

PATRIARCHY AND WOMEN IN PAKISTAN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**Dr Samina Isran****Assistant Professor Dept: of Economics
Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur****Dr Manzoor Ali Isran****Senior Faculty Member****Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology****Abstract**

This study analyses the experiences of inequality and discrimination that most Pakistani women face within the household and society as a result of unequal gender power relations. In South Asian societies, of which Pakistan is part, there are different social controls applied to control women's social and economic behaviour at every level of society. A central and systematic form of control is patriarchy, which, as argued in this study, is the main cause of women's subordination. With regard to women's position and status in Pakistani society, women still find themselves struggling to be treated as gender equals. Despite the acknowledgement of women's productive potential and their different economic roles, Pakistani women still face seclusion and exclusion due to socio-cultural norms based on patriarchy which deny them access to the benefits of development. Therefore, the analysis of patriarchy and its repercussions on the various aspects of women's lives informs the analysis of the study.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Women in Pakistan, Household Models, and Bargaining.

1. Introduction

In this chapter the position and status of Pakistani women within and outside the household and their access to economic resources for their enhanced status and increased bargaining power is analysed in detail under the bargaining approach suggested by Agarwal (1997). The significant feature of this study is to analyse the fundamental and traditional structures of the Pakistani society that are patriarchal in their nature and determine women's lower position and impose upon them responsibilities of under value and un-accounted domestic production and reproduction. Thus the study examines the social and economic structures of the society vis-à-vis the matter of women's empowerment and patriarchy. No doubt, patriarchy flourishes on control of women 'labour' sexuality and fertility for male hegemony over economic resources.

2. Literature Review

In recent years, the term patriarchy has assumed a central place in feminist literature. Its use refers to the level of gender inequality between men and women in their social and economic relationship within the household, community and societal structures. Though, there are other ways of understanding gender inequalities, it is argued that patriarchy is the most appropriate means of grasping the scale of gender prejudices and inequalities.

According to Walby (1990), “The concept of patriarchy is indispensable for an analysis of gender inequality as it captures the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of different aspects of women’s subordination within the household, family and society” (Walby: 1990:1). Similarly Lim (1997), also points out that patriarchal institutions and social relations are responsible for the inferior or secondary status of women. However, many theorists propose that patriarchy does not necessarily mean that every man has power over every woman in every context. On the contrary, “patriarchal interests overlap with system that also reinforce class and race privilege”, as well as other valences of social stratification” (Chesney-Lind: 2006, p.9). Patriarchy is not therefore a single element, as sometimes suggested by feminists, but is instead the intersection of multiple factors relevant at all levels of the social ecology (Dekeseredy and Dragiewicz: 2007, Heise: 1998).

Nevertheless, patriarchy as a tool to analyse gender relationships has its proponents and opponents, and has generated much of the debate around the economic, cultural, physiological and sexual issues highlighting the role of women within the family and community.

2.1 Structures and Variations of Patriarchy

The conceptual variation of patriarchal operation has led to debate. In this connection Rosaldo (1974), provides an historical account. She describes women’s subordination as a historical phenomenon. Women’s status would be lowest in those societies where there is the clearest split between the public and the private and where the women are isolated from one another, (Walby: 1990). Another account is provided by (Boserup:1970), who offers a rich and empirical account of different forms of the sexual division of labour, especially in agriculture, in an international

perspective. She suggests that there are two main forms of sexual division in agricultural societies. In this regard she cites the example of Africa where women do most of the farming such as cultivating the subsistence crops whereas men are merely engaged in clearing the land for cultivation. In contrast to Africa she characterises Asian societies where men mostly do the ploughing and women live in seclusion, veiled, and perform domestic labour. Boserup's findings belied the very notion of neo-classical economists concerning women's role as one which is confined to the family only. According to her diagnosis, women's inferior economic position in society is due to their lack of access to education and training, and their inability to own land and property, which has resulted in the hierarchisation of the labour force within the family, and in the labour market. Those who are less burdened with family obligations are more likely to draw benefits from the changes, and women tend to find themselves at the bottom of the labour market hierarchy. However there is wide discussion of the work of Boserup (1970), by Beneria and Sen: (1997), and (Tinker: 2002), on the grounds that it is under-theorised, and over-generalised, especially in her use of modernisation theory. Despite some deficiencies in the work of Boserup, such as it does not consider the gender relationship, she has contributed significantly towards the understanding of women's economic marginalisation from mainstream development activities.

All this said, the major contribution on the missing aspect of patriarchy has come from literature produced by Guillaumin (1981), Dworkin (1983), and Brown (1981), who have all attempted to analyse patriarchy in a broader sense, covering all aspects of it. They make the distinction between the public and private appropriation of women. Their conception of patriarchal appropriation includes women's labour, sexuality and physiological care. But Walby (1990), whilst making the distinction between the public and private patriarchy, coin six forms of patriarchal structures. These are the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchy relation in the state, and male violence, patriarchal relation in sexuality and patriarchal relation in cultural institutions including religions, media, and education.

Patriarchal production relations in the household are the first structure, and it is through this structure that women's labour is expropriated by their husbands and cohabitantes. The women may receive their maintenance in exchange for their labour, especially when they are not also engaged in waged labour.

The second patriarchal structure within the economic level is that of patriarchal relations within paid work. A complex of forms of patriarchal closure within waged labour excludes women from the better forms of work and hence under values their work.

