their very last breath. For instance, talking and playing with boys in childhood, to having a boyfriend and marrying for love in youth to seeking a divorce and falling in love after a certain age are some forbidden acts for the female which decrease the value of familial honour. Whether the vigilance is carried out by women or men, the regulation of women’s sexuality and social behaviour in the name of honour property severely undermines women’s sexual autonomy and bodily integrity in a patriarchal society.

M.L Anderson writes, “Patriarchal societies give men power and authority over women and this can be found at the individual, group or institutional level.”¹⁷⁰ As should be evident, this places females in a very dangerous position under patriarchy as it is only those with power within the family and the community (men and older women who have proved their

¹⁶⁸ Roy, *A Challenge to Doing Gender Justice by Violence*, *NY Times*, May 17, 2011, p. 1.

¹⁶⁹ Johanna Bond, “Honour as Familial Value,” p. 99.

¹⁷⁰ Anderson, M.L., *Thinking About Women: Sociological Perspectives in Sex and Gender*, p. 291.

internalisation of the honour-shame code through strict scrutiny of the behaviour of younger women) who decide what acts are honourable or dishonourable. For instance, shame and dishonour is caused by the acts such as, seeking divorce, adultery, premarital sexual relations, premarital pregnancy, having a boyfriend, homosexuality, disobedience to men, refusing to enter into an arranged marriage, or being the victim of rape or a sexual assault (in a patriarchal perspective, rape is far worse than death, for it is understood as an attack which blemishes the family's honour forever and not as an attack against the autonomy and bodily integrity of a woman), etc. In other words, honour crimes, through negative reinforcement, promotes marriage (even though an abusive one), monogamy, chastity, procreation within a union, heterosexuality and obedience to men. Susanne Moller Okin in the book, *Is Multiculturalism bad for Women?* claims that honour based violence is a global phenomenon that decreases women's possibilities to make choices in life. Many of the world's traditions and cultures, which certainly encompass most of the people of Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia are quite distinctly patriarchal. They also have elaborate cultural practices (socialisation, rituals, matrimonial customs, property ownership, etc.) which are aimed at bringing women's sexuality and reproductive capabilities under men's control by dictating and controlling their behaviour right from a very tender age. Thus, the perpetration of honour based violence can be considered a public display of patriarchal power in the society as the violence inflicted on a woman by a male relative is not an individual act of violence, but one which is collective, planned, and socio-economically approved by both men and women in the family and community concerned.

Prem Chowdhry in her article, "Private Lives, State Intervention: Cases of Runaway Marriage in Rural North India," argues that "disapproved relationships" are the most common source of shame where honour killing is directed on women who challenge the scripted behaviour in a patriarchal society. In the second decade of the 20th century, the rural landscape of Northern India has been dominated by a parallel system of governance called the *khap* (caste) *panchayats* or also known as "kangaroo courts". These caste panchayats function in the state of Haryana, Punjab and Western Uttar Pradesh where most extreme, brutal cases of honour killings due to disapproved relationships have been reported. Disapproved relationships in a patriarchal set-up which cause shame and dishonour to a man's honour and his family/community's honour are: love marriages within the same *gotra* or patrilineal clan marriages, inter-caste marriages, inter-religion marriages, same village marriage (which is also called 'village exogamy' which is further extended to 'territorial exogamy' by which several villages come under a brotherly (*bhaichara*) relationship with each other and hence

marriageable girls and boys in such villages are considered as brothers and sisters) and love within the same sex (homosexual relationships between gay people and lesbians). Also, in some cases, economic factors contribute to disapproved relationships. In-order to explain how, I shall draw support from Marx's philosophy. According to the fundamental premise by Karl Marx, the society is in a state of quarrel where the proletariat are marginalised and oppressed by the bourgeoisie. This principle can be applied to the couples exercising their right to marry who face violence and opposition on the account of lower economic status of either of the two. Caste *panchayats* sanction acts of violence (specially on women) and override the notion of equality which the Indian constitution provides by imposing its writ through physical violence in the form of murdering the victim and public lurching. Therefore, there is no place for romantic love and marriages in societies whose value systems are dependent on the patriarchal notions of honour. In a patriarchal society, the purpose of marriage is to uphold the social structures and alliance between family and community. Since, romance is the structural antithesis of this concept of marriage, hence, it is looked down upon and is only viewed as a modern concept which deals with personal gratification that contravenes moral norms. Thus, the concept of romance not only triggers condemnation and ostracism but also triggers violence (perpetuated from both, the family and community) in a patriarchal set-up.

