



MISOGYNY: CONCEPTS AND DIMENSIONS

AVDHESH YADAV

Ph. D. Research Scholar
Department of English & MEL
University of Allahabad
Allahabad (UP) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Misogyny is the hatred, contempt, or discrimination against women. Misogyny can be expressed in different ways in the form of social discrimination, hostility, androcentrism, patriarchy, male privilege, belittling of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification. Misogyny can also be found within religious texts and mythologies, and various Western philosophers and thinkers have also been described as misogynistic. Misogyny can be further defined as a cultural attitude of hatred for females because they are female. One may argue that misogyny is a central part of sexist prejudice and ideology and, as such, is an important basis the oppression of females in male-dominated societies. Misogyny is manifested in many different ways, from jokes to pornography to violence to the self-contempt women may be taught to feel toward their own bodies.

Key Words: *Misogyny, Prejudice, Male Domination, Oppression*

INTRODUCTION

Misogyny is the hatred, contempt, or discrimination against women. Misogyny can be expressed in different ways in the form of sexual discrimination, hostility, androcentrism, patriarchy, male privilege, belittling of women, violence against women, and sexual objectification. Misogyny can also be found within religious texts and mythologies, and various Western philosophers and thinkers have also been described as misogynistic.

Misogyny can be further defined as a cultural attitude of hatred for females because they are female. One may argue that misogyny is a central part of sexist prejudice and ideology and, as such, is an important basis the oppression of females in male-dominated societies.

AVDHESH YADAV

1 Page



Misogyny is manifested in many different ways, from jokes to pornography to violence to the self-contempt women may be taught to feel toward their own bodies.

Sociologist Michael Flood at the University of Wollongong states misogyny as the hatred of women, and notes:

Though most common in men, misogyny also exists in and is practiced by women against other women or even themselves. Misogyny functions as an ideology or belief system that has accompanied patriarchal or male-dominated societies for thousands of years and continues to place women in subordinate positions with limited access to power and decision making. [...] Aristotle contended that women exist as natural deformities or imperfect males [...] Ever since, women in Western cultures have internalized their role as societal scapegoats, influenced in the twenty-first century by multimedia objectification of women with its culturally sanctioned self-loathing and fixations on plastic surgery, anorexia and bulimia.(110)

Dictionaries define misogyny as "hatred of women" and as "hatred, dislike, or mistrust of women". In 2012, primarily in response to events occurring in the Australian Parliament, the Macquarie Dictionary (which documents Australian English and New Zealand English) expanded the definition to include not only hatred of women but also "entrenched prejudices against women". The counterpart of misogyny is misandry, the hatred or dislike of men; the antonym of misogyny is philogyny, the love or fondness of women.

In his book *City of Sokrates: An Introduction to Classical Athens*, J.W. Roberts argues that older than tragedy and comedy was a misogynistic tradition in Greek literature, reaching back at least as far as Hesiod. The term *misogyny* itself comes directly into English from the Ancient Greek word *misogunia* (μισογονία), which survives in several passages.

The earlier, longer, and more complete passage comes from a moral tract known as *On Marriage* (c. 150 BC) by the stoic philosopher Antipater of Tarsus. Antipater argues that marriage is the foundation of the state, and considers it to be based on divine (polytheistic) decree. He uses *misogunia* to describe the sort of writing the tragedian Euripides eschews, stating that he "reject[s] the hatred of women in his writing". He then offers an example of this, quoting from a lost play of Euripides in which the merits of a dutiful wife are praised.(224)

The other surviving use of the original Greek word is by Chrysippus, in a fragment from on affections, quoted by Galen in *Hippocrates on Affection*. Here, *misogyny* is the first in a short

AVDHESH YADAV

2Page



list of three "disaffections"—women (*misogunia*), wine and humanity (*misanthrōpia*). Chrysippus' point is more abstract than Antipater's, and Galen quotes the passage as an example of an opinion contrary to his own. What is clear, however, is that he groups hatred of women with hatred of humanity generally, and even hatred of wine. "It was the prevailing medical opinion of his day that wine strengthens body and soul alike." (162) So Chrysippus, like his fellow stoic Antipater, views misogyny negatively, as a disease; a dislike of something that is good. It is this issue of conflicted or alternating emotions that was philosophically contentious to the ancient writers. Ricardo Salles suggests that the general stoic view was that "[a] man may not only alternate between philogyny and misogyny, philanthropy and misanthropy, but be prompted to each by the other."(485)

Aristotle has also been accused of being a misogynist; he has written that women were inferior to men. Aristotle has said that the courage of a man lies in commanding, a woman's lies in obeying; that 'matter yearns for form, as the female for the male and the ugly for the beautiful'; that women have fewer teeth than men; that a female is an incomplete male or 'as it were, a deformity': which contributes only matter and not form to the generation of offspring; that in general 'a woman is perhaps an inferior being'; that female characters in a tragedy will be inappropriate if they are too brave or too clever.