The third structure of patriarchy is the state, which is described as capitalist and gender blind. The state mediates and regulates gender relations through laws and rights. While being a site of struggle, the state has a systematic bias towards patriarchal interests in its policies and actions.

Male violence is the fourth structure of patriarchy. Apparently, despite its individualistic and diverse forms, women routinely experience it from men. Male violence against women is systematically condoned and legitimated by the state's refusal to intervene against it except in exceptional instances.

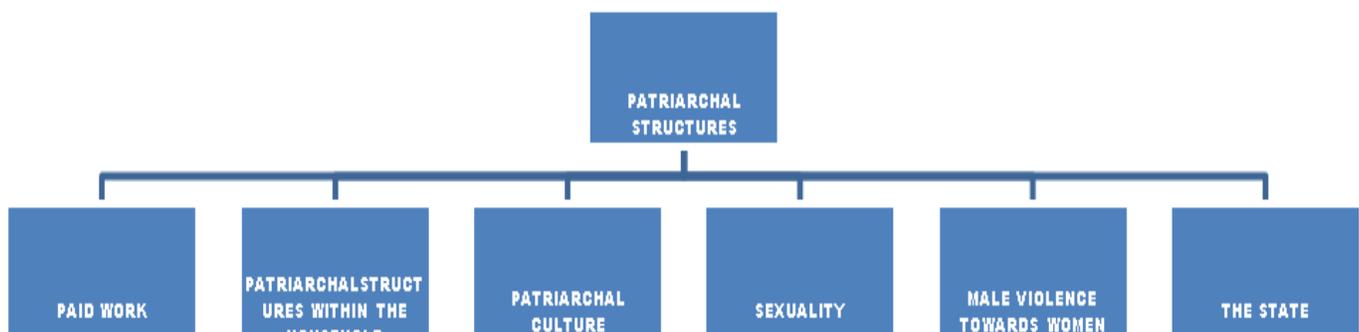


Figure 1

Cultural structure consists of a set of institutions, which create the representation of women within a patriarchal gaze in a variety of arenas, such as religion, education and the media. While Sex differences constitute discrimination on the basis of gender in matters of distribution of food, jobs etc.

Therefore in the light of these structures, it could be deduced that patriarchy, in the broader sense of the term, is the system of social relations between men and women based on inequality

and prejudices. These inequalities and prejudices are well reflected in socio-cultural norms, male violence and limited economic opportunities for women, which is basically designed to control women's sexuality and expropriate their labour. A study by Anita Weiss (1992), reveals the experiences of women workers in home-based cottage industry living in the 'walled' city of Lahore in Pakistan. In many cases women do much of the same work which men do in the market, but given the socio-cultural norms of limited mobility and segregation, women work within their private sphere of the household (Azid et al: 2001). Obviously, men enjoy a greater degree of economic freedom than do women, who are dependent on middlemen for marketing their home-based products. Due to patriarchal cultures and norms many women have restricted mobility and consequently, they have to rely on middlemen. Middlemen while playing the part of intermediary between women and shopkeepers buy goods from these women at cheap prices and sell these products to shopkeepers at high rates. Women therefore, get significantly less remuneration for the same work than men do.

In fact, the gender asymmetries in every rung of society are well reflective of the fact that women's interests and preferences are neglected within the household and job market. Such discrimination itself is based on the patriarchal assumption that a woman's natural role is a domestic one and that she is therefore unsuited to any kind of wage employment, either because the productivity of woman will naturally be lower than a man's in the same employment, or because it will be adversely affected by her domestic responsibilities.

2.2 Forms of Patriarchy

As it is argued earlier, that patriarchy has a cultural and material base which is well-articulated with the dynamic of patriarchal relations characterised either by the total domination of women by men (Classical Patriarchy), or co-operation and conflict (Bargaining Patriarchy). This gaze of human relationship is described as a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Walby: 1990:20). The use of social structures implies rejection of both biological determinism and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one (Walby: 1990).

These notions, in the perspective of South Asian patriarchal structures, are reinforced by some degree of abstraction which is well-articulated through the existence of social relations based on male domination.

2.2 (a) Classical Patriarchy

When we analyse the literature produced by various South Asian authors we see that the patriarchal structures remain dominant on the lives of south Asian women. The analysis of the different patriarchal structures in the different regions of South Asia and Middle East offered by Kandiyoti (1997), reveals the different facets of patriarchal structures and their possible impact on the lives of women. Kandiyoti finds great contrast in the patriarchal structures in operation in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. According to her, women in Africa often resist male dominance and control over their lives, the reason being that such response lies in the fact that the insecurities of African polygamy¹⁵ for women are matched by the relative autonomy which they strive to maximise. Women have very little to gain and much to lose by becoming totally dependant on husbands, and they quite rightly resist projects that tilt the delicate balance and strive to safeguard their autonomy. In contrast to the African resistance to male dominance is the kind of accommodation and reconciliation which women in South Asia and the Middle East have espoused. Kandiyoti calls this system “Classical Patriarchy”, the key to the reproduction of this lying in the operations of the patrilocally extended household, which is also commonly associated with the reproduction of the peasantry in agrarian societies (Kandiyoti: 1997,). Even though demographic and other constraints may have curtailed the numerical predominance of three-generational patrilocal households, there is little doubt that they represent a powerful cultural ideal. It is plausible that the emergence of the patriarchal extended family, which gives the senior man authority over everyone, including younger men, is bound up in the incorporation and control of the family by the state, and in the transition from kin-based to tributary modes of surplus control. The implications of the patrilineal¹⁶-patrilocal¹⁷ complex for women not only are remarkably uniform, but also entail forms of control and subordination that cut across cultural and religious boundaries, such as those of Hinduism and Islam (Kandiyoti: 1997, 1999).