Prem Chowdhry, in her article, "Private Lives, State Intervention: Cases of Runaway Marriage in Rural North India", argues that in-order to overcome the orthodox caste and customary rules, most couples choose to run away from their parental homes to get married. Although, such cases are generally taken care of by the family in the initial stage. Yet, either voluntarily or involuntarily, some of them spill into the public sphere and are thrown open for judgement. According to her, the public sphere is dominated by two diametrically opposite authorities. One is formal and is regulated by the State's egalitarian laws, while the other is informal and comes under the domination of the entire community with no legal standing (*khap panchayats*). She argues that both the authorities in the public sphere pose various hindrances in the lives of the runaway couples. While much is not expected from the informal authority which regards honour as a masculine concept and treats any act or accusations of female promiscuity with violence. The formal institution on the other hand says Chowdhry, continues to labour under the same ideological hold.¹⁷¹ According to her, the State gets galvanised on the complaint filed by the woman's relative in runaway marriage cases. The

¹⁷¹ Prem Chowdhry, Private Lives, State Intervention: Cases of Runaway Marriage in Rural North India, p.57.

police registers a FIR (First Information Report) and generally accepts such cases as criminal cases involving abduction, kidnapping and very often rape charges on the man. As a result, when the couple is caught, the man is immediately taken into the custody for interrogation, leading to his imprisonment. While his wife, the woman is handed over to her family. The patriarchal family pressurises her (both, physically and emotionally) into indicating her husband as an abductor and a rapist, and forces her to deny her marriage (in most cases, women either succumb to the pressure or commit suicide). While the husband's claims or proof of marriage is considered redundant on the grounds of the woman's testimony. In case the couple fails to get married and gets caught by the police, the man in this case is charged with kidnapping and he is also attacked with allegations for using his force to compel the girl to get married in order to have an "illicit intercourse" with her (this specially happens when the girl is a minor).¹⁷² Therefore, that the theoretical framework of honour in a patriarchal society leads to fear and apprehension in couples contracting choice marriages which eventually leads to increased spate of run-away marriages and honour killings. In runaway marriages the couple is entitled to adequate protection and rights under the law but the State even though regulates egalitarian laws, in reality colludes with the patriarchal family in controlling the deviant females.

Rex Martin writes about natural rights being the ancestors of contemporary human rights in his article, "Human Rights and the Social Recognition Thesis". According to him, contemporary human rights exist prior to, or independently of, any legal or institutional rules: that is they are rights which are 'independent of *any* institutional rules, legal or nonlegal.'¹⁷³ The milestone document of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world. The fundamental human rights to life, equality, liberty are universally protected for people across the globe. The word 'human' seems to be do much of the same work in this context that the word 'natural' used to do. According to its main proponent, John Locke, natural rights theory identifies natural rights in a state of nature which are characterised by the absence of government where people in the state were free, equal and independent. He conceived natural rights as the right to life, liberty, health, and the fruits of one's labour and as having obligations attached, which normatively directed the conduct of other individuals to respect these rights even in the state of nature.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, the right to choice in marriage and to lead

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁷³ Martin, "Rights and Human Rights, *Multiculturalism, Identity and Rights*," p. 180.

¹⁷⁴ Martin, Rex, "Human Rights and the Social Recognition Thesis," p. 1-21.

a life of dignity, free from fear and threat is imperative to the very essence of liberty. This imposes an obligation upon every individual to exercise their rights while mutually respecting the inviolable rights of others. They are held by human beings simply in virtue of their being human; they are rights of individual persons as such. In this regard, the right to choose a life partner is one such fundamental human right that can be traced right from the Natural rights era. Unfortunately, the heinous practice of honour killing which leads to social exclusion of youth in today's time lies in direct contradiction to the main premise of these theories where the right to life, liberty and equality is missing out due to the socio-cultural and economic practices of the patriarchal society.