In the *Routledge philosophy guidebook to Plato and the Republic*, Nickolas Pappas describes the "problem of misogyny" and states.

In the *Apology*, Socrates calls those who plead for their lives in court "no better than women" (35b)... The *Timaeus* warns men that if they live immorally they will be reincarnated as women (42b-c; cf. 75d-e). The *Republic* contains a number of comments in the same spirit (387e, 395d-e, 398e, 431b-c, 469d), evidence of nothing so much as of contempt toward women. Even Socrates' words for his bold new proposal about marriage... suggest that the women are to be "held in common" by men. He never says that the men might be held in common by the women... We also have to acknowledge Socrates' insistence that men surpass women at any task that both sexes attempt (455c, 456a), and his remark in Book 8 that one sign of democracy's moral failure is the sexual equality it promotes.

In *Misogyny: The World's Oldest Prejudice*, Jack Holland argues that there is evidence of misogyny in the mythology of the ancient world. In Greek mythology according to Hesiod, the human race had already experienced a peaceful, autonomous existence as a companion to the gods before the creation of women. When Prometheus decides to steal the secret of fire from the gods, Zeus becomes infuriated and decides to punish humankind with an "evil thing for their delight". This "evil thing" is Pandora, the first woman, who carried a jar (usually described—incorrectly—as a box) which she was told to never open. Epimetheus (the brother

AVDHESH YADAV

3P a g e



of Prometheus) is overwhelmed by her beauty, disregards Prometheus' warnings about her, and marries her. Pandora cannot resist peeking into the jar, and by opening it she unleashes into the world all evil; labour, sickness, old age, and death.(12-13)

Differences in tradition and interpretations of scripture have caused sects of Christianity to differ in their beliefs with regard their treatment of women.

In *The Troublesome Helpmate*, Katharine M. Rogers argues that Christianity is misogynistic, and she lists what she says are specific examples of misogyny in the Pauline epistles. She expresses that the foundations of early Christian misogyny — its guilt about sex, its insistence on female subjection, its dread of female seduction — are all in St. Paul's epistles.

In K. K. Ruthven's *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction*, Ruthven makes reference to Rogers' book and argues that the legacy of Christian misogyny was consolidated by the so-called 'Fathers' of the Church, like Tertullian, who thought a woman was not only 'the gateway of the devil' but also 'a temple built over a sewer'.

However, some other scholars have argued that Christianity does not include misogynistic principles, or at least that a proper interpretation of Christianity would not include misogynistic principles. David M. Scholer, a biblical scholar at Fuller Theological Seminary, stated that the verse Galatians 3:28 ("There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus") is "the fundamental Pauline theological basis for the inclusion of women and men as equal and mutual partners in all of the ministries of the church.(162)In his book *Equality in Christ? Galatians 3:28 and the Gender Dispute*, Richard Hove argues that—while Galatians 3:28 does mean that one's sex does not affect salvation—"there remains a pattern in which the wife is to emulate the church's submission to Christ (Eph 5:21-33) and the husband is to emulate Christ's love for the church."

In *Christian Men Who Hate Women*, clinical psychologist Margaret J. Rinck has written that Christian social culture often allows a misogynist "misuse of the biblical ideal of submission". However, she argues that this a distortion of the "healthy relationship of mutual submission" which is actually specified in Christian doctrine, where "[l]ove is based on a deep, mutual respect as the guiding principle behind all decisions, actions, and plans".(85) Similarly, Catholic scholar Christopher West argues that "male domination violates God's plan and is the specific result of sin".(81)

In his book *Scientology: A New Slant on Life*, L. Ron Hubbard wrote the that a society in which women are taught anything but the management of a family, the care of men, and the creation of the future generation is a society which is on its way out. In the same book, he

AVDHESH YADAV

4P a g e



also argued that the historian can peg the point where a society begins its sharpest decline at the instant when women begin to take part, on an equal footing with men, in political and business affairs, since this means that the men are decadent and the women are no longer women. This is not a sermon on the role or position of women; it is a statement of bald and basic fact.

As we have interpreted that misogyny has been prevalent in different forms and expressions in all around the world. It has become so much powerful practice in the world. Women have been the real culprit of such misogynistic tendencies. Men and women are basically different from each other. It does not allow men to hate women and they are complementary to each other. But this gender harmony cannot be established unless women are given equal opportunities in life as men are given.

WORKS CITED

- Haskell, Molly. *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*. 1974. University of Chicago Press, 1987.
- Holland, Jack. *Misogyny: The World's Oldest Prejudice*. 2006.
- Marshall, Gordon. 'Misogyny'. In *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Johnson, Allan G. 'Misogyny'. In *Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User's Guide to Sociological Language*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000.
- Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. New York: Doubleday, 1970.
- Morgan, Fidelis. *A Misogynist's Source Book*.
- Patai, Daphne, and Noretta Koertge. *Professing Feminism: Cautionary Tales from the Strange World of Women's Studies*. 1995. ISBN 0-465-09827-4
- Rogers, Katharine M. *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature*. 1966.