¹⁵ Custom of marriage to more than one person at a time or in a life

¹⁶ Traced through the father or through males alone.

¹⁷ A form of marriage in which the wife goes to live with the husband's household.

Under classical patriarchy, girls are married at a very young age into households headed by their husband's father. There, they are subordinate not only to all the men but also to the more senior women, especially their mother-in-laws. Moreover, under the classical patriarchy women do not normally have any claim on their father's patrimony (an inheritance from a father or from male ancestors). In Muslim communities, for a woman to press for her inheritance rights would be tantamount to losing her brother's favour. Her only recourse in case of severe ill treatment by her husband would end in her divorce. According to Kandiyoti (1997), patrilineage totally appropriates both women's labour and progeny and renders their work and contribution invisible. A woman's lifecycle in the patriarchal extended family is such that the deprivation and hardship she experiences as a young bride is eventually superseded by the control and authority she will have over her own subservient daughters-in-law. The cyclical nature of women's power in the household and their anticipation of inheriting the authority of senior women have encouraged the internalisation of this form of patriarchy by the women themselves. In classical patriarchy, subordination to men is offset by the control which older women attain over younger women. However, women only have access to the only type of labour power they can control, and to old-age security, through their married sons. Since sons are a woman's most critical resource, ensuring their life-long loyalty is an enduring pre-occupation.

In classical patriarchy, the cyclical fluctuations of women's power positions, combined with status considerations, result in their active collusion in the reproduction of their own subordination. Under these circumstances women opt to adopt interpersonal strategies that maximise their security through manipulation of the affections of their sons and husband.

2.2 (b) Classical Patriarchy in South Asia

Literature offered by many renowned writers clearly argue that in many parts of South Asia, patriarchy is applied as an instrument to control and subordinate women, and denies them access to the productive resources outside the household. An analysis of this literature on cross-regional differences in South Asia also helps to understand the question of how and why women are discriminated against in favour of men in various parts of the Indian-subcontinent. According to Agarwal (1988), there are various inter-linked historical, cultural and economic factors

responsible for these differences. Taking on an often disproportionately large share of the households' workload, or making a significant contribution to household earnings, does not ensure women a greater or even equal, access to crucial needs such as food or health care (Sen: 2001).

In contrast to women's autonomy in many parts of India, an opposite pattern with regards to women's autonomy is found in rural Pakistan. A study by Sathar and Kazi (2000), on rural areas of Punjab province of Pakistan found that the economic autonomy is highest in *barani* (Rain-fed), areas and in Southern Punjab, where labour force participation of women is highest giving them the greater opportunities for cash income. Economic autonomy is the highest among those women who are paid, whether inside or outside the households. Similarly, the power of decision-making is higher among women who are paid even if they work from within their households. Whereas in northern Punjab, women have comparatively lower economic autonomy but greater mobility and decision-making power than women in southern Punjab. Mobility is low in south Punjab and in the northwest areas as a result of high prevalence of purdah in these regions (Sathar and Kazi: 2000). While women in rural Sindh province have relatively lower autonomy "as a result of tenacious feudal¹⁸ traditions which inhibit their autonomy" (Sathar: 1996).

In the context of Pakistan, the factors which influence the individual autonomy of women are age of women, residence near natal kin, and family structure (Vlassoff: 1992, Caldwell et al: 1982 cited in Sathar and Kazi: 2000). Older women have more mobility, have a greater access to household resources and have more decision-making power within the household in comparison to younger women. Women living in their birth places or near parents or relatives after marriage as a result of endogamous marriages have more individual autonomy, and they enjoy a greater support and freedom extended by their natal families. In Pakistan there is a wider practice of endogamy and "consanguineous marriages or marriages with relatives, which leads to virtually village endogamy" (Sathar and Kazi: 2000: 105). When a daughter is married among close-kin as a result of endogamous marriage, there is always a possibility of support and security extended by parents for her in marital or other conflicts.

¹⁸ A type of culture and society where land holding is the basis of political and economic power

Structure of the family is another element which influences women's status and autonomy within a particular household. A woman who lives in a nuclear family is free to organise her work according to her wishes. The situation is different in the households where an extended family lives. Here the senior women have control over the labour of the younger women, and the unmarried daughters over the daughters-in-laws. The relationship between households members are determined not only by the social structure of the family but also the personality and character of each individual. Sometime hierarchical allocation of tasks lead to conflicts within the households as junior women (daughters-in laws), do not get an opportunity to develop their individual autonomy and empowerment.

Other writers like Sen (2001), however, cite some other factors like female literacy and proportion of women in work (as paid family workers), as indicators of women's autonomy and empowerment.