Culture values and traditions are not necessarily detrimental but when they propagate biases, discrimination and exploitation in the name of honour which leads to loss of lives of the helpless innocents, it ought to be affirmatively uprooted. Nussbaum claims that even in the modern times, we are still bound by the conventional cultural values and traditions which results in a condition where women's position as fully functioning human beings is almost impossible.¹⁷⁵ Hence, according to her it is very important to understand that cultural values and traditions are not museum pieces to be contemplated; they are lives of human beings to be lived.¹⁷⁶ They deal with real people who are in a constant engagement for power and opportunity in the society. Women injustices (for instance, honour killings, domestic violence, unequal employment and political opportunities, illiteracy, etc.) propagate in a patriarchal society because inappropriate sexist, orthodox values and traditions are romanticised till date which leads to women's misery. Honour Killing has been traversing on an increasingly steep curve in India. Although, the Supreme Court of India has termed *Khap Panchayats* as "kangaroo courts" and declared them illegal in the year 2006. Yet, the heinous practice is very much active and prevalent in our society. The onus lies on each one of us to understand that nobody is above the legislature and no social informal institution can be allowed to act as an alternative judicial body which denies an individual the fundamental right to freedom of choice which is guaranteed by the constitution to each one of us equally. In order to perpetuate an egalitarian society, it is necessary to understand the mindset behind the practice where one kills one's own blood without any hesitance whatsoever for the sake of restoring honour. It is important to note that the challenges to orthodox cultural practices, after all, first arise from the young people within the patriarchal communities, who bravely risk social boycott and even death for love. Love that refuses to be tamed within the rules of caste and

¹⁷⁵ See, Nussbaum (2003).

¹⁷⁶ Nussbaum, "Women's Education: A Global Challenge," p. 341.

community is most honourable, honest and praiseworthy. Hence, we understand that the patriarchal definition of honour and shame demonstrates the apparent sexism prevalent in the society which is based on the stereotypes that create negative prejudices for women alone. This discrimination triggers from not just one but multiple factors, all the various institutions of the society (social, cultural, political and economical institutions) play their respective part.

CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to investigate the concept of body, women and violence under patriarchy in order to postulate the scope and possibility of social transformation at the level of everyday existence and interaction in the lived-world. For this purpose, various key concepts in the works of feminist philosophers have been elucidated, examined, analysed and reflected upon. For feminists expose the felicity of social values and traditions that construct the notions of masculinity and femininity under patriarchy and sternly argue against the bogus beliefs such as women are feminine: passive and submissive by nature, whereas men are masculine: strong and decisive naturally. The study began with tracing the genealogies regarding the notions of body in the Western philosophical tradition. It was examined that body remained a conceptual blindspot in the mainstream Western philosophical thought by discussing some of the prominent philosophers who had very little to say about body in comparison with mind. The dichotomous thinking practiced by the philosophers puts the two terms, mind and body in a hierarchal ranking where the latter term, body is merely the negation or absence of the primary term, mind. Thus, body has been understood as something which mind is definitely not. If one begins to re-read the philosophers' distinctions regarding the mind and body, it soon becomes evident that in many cases the distinction is repeated in the philosopher's work without a strong premise. One would expect that the way in which a philosopher distinguishes between mind and body should have essential ties with how he understands the nature of knowledge, reality, reason, freedom, etc. In other words, one would expect proper, systematic connections between the philosophical concepts but there is no clear evidence of the systematic connections regarding the concepts in the philosophies of the West while they differentiate between the mind and the body. Hence, the status of the mind as superior and body as inferior has been given by the philosophers on mere metaphysical assumptions, it seems to be based on probability for it lacks to provide satisfactory demonstrations. This was however noted by Descartes as he understood that the philosophers who preceded him accepted their truths on tradition, hence, he wanted to seek what is not probable according to the tradition but what is true. As a result, he began with his own method which aimed at replacing the useless ancient logic by doubting everything around him. He simply wanted to see if he can come across any truth which he will find impossible to doubt and he did. He came up with *Cogito Ergo Sum*, meaning, I think, therefore I am. According to Descartes, this maxim was an indubitable truth because any attempt to doubt, "I think, therefore I am," would only lead to a confirmation of the fact that I exist, because doubting

