

Duggar Women's Familial Exclusion Due to Socio-Cultural Rituals: An Overview

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Abstract

Exclusion a widely acclaimed term is explained by World Health Organization (WHO) as “a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state” (United Nations, 2016, p. 18). Social exclusion excludes a person or even a group from enjoying basic rights reserved for human beings, which leads to their deprivation and impoverishment. It checks the participation of an individual in various social, political, economic and cultural spheres resulting in their exclusion and alienation from the mainstream. Women across cultures are treated as the ‘other’ and being addressed as members of ‘the second sex’ are excluded and