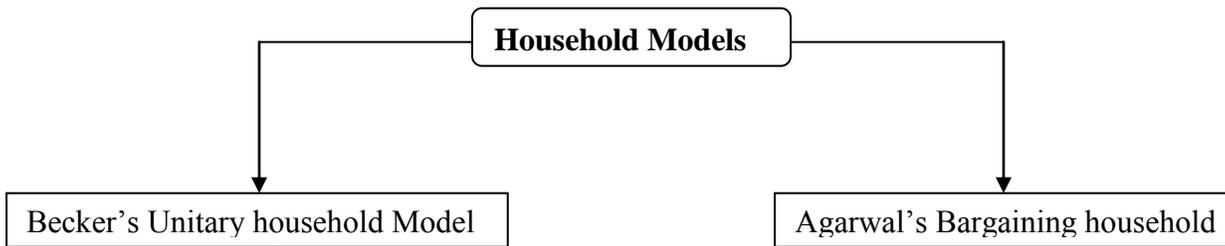
In the next section, I will discuss the concept and meaning of household and various household models in the context of the patriarchy to understand the subordinate position of women in Pakistan within the household and society.

3. The Household Models

The household is generally defined as a kind of social grouping of people who live together and share common food and shelter and produce and reproduce for the common benefit of all members of the household (Crehan, cited in Bernstein et al: 1992). Households may differ in forms (such as single, joint and female headed household) in different parts of the world according to marital practice, inheritance rules and kinship pattern. However, most of the household are based on some kind of kinship relation, because kinship is fundamental to social relations (Brydon and Chant: 1989).

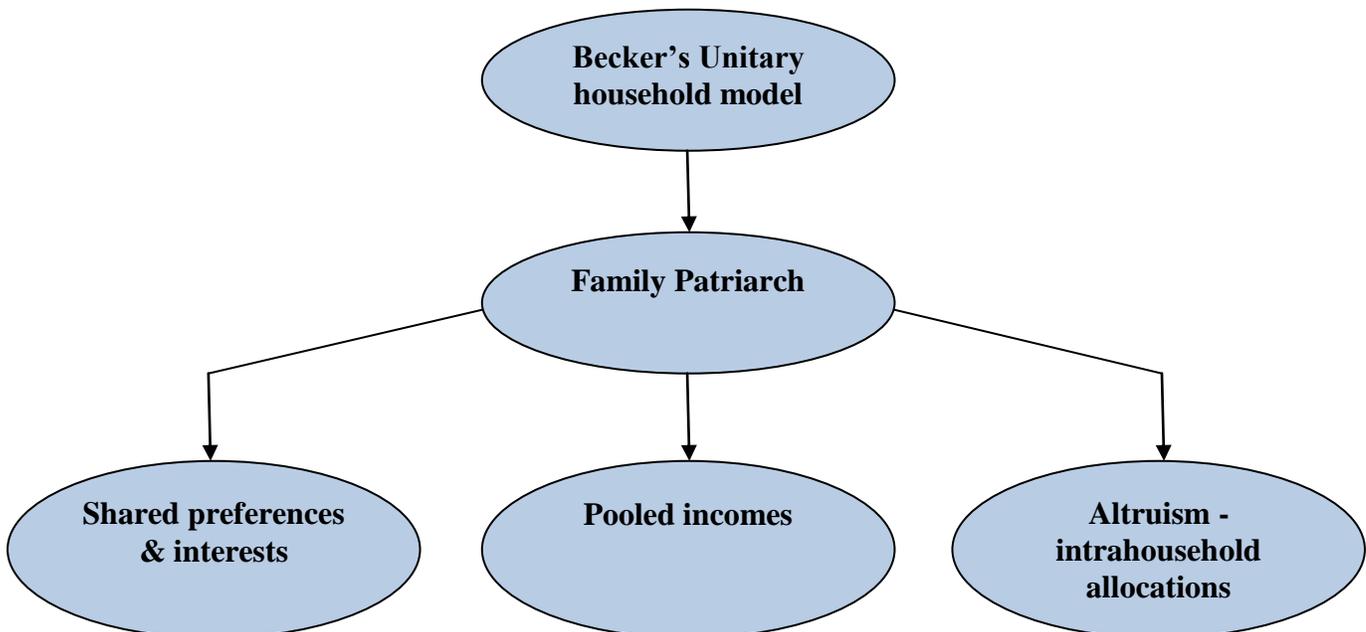
To understand the gender relationship within the household and family, various household models have been introduced. In this study Becker's Unitary household Model and Agarwal's Bargaining Model are analysed and discussed.

Figure 2



Unitary household model is largely based on the formulation which treats household as a unit of altruistic decision making, according to which the welfare of each member of the family is normally integrated in to the unified family welfare function (Rosenzweig and Schultz: 1984 cited in Kabeer: 1994). The foundation of unitary model, laid by Becker (1960), integrates the production and consumption activities of the household economy. But this model does not rule out the discrepancies in the resource distribution within the household, as according to this model resources of the household are allocated to those activities in which they are likely to make the greatest contribution. Family labour is also allocated on this principle of the comparative advantage so that each member specialise in those activities which give them the highest relative return (Ibid). Unitary Model supports the benevolent dictatorship of the household head by believing that welfare resources are optimally allocated between household members (Agarwal: 2002).

Figure 3



Therefore, under the unitary model, the policy-makers in south Asia of which Pakistan is a part, have implicitly or explicitly directed resources at male household heads, believing that the resources will be shared equitably within the household. But there is much evidence to show that resources are not shared equally.

The World Bank (2002), while analysing the literature on bargaining approach, insists that, “The evidence on determinants of intrahousehold resources allocation and investments makes a strong case for targeting interventions by gender to promote gender equality and more effective development”(World Bank: 2001: 163).