involves thinking, and one has to exist in order to think. As a result, he came up with the separation of the mind (the thinking substance) from the body (the extended substance) which has been long anticipated by the philosophers who preceded him. Thus, with Descartes' establishment of the soul or the mind existing independent of the body, the seed of Cartesian dualism was sowed. Gilbert Ryle in his book, *The Concept of Mind*, ridiculed the Cartesian dualism by explaining how the mind without the body will be like a ghost, which of course, is absurd. He thus critiqued the Cartesian view as the dogma of the ghost in the machine. It is important to note that overemphasis on the importance of mind or thought has led to such a reasoning all these years which is extremely contradictory to the way a human person lives his or her life in the world. With the advent of phenomenology, the focus started to shift from the mind to body. How human beings live, how they perceive, and understand the world is the subject matter of phenomenological study. Phenomenology highlights the idea of embodiment and subjectivity in the lived-world rather than seeking to arbitrary metaphysical hypothesis regarding the body based on theological suppositions or assumptions. Merleau-Ponty's famous statement, "we are our bodies," highlights the ontological inseparability of the body from the mind. Hence, through his works, *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible*, he brought body back into philosophy.

When feminists started studying women vis-a-vis men in the society they came to know more about women's history and how they were hidden and subordinated by men. They realised that women's subordination was primarily due to the influence of patriarchal ideologies in the society which can be best understood by exploring the sexist, misogynist philosophical discourses of the West. Feminists argue that the distinction between mind and body has been very systematically associated with the distinction between men and women under patriarchy. The coupling of the mind with maleness and the body with femaleness shows how the correlation has been secretively done for maintaining philosophy as a discipline associated only with mind, reason, in short, men alone. Women, on the other hand have been simply excluded from the domains of philosophy for they have been identified by the philosophers of the West with body which lacks reason and is unruly in nature. In short, philosophy became a faculty of mind, a man's area and women in association with their bodies were related to the home, the private sphere with the onus of household chores and responsibility. Feminists like, Simone de Beauvoir, Sylvia Walby and Judith Butler argue that the basic premise of subordination of women lies on the notion of biological determinism which has been extensively followed by the patriarchal philosophers. Biological determinism asserts that men and women are naturally different because of the difference in their biology,

as a result both of them get different roles to play in the society, they have different places assigned to them on the premise of their roles due to which their behaviour varies. Due to biological determinism, patriarchy also ensures that men and women who do not conform to gender appropriate behaviour are disciplined by both, mild and strong means of violence. For instance, girls who show masculine characteristics are chided by the society, they are constantly corrected for speaking loudly, playing outdoors, etc. Likewise, boys who act in a feminine manner are shamed for acting like a girl!

Body for Merleau-Ponty, is a body-subject which shows attitudes towards the interpersonal relationships with the others in the lived-world. According to him, body subject practices dialectical relationship with the lived-world because of which body is pre-reflectively capable of responding according to the situation. Yet, feminists have criticised Merleau-Ponty for understanding body in a gender neutral sense. Irigaray and de Beauvoir argue that the constitution of the subjectivity of a woman in the lived-world is very different from that of a man. Under patriarchy, the lived-world of a woman is determined by the orthodox values and traditions which influence the way she lives her life. de Beauvoir argues that the subjectivity of a woman is solely determined by her sexuality or by the sexual presence in the society. She emphasised on the victimisation fostered by the “male gaze” in a patriarchal society which signifies power and control over a woman’s body. As a result, a man’s gaze lacks mutual recognition for a woman which results in her feeling violated throughout the life for she is always understood as a mere object. Irigaray criticises Merleau-Ponty’s theory of “relation of reversibility”. According to the theory the being while seeing the world becomes a part of the world through his body and the object of one’s own vision. This according to Merleau-Ponty is ‘seeing-seen’. Similarly, when one touches one’s other hand, the hand which is touching also gets touched by its other hand which is called, ‘touching-touch’. This means, the being is both the subject and the object not only for itself but also for the other as it has been seen and touched by the other. Hence, seeing-seen and touching-touch are the two ways of understanding being’s participation in the lived-world. Irigaray criticises his theory, according to her, the theory lacks the scope of recognising the sexual difference. The seeing and touching hold very different meaning for men and women, for the gaze and the touch in inappropriate ways are acts of violence inflicted on women which scar her for life. Hence, Merleau-Ponty has been criticised for remaining oblivious to understand the bodily presence and experiences of women in a patriarchal society. Merleau-Ponty in the chapter, “The Spatiality of One’s Own Body and Motility” in *Phenomenology of Perception*, argues that we understand spatiality and motility by incorporating our body’s