According to World Bank (2001), women have relatively poor prospects outside of marriage and experience limits on their ability to act independently within the households, and therefore, possess relatively little bargaining power within the family. Moreover, under the Unitary Model, productive and reproductive functions are seen as separate arenas and they refer to division of labour within the household. Productive and reproductive activities refer to income earning activities and children/domestic labour respectively. Although women do engage in productive work, they are seen to have primary responsibility in reproductive activities. Furthermore, due to their reproductive activities, they are treated as wives and mothers. This was well-reflected in the early development policies of the fifties and the sixties where the entire focus was on how to control the reproductive behaviour of women. These early policies paid little attention towards raising the productive potential of women.

Unitary Economic Model has been widely criticised by many critics and economists (Sen; 1984, Agarwal: 2002). For example, Sen (1984), in his criticism of the neo-classical theory, asks,

“Why the views of the household’s head count on the collective welfare of the household and why the views of subordinated and subjugated members regarding their own and family welfare should be given no status” (Sen: 1984).

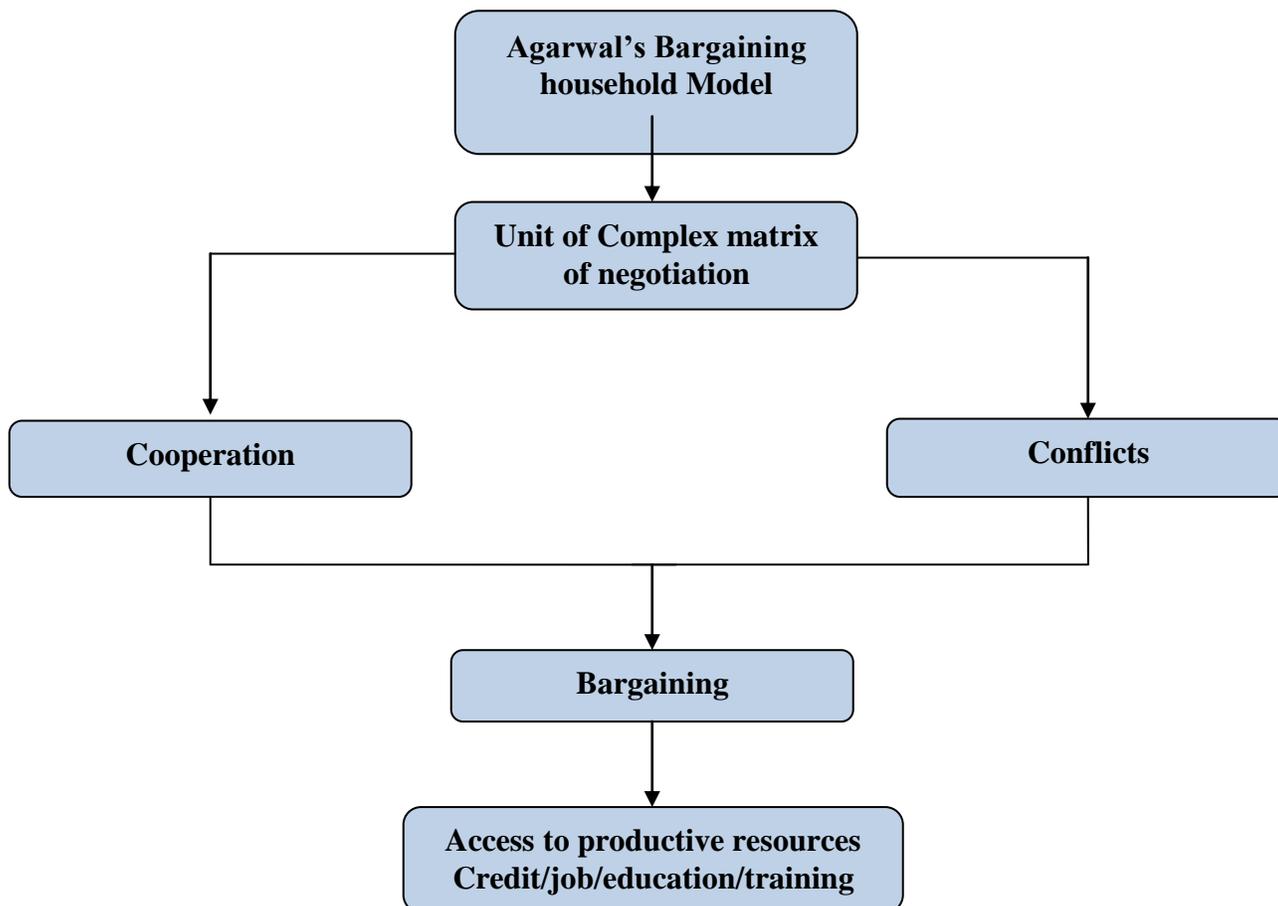
Further, there is a growing body of literature which nullifies the neo-classical claim that intra-household distribution is undertaken equitably, and ensures welfare maximisation (Agarwal: 2003). A number of studies have reported distributional inequalities within the household, and these studies provide further proof of the refutation of the argument that household economy is

guided by altruism, with the male as patriarch sitting at the top of the household pyramid. The macro demographic studies, reporting inequalities in the sex ratio between males and females in South Asia, provide ample evidence of gender-related differentials in household health-seeking and nutritional behaviour (Sen: 1984, Agarwal: 2003).

3.2 Bargaining Household Model

The emergence of bargaining approach is relatively new phenomenon in the literature of gender relationship within household and family. The bargaining approach has gained wider currency after the writings of well-known economist Amartya Sen (1990), who, in his writing presented the different kind of conceptualisation of the relationship between household members. In stark contrast to the Unitary Model, Bargaining Model see the household/family as a “complex matrix of relationship, in which there are ongoing negotiation subject to the constraints set by gender, age, type of relationship and outdated undisputed traditions” (Agarwal: 1994:54).

Figure 4



According to this approach, intra-household interaction contains the elements of both cooperation and conflict, and cooperation continues in so far as cooperative arrangements make each of the household members better off. However, different cooperative outcomes are possible if there is discrepancy in the distribution of resources, especially in relation to who gets what and who does what.

The essence of the bargaining approach lies in the fact that the bargaining position of the each member of the household lies in what Agarwal (1994), calls a person's fall-back position (the access to outside resources determine how well off he or she would be if cooperation ceases).

The person who has stronger fall-back position (better outside access to productive assets such as employment, ownership of land and etc) would emerge with more favourable outcome.

But the biggest dilemma is how to characterise the household whether as an arena of cooperation and contestation or as a place where all decision are made by consensus or by altruist head. The bargaining approach presents different characterisation of the household in contrast to unitary model where all the resources are directed at the household head under the assumption that all the resources would be distributed equitably. But this is not the case. The empirical evidences show that in South Asia severe discrepancies have been found in the distribution of food between different house hold members, as a result of the resources directed at the household head (Sen: 2001).

It is in the backdrop of this background that bargaining approach presents different kind of conceptualisation where it underscores the need that the government policies and resources should need to be overhauled.

Another aspect of the bargaining approach in respect to determine person's bargaining position stems not only from the person's fall-back position but also from what Sen (1990), calls person's 'perceived interest response' and person's 'perceived contribution response', according to which person who attaches less value to his/her welfare (perceived interest) and contributes less to the household (perceived contribution) will have less say or will be treated unfavourably. In that

case, Sen (2001), places considerable importance to women's access to outside resources, which mean entitlement to employment, land and etc, person's bargaining position within and outside household and agency role of women of the realisation of such fundamental right of right. The agency role requires women to form alliances across the different regions to launch collective struggle.

The kernel of Sen's argument here is that the accessibility of women to outside earnings strengthens their bargaining position inside the household vis-à-vis other household members (Agarwal: 1994, 2002, 2003). To support his case, he cites Bhatta's research (1980), where women workers in the Indian Beedi industry appear to have gained strength in their role in household decision-making, and in their claims on household resources. The denial of outside work to women makes them dependant on men and subjects them to gender symmetries in the access to resources (food and health care etc) within the household (Sen: 2001, Agarwal: 1994).

4. The Household in Pakistan

The household in Pakistan is described as the basic functional unit and treated as unit of co-residence, production and consumption. Like Beckerian household (cited in Kabeer: 1994), the household in Pakistan is also formed by men and women, who come together in marriage because of biological reproduction. But in contrast to Beckerian household Model, many households in Pakistan include parents, married sons, their wives and children, unmarried sons and daughters. As such, household in Pakistan is fully functional social and economic unit.

Traditionally, the household in Pakistan is headed by a male, particularly, the senior male member who holds command and control of most of the household's material resources and labour and mediate women's relations with the non-familial world. The family patriarch directs the affairs of the family, protects its interests, and expects complete obedience from its members as religious and ethical obligation (Nyrop et al: 1971). The importance and influence of male member can be judged from the fact that son within Pakistani household is thought to be the custodian and protective of family interests, family honour and its good name in the society. A daughter, on the other hand, is not regarded as an asset under the ideology that a female belongs to another (her future husband), and is therefore, a temporary visitor in the house(Fikree: 2004).

A wife is always expected to submit to her husband's authority. When the husband and wife live with the husband's parents, (as is often the case in patrilineal social system), the wife is also under the control of the most senior woman (usually mother-in-law), of the household (Fikree: 2004). The position of housewives within the household is hardly favourable to bargain for their share. They lack independent economic resources and remain totally dependent on their husbands and hence fear threat of divorce if they come into open conflict with the husband or in-laws (Kandiyoti: 1988). Until she has borne a child, the new bride has no real acceptance in the family because her participation in the family is through her children. Because of their perceived liabilities and their limited access to physical and economic resources women have often weak bargaining power for their intra-household resources.

Further, the role played by these women may depend to a greater extent on the status which society attaches to them. One of the main factors which curtail the empowerment and autonomy of women in Pakistan is the male perception of the role of women. Such evidence has been revealed in the Report of the Pakistan commission on the status of women (ZariSarfaraz Report 1985), on the status of women in the Pakistan.

“The prevailing milieu being still feudal and anachronistic, illiteracy, ill-health, poverty and iniquitous social dispensation continue to cause deterioration of the condition of deprived and valuable sectors, particularly for women in the rural areas and the urban slums. Seclusion and segregation and confinement which have limited women's educational and economic opportunities, coupled with early marriages and large families continue to preclude the mass of women from all avenues of advancement” (Sarfaraz: 1985:31).

In order to decrease women's economic dependence on men and gain viable bargaining position within and outside the household, it is imperative that women should have free and unrestricted access to economic resources. Agarwal (1997, 2002, 2003), argues that a society in which women share relative equality with men in accessing economic assets and opportunities are in a better position to bargain for their rights within or outside the households. In the support of her argument, she suggests that a person's fall back position and associated bargaining strength within the family vis-à-vis subsistence needs would depend on ownership and control over assets like land or property, access to gainful employment and other income-earning means. Moreover, among a wider range of factors which determines a person's intra-household bargain power, she also suggests the external support from government and NGOs, which also contribute towards a

person's bargaining power. Therefore, the greater a person's ability to physically survive outside the family, the greater would be her/his bargaining power in relation to resource sharing within the family (Agarwal: 1994, 2003).