orientation into our experiences of the lived-world. Iris Marion Young argues that the spatiality and motility of the female body is very different from that of a male body. She argues that according to a sexist society one's anatomy determines one's behaviour, for instance boys are strictly masculine and girls, feminine. Hence, girls are attributed to some natural and "eternal feminine" essence and are taught to live their lives in accordance with the definition that the patriarchal culture assigns. As a result, they are physically inhibited, confined, positioned and objectified. She draws support from de Beauvoir who argues that every human existence is defined by its situation, therefore, the existence of the female person is defined by the cultural and social limits of her situation in the society. Hence, Iris Marion Young criticises Merleau-Ponty for dealing with body in a neutral manner, and shows how he only deals with a male centric perspective in his accounts by providing the differences between male and female embodiment through his descriptions of body's spatiality and motility. Where Iris Marion Young's account of comportment, spatiality and motility in relation to Merleau-Ponty's philosophical account lies on a practical approach, Judith Butler offers a theoretical approach to Merleau-Ponty's failure to recognise the sexual difference in reference to his chapter, "The Body in Its Sexual Being" from *Phenomenology of Perception*. Butler questions the normative description of sexuality that Merleau-Ponty offers in the chapter when he only speaks from a male reference point. He discusses Schneider's "sexual abnormality" where obscene pictures of women, sexual topics and conversation, and the sight of a woman failed to arouse any desire in him. Butler argues that Merleau-Ponty fails to realise that all human sexual reference is not the same, not all people are heterosexuals. Also, the pictures, conversations and sight that Merleau-Ponty talks about designate a concrete patriarchal cultural situation, it is a situation in which the masculine subject is the viewer of an object, the woman's body. Therefore, feminist philosophers help us understand that women have only been perceived as the other of a man in the discourses of philosophy by the men of the patriarchal society. Understanding a woman's bodily presence from a woman's perspective in a patriarchal society find no place in the domains of Western philosophy. Thus, although men and women are embedded in the same lived-world yet the nature of lived experiences of men and women are very different from each other.

Body is the source of all kinds of experiences in the lived-world. It implies mortality and vulnerability by exposing us not just to gaze and touch of the others but also to violence. Violence is experienced as a ubiquitous existential social phenomena in the inter-subjective lived-world. In the present study, violence was understood as an experience, as an act of intentionality where the perpetrator inflicts injury or pain upon the subject on purpose with a

desired intention which influences not only the subject's openness to the world but also influences the subject's openness to one's own self. Now, although men and women are rooted in the same lived world yet violence work differently on men and women. This becomes evident when the lived-world works in accordance with a patriarchal socio-cultural milieu which follow a separate set of values, norms and traditions for men and women. As a result, violence is also differently experienced by men and women even when they are the embodied beings of the same lived world. This sort of violence which implies discrimination and inequality in its application is called gender based violence. Unfortunately, it is a prevalent practice in most patriarchal societies across the globe. Although, gender based violence is usually understood as suffering or pain inflicted on women alone but in the present study, people belonging to sexual and gender minorities are also included under the term. In the lived world one is not only influenced by one's family, religion, caste and community but also by the pre-given structures of the society like the social, cultural, economic and political institutions. In a patriarchal, heterosexual society, these pre-given structures limit females' potentialities (through both actual and potential form of violence) because they work in the interest of men alone and are by and large controlled by them. Family which is the basic social institution of a society is examined to be most patriarchal in nature. A patriarchal family oppresses and exploits women by controlling their labour and reproductive powers. The cultural institution of a patriarchal society is understood by understanding the domains of gender ideology and educational system which have and continue to marginalise and oppress women. The son preference phenomena is analysed at length where it was examined as to how a patriarchal society goes to extreme lengths, right from female foeticide to female infanticide in-order to get rid of the girl child. The poor status of the girl child is also reflected in the educational system where going to school still remains a dream for most girls even in the modern times as their labour is used at home where they are only trained as per the cultural stereotypes. According to Nussbaum, the patriarchal culture influences the lives of real people with its "the values" and "the traditions", especially the lives of little women who suffer the most through misery and injustice when school is replaced by long hours of grinding labor at home. Hence, the girl child in a patriarchal society is given no opportunity to cultivate her mind and imagination in the lived-world. Also, the patriarchal and prescriptive nature of education which justifies and perpetuates the inequalities and discrimination between men and women was is examined at length. Similarly, women's oppression can also be located in the economic institutions of a patriarchal society where men oppose women's labour and rights in both the public and private spheres of life. Hence, wealth gap and pay gap amongst men and women is prevalent in patriarchal societies across the globe till date. Lastly,