The position and status of Pakistani women within the household and their access to economic resources for their enhanced bargaining power can be examined in detail as under in the light of above bargaining approach suggested by Agarwal (1994).

Society of Pakistan is basically a feudal one, where land ownership is not only a symbol of economic status but also of social prestige and power. Traditionally, under the Patrilineal system of inheritance, Pakistani women enjoy very limited rights in landed property. Islam gives significantly greater inheritance rights in landed property, though unequal to men, but there are various gender inequalities in laws which deny women their proper share in property (Weiss: 1986, Agarwal: 2002). The elements that constrain Pakistani women in fully exercising their legal rights in practice are several. These include women's voluntary giving up of claims in parental ancestral land in favour of their brothers in part due to the cultural constructions of gender roles (good sister image), and in part due to the prospect of social and economic security offered by a brother, especially in times of distress or marital breakdown. Other reasons are the necessity of male mediation in disputes and claims, due to the gender segregation of space and gendered specification of behaviour, and fear of hostility from male kin. Lastly, male domination in government administration and judicial bodies at every level, also work to women's disadvantage as does women's lack of financial resources and legal education. Possession of land by women could have provided them economic security and virtually decrease their dependence on men, but this is not the general case in Pakistan.

Beside access to land and property, access to employment and income generating activities also contribute towards women's economic independence and increased bargaining power within the household. Carr et al. (1996), and many other theorists have argued that main obstacle for women in a patriarchal setting is female seclusion which deny them the right to gainful employment outside the home. Female seclusion or purdah practice is common in many tribal and rural parts of Pakistan (Lindholm: 1982, Ibrah: 1992), which restrict mobility of women and

confine them within the household; consequently, women can not participate in job market or in other economic activities. And because many women do not own property to offer as collateral, they have limited access to loan from formal institutions and are charged particularly high interest rates in the informal financial markets. So, they remain powerless in access to credit and other input necessary for independent business or successful enterprises.

However, there are also evidences that show women experience economic independence and individual autonomy by working for income. For example, as it is referred earlier the study of Sather and Kazi (2000), on rural Punjab which illustrates that woman's paid work has positive influence on their status and autonomy.

Another factor that can enhance economic power and bargaining ability of women within and outside the household is the direct and indirect support from NGOs and the state; the direct support refers to the provision of subsistence like food, whereas indirect refers to women's increased access to employment or other income-generating activities, assets, and other necessary social services like training, education, health care etc (Agarwal: 1994, 2002). It is also seen that for women's enhanced status and bargaining power, access to economic resources is crucial but equally important is provision of other social services like education, training, health care and an adequate fertility policy for their well-being.

But pathetically the role of the State in the provision of such services to women is not very encouraging. In the past women's economic and social rights were seriously affected by a series of laws and ordinances enacted by various regimes, whereas their real development in vital arenas like education, training, health was largely neglected. Many plans and projects initiated by the Government for employment and income generating activities of women, which are considered crucial for their economic and social development remained ineffective. For example, the formal sector demands education and skilled labour to provide a good salaried job. This demand is overwhelmingly met by men. In comparison to women, men have more access to education and training as the State has provided more boys schools and vocational colleges in comparison to female schools or female training institutions. Shaheed and Mumtaz (1990), have also indicated that women due to their unequal access to education are unable to compete with

men in the formal labour market. The lack of proper provision of education and vocational training for women in comparison to men by the State has led many women to participate in informal market which demands relatively lower formal education and training. The majority of women are concentrated in the informal sector which is largely characterised by lower remuneration and exploitation by middlemen and employers (Ahmad and Zia: 1991). The lack of women's access to formal market due to their insufficient education and training also contribute to their weaker bargaining power within the household.

As for as NGOs are concerned, it is seen that in most of the cases, they concentrate on generating income and employment for women far more than public sector does (Agarwal: 1994, 2002). Many non-organisations in Pakistan play significant role by integrating women in the economic activities and thereby enhancing their bargaining power in order to achieve the goal of empowerment. In fact many NGO's in Pakistan like Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP), and Kashf Foundation have performed an important role in raising subsistence possibilities by providing income-earning opportunities, credit, and other social support (UNDP: 2003).

5. Conclusion

The above discussion demonstrates that the subordination and exclusion of Pakistani women in the development activities, flows from the barrel of patriarchy, which has denied women the right of choice in engaging themselves either in productive and reproductive activities. Under the patriarchal ideology, women's labour has been divided into productive and reproductive spheres. Mostly in South Asian countries the existing patriarchal structures are based on gender discrimination and are underpinned by gender asymmetries, male supremacy and male control over the economic resources (Agarwal: 2002).

Realising low status of women, their weaker fall-back position and bargaining power within and outside the households as a direct result of their lack of access to and control over economic resources, many development agencies have adopted empowerment strategies to approach the powerlessness of women within and outside the households. For disadvantaged women, challenging the existing power relations through gaining access and taking greater control over

the sources of power is termed as empowerment (Agarwal: 1994, 2003). But empowerment must include both ‘access’ and ‘control’ of both material and informational resources as crucial elements of empowerment (Batliwala: 1994). In order to facilitate poor and disadvantaged women’s access to such resources, many NGOs have acquired economic interactive strategies for their overall empowerment (Carr et al: 1996). These strategies are basically designed to enhance women’s intra-household bargaining strength and decision-making power through their increased access to independent income generation sources like providing them collateral free credit, employment and other much needed social services (Agarwal: 1994), (Kabeer: 2005), (Swain and Wallentin: 2008).

Although there have been some changes in women’s position with changes in socio-economic development in the country, which clearly indicate that women can no longer rely on traditional patriarchal kinship ties in modern age.

Perhaps the wave of change have come from the gender-aware organisations and other development agencies who believe that women’s struggle for their right share in economic resources like property, credit, asset and gainful employment is the most critical entry point for their empowerment in Pakistan.

6. Recommendations and Policy Implications

To improve women’s status, and to enhance their bargaining position within the households, state and society and more importantly for achieving their economic empowerment following recommendations are suggested.

As woman’s economic dependence on men is seen as a consequence of patriarchal structure, women’s economic participation is essential for removing their persistence subordinate position. For economic self-reliance and sustaining livelihood of women, the emphasis of the state or other agencies, who are primarily involved in women’s welfare should be on facilitating their access to credit, gainful employment, education and training as well as provision of much needed social services while simultaneously reworking societal structures..

6.1. Credit

Following measures seem quite essential for successful credit programmes initiated for women. These are low interest rates, a strong emphasis on savings, a system of group guarantees, and the use of NGOs as intermediaries or, alternatively, an extensive network of field staff. While the training of the staff in innovative credit approaches is significant, but most importantly, a commitment at the highest levels of management is essential for the success of such efforts.

The Government should co-ordinate with NGOs like the Kashf Foundation, the Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP), and Agha Khan Rural Support Program, (AKRSP), and other NGOs which extend loans to women while maintaining financial discipline and observing the above cited principles.

The State-owned Financial Institutions like the First Women's Bank Ltd., the Co-operative Banks and the Agricultural Development Bank need to experiment with delivery mechanisms based on an assessment of the credit needs of small borrowers, particularly in the rural areas.

The recruitment of female staff is an essential component of programmes to reach women in the context of Pakistan, where patriarchal constraints in the form of female segregation and restricted mobility are prominent and the possibility of social intermediation, with a few exceptions, is limited due to the sparse distribution of development-oriented, community-based NGOs.

Moreover, the introduction of more organisations like Kashf Foundation, AKRSP, and FPAP to provide credit facilities without collateral, are needed to help poor households improve their standard of living and quality of life.

The women should be assisted in marketing their products through the establishment of co-operatives.

Those integrated credit programs that consider all aspects of enterprise inputs should be developed for women.

6.2 Employment

To encourage female employment, effective policies and programmes should be devised and implemented. Appropriate laws and legislation should be enforced to improve the working conditions and provision of support facilities for those women who are already in labour market.

Furthermore, discrimination in the labour market in terms of wages and occupation segregation should be eliminated through the strict enforcement of such laws.

Moreover, to increase female labour participation it is necessary that a long-term strategy be developed to encourage the desired changes in the society and attitudes through mass media.

6.3 Social Development

Women's participation in social development programmes and policies is crucial for their empowerment and enhanced intra-household bargaining power.

The government-initiated multi-sectoral programme (SAP), should especially focus on providing improved and efficient basic and elementary education, health care and family planning services to women.

It is also recommended that those policies and plans which embody gender bias or deny women significant roles in education, family planning, health and work should be modified and changed.

In addition the laws and legislations which fail to facilitate the transformation of the subordinate status of women or reproduce patriarchal social relations that relegate women to an inferior position should also be replaced or removed

6.4 Group Formation

A systematic formation and promotion of more women organisations and groups for facilitating the process of empowerment for women in Pakistan is also recommended.

The formation of women organisations in Pakistan appears to be crucial for an effective struggle to increase their access not only to vital economic resources like credit, gainful employment and other income-generating activities for their enhanced bargaining position and economic empowerment, but also to their social and political empowerment.

Agarwal (2002), argues that women's groups can prove to be important determinants of women's fall-back position and bargaining power within the household, the community, the market and the state. According to Agarwal (1994), "Group organization empowers women to confront existing sources of oppression" (Agarwal: 1994: 465).

Initiating radical changes in changing existing 'gender system' tends to provoke resistance from those who benefit from such system and in this case, a group of women, rather than individuals, is more adequate to advance its process of change in the face of resistance (Kabeer: 2001).

Moreover, it is both society and the nation as a whole, which must realise and recognise the importance of women's role and contribution to domestic and national development.

There is a need for a new thinking and attitude towards the division of labour, and new behavior, to allow flexibility so that it gives choices to many women to move between their prescribed and new roles. This is a necessary condition for empowerment. Empowerment is a process and the result of that process requires that both women as well as men are influenced in their ways of thinking and behaviour in household, the community and society. In fact, the process of empowerment is not a linear process. Instead, it is more a spiral (Batliwala: 1994). Women may gain power in one aspect but not in other aspect. Negotiating power relations is a continuous process with trials and errors involving a good combination of covert and overt resistance (Agarwal: 1994). Controlling the patriarchal and male-dominated culture is one of the functions of the empowerment of women (Agarwal: 1994, Batliwala: 1994).

Women's individual and collective awareness and initiative is also essential for their development and for improving their fall-back position and bargaining power which in turn will give them strength to challenge and change patriarchal cultures and structures within the household, state and society.

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