like the rest of the institutions, the political institution of a patriarchal society too works with male domination. Susan Moller Okin in the book, *Women in Western Political Thought*, argues that the idea of contemporary politics has been obtained from the works of Western political philosophers such as Aristotle, Rousseau, together with Mill who had only nasty, sexist remarks about women and their place in politics. Okin argues that patriarchy defines women solely by their sexual, procreative and child rearing functions within a family which has been seen as a natural and necessary institution of a society. In other words, women have been given the extra burden of domesticity because of their capacity for gestation, parturition and nursing human offspring. As a result, women are grossly underrepresented in politics, the problems they face within the political institution have common roots with the problems that prevent the freedom of women in any other sphere. Therefore, the aim was to establish the fact that violence inflicted by patriarchy acts as a potent force that shapes not only the lived bodies but also their relationship with other beings along with the structures of the lived-world.

In the present study, gender violence is also understood with body shame which is very conveniently associated with female experience under patriarchy. de Beauvoir, Bartky and Wolf argue that shame is a self-conscious experience and like all other affective experiences, occurs through the body. It overwhelms us physically, and the common physical response deals with a sense of wanting to hide or runaway. However, while shame undoubtedly finds its expression through the body, shame is often also “all about the woman's body” in a patriarchal setup. Beauvoir understands body shame an effect of oppression for women in a patriarchal society where their embodied existence is marked as shameful in itself right from adolescence and continues to be considered so till their last breath. Bartky and Wolf theorised the link between the social oppression of women and body shame by discussing the ideology of beauty in a patriarchal set-up. According to the feminist philosophers, the strict ideas of femininity imposed on women by patriarchy forces them to see themselves as objects for men's gaze. The ideology of beauty oppresses women by creating competition within them and divides them into categories of age, weight, colour, etc. As a result, the fear of body shame is sometimes experienced to such an extreme that we have anorexia nervosa, body dysmorphic disorder and bulimia nervosa as female maladies. Also, the ideology of beauty is extremely evil because the ideology of beauty is the last one remaining of the old feminine ideologies that still has the power to control women in the contemporary world. Hence, beauty myth is examined at length in the various institutions of a patriarchal society which oppress women to the extent that it influences their psychological and physical well-being.

The honour-shame connection in gender violence has also been embarked upon in the present study. The honour-shame ethic is a system that subordinates women from the day they are born. Since women stands for the shame, they must be aware of not bringing shame over their families. As a result, honour based violence is increasingly becoming the most socially sanctioned repercussion and an all encompassing deterrent to the rural and urban youths (specially, young women), who bring dishonour and shame by daring to question the traditional, orthodox ideologies of a patriarchal society. Under patriarchy, honour is a gendered concept, it is associated with man alone. A man's honour gets reflected in factors such as, his integrity, wealth, generosity and so on but it is most importantly tied very closely to the reputation of women in his family, particularly his mother, sister, wife, and daughter. As a result, honour is seen as a social value which men are expected to uphold by disciplining their women's bodies and appointing gender appropriate behaviour for them. Whereas, women are expected to preserve the honour by showing allegiance to the set norms and principles in their behaviour. Since is it a social quality, it also revolves around the public perception of the women more than their actual behaviour in the patriarchal society. In a patriarchal society, honour is also seen as a prized economic value. Johanna Bond in "Honour as Familial Value", argues that honour is seen as a social currency, it is a highly valued and zealously protected asset which depends primarily on the social and sexual behaviour of the female members of the family in the society. When female family members act honourably, the value of honour property increases for the family as a whole. However, when female family members act dishonourably, or are merely perceived as having acted dishonourably, the value of honour property decreases significantly. In this case, the familial value is so devalued that men in patriarchal family seek to restore honour by inflicting violence on the deviant female family member. Therefore, honour is seen as a prized social and economic value in a patriarchal society. Although there is a long list of acts which cause dishonour and shame, Prem Chowdhry argues that love marriages or disapproved marriages are the most common cause of honour killing where women challenge the scripted, orthodox behaviour. Caste *panchayats* sanction acts of violence (specially on women) and override the notion of equality which the Indian constitution provides by imposing its writ through physical violence in the form of murdering the victim and public lurching. Therefore, there is no place for romantic love and marriages in societies whose value systems are dependent on the patriarchal notions of honour. In a patriarchal society, the purpose of marriage is to uphold the social structures and alliance between family and community. Since, romance is the structural antithesis of this concept of marriage, hence, it is looked down upon and is only viewed as a

modern concept which deals with personal gratification that contravenes moral norms. In order to overcome the orthodox caste and customary rules, most couples choose to run away from their parental homes to get married. Their situation is worsened not only because the family and the community (*khaps panchayats*) acts together in-order to catch the eloped couple and kill them (specially a woman) in the name of honour but also because the laws fail to provide them protection which in-fact is their legal right. B.R Ambedkar saw the potential in inter-caste marriages when he said,

Where society is already well-knit by other ties, marriage is an ordinary incident of life. But where society is cut asunder, marriage as a binding force becomes a matter of urgent necessity. The real remedy for breaking caste is inter-marriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste.¹⁷⁷

Ambedkar believed that the power of inter-caste marriages could result in annihilation of the caste system in India. It was a dominant problem then and it is a dominant problem now, haven't we learned at all? Nobody is above the legislature and no social institution can be allowed to act as an alternative judicial body denying individual's right to freedom of choice which is guaranteed to each one of us by the Constitution.

I believe Nussbaum's "human capabilities approach"¹⁷⁸ is the most effective approach for emancipation of women, people belonging to minorities and girl in a patriarchal set-up. Her taxonomy of ten particular capabilities are derived from the fundamental human rights. She defends the list of capabilities as the basis for an account of fundamental human entitlements or rights that should be adopted in the constitutions of all nations. The ten capabilities are:

1. *Life*: Living up to the normal age or longevity without any cause of premature death or without factors negating life's worth. Therefore, violence in the name of honour, communal murders, sex-selective abortion, female foeticide, domestic violence, killing in connection with dowry, etc. are all evil socio-cultural evil practices which must at once be eradicated.

¹⁷⁷Ambedkar, B.R.. 'Annihilation of Caste'. *B.R. Ambedkar's Writings and Speeches*, p. 67.

¹⁷⁸Nussbaum's approach stems from the work of economist Amartya Sen, and from the Human Development Reports of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Her taxonomy of ten particular capabilities are derived from the fundamental human rights proclaimed by the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. For more information, see Nussbaum, "Human Rights and Human Capabilities", *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, Vol. 20

2. *Bodily Health*: Being able to have a good health; adequate nourishment; adequate shelter. Hence, rape, unequal food distribution practices for the girl child, poor medical care for the girl child, child sexual abuse, etc. are types of violence which tremendously impacts a person's psychological and physical well-being even when it is not lethal.
3. *Bodily Integrity*: Free movement; personal safety; safety against any kind of abuse and violence; opportunities for sexual gratification and choice in marriage and matters of reproduction. In reality, most women do not have feel safe in the outside world, they do not have the freedom to move freely from place to place to the same extent that men have it, sexual violence, inflicting violence (though mocking, shaming, hitting, killing, etc.) on people belonging to sex and gender minorities, most women under patriarchal societies can not choose who to marry and when to marry. To make matter worse, men control their reproductive powers also. Hence, all these forms of violence are against the basic human rights and annual this capability.
4. *Sense, Imagination and Thought*: Being able to use senses to think, imagine and reason in a truly human, civilised way through the adequate means of education; not limiting to basic learning of how to read and write, and basic mathematics and scientific training; searching for the ultimate meaning of life in one's own way by freedom of expression in the fields of religion, literature, music and so. Females under patriarchy are unable to exercise this capability, for instance, there are hinderance for girls access to education, women's freedom of speech and expression is often regulated by men in maintenance of honour, etc. In short, women and girls are prevented from using their thought, reason and imagination due to cultural stereotypes which regulate and limit her freedom.
5. *Emotions*: Being able to have attachment or feelings towards things and people; freedom to express emotions; to be able to love and care; not having one's emotional development hindered by fear, anxiety and societal pressure. But, under patriarchy, women and people belonging to minorities cannot exercise the capability to love, as a result, we have numerous cases of runaway marriages where couple in love elope fearing the families and communities concerned. Also, boys and men are often shamed for showing emotions, they are chided for being feminine or for behaving like a girl!
6. *Practical Reason*: Being able to form a critical conception about good and bad while planning one's life but women under a sexist society are often not able to exercise this right because for most women life is already planned by the family and the community in accordance with the orthodox socio-cultural practices. Also, women often deter themselves or change their plans (if only they are allowed to have plans) fearing that they

could come across violence in the society. Even if somehow she goes ahead, she is always think about keeping themselves safe, hence, they cannot freely exercise this capability.

7. *Affiliations*: Being able to show concern for others; being able to engage in social interaction; capability for justice and friendship that entails non-discrimination, non-humiliation; protection against racial, sexual, religious, caste, ethnic inequality. But gender based violence or threat of gender based violence limits women's affiliations. In the family, actual/threat of violence deforms marital love or girl's friendship with a boy or her relationship with the surrounding world. Outside the family, women are often faced with a lot of hindrances in the economic and political institution of the society. Also, sexual harassment at work is a major problem for women in the public sphere.
8. *Other Species*: Being able to live with care and concern for animals, plants and the world of nature. But women will be only free to exercise this capability once when they are not themselves perceived as other species, the insignificant "other" of the man in a society. Violence or the threat of violence affects women's ability to have a meaningful relationship with the world of nature
9. *Play*: To be able to live, laugh, play and enjoy recreational activities. Women through persistent fear of violence or threat of violence are neither able to live freely nor laugh heartedly. But Girls are often scolded for playing outdoors with or without boys, young girls carefully regulate their emotions for the fear of drawing men's attention towards them. The power of a man's gaze is so powerful in a society that a woman is always keeping check of her bodily comportment. Nussbaum writes, "There is nothing sadder than to see the removal of laughter from the eyes of a girl or woman, through repeated sexual or physical abuse, or through persistent fear."¹⁷⁹
10. *Control over Environment*: To be able to politically participate in political choices governing one's life; to be able to exercise free speech and association. To be able to hold property and have rights on an equal basis with men; being able to be employment and work as free human beings. Women under patriarchy are not free to exercise this capability. Sexual harassment and potential gender based violence (oppression, subordination, marginalisation, etc.) greatly affects women's ability to participate in politics and to exercise their legal right in land and moveable property (as noted in the first section of chapter third). Women go through numerous hurdles in-order to seek

¹⁷⁹ Nussbaum, "Women's Bodies: Violence, Security, Capabilities", *Journal of Human Development*, Vol. 6, No. 2, July 2005.

employment and enjoy a hassle free work life for the onus of taking care of the house, household chores and child lies on them alone in a patriarchal set-up.

Thus, the list sets a benchmark for a minimally decent human life. These ten capabilities are the most basic fundamental human entitlements or rights that should be adopted in the constitutions of all nations. Unfortunately, women so far do not have them. The present study made an attempt to focus on feminist politics and feminists ways of understanding the concepts of body, patriarchy and violence. It is a baffling mystery to understand gender based violence in the society specially when our religion teaches us that every lived-body is constituted of the same five elements (earth, water, fire, air and space) equally. The need of the hour is to understand, recognise and acknowledge that people are autonomous human beings where reciprocity of mutual respect, kindness, compassion and love can only help us in removing inequalities from the society. In the end, I hope the present study has put in place some answers but most importantly, I hope it has put in place new questions and new concepts which have not been addressed so far. For the more we investigate as feminists, the better our horizons shift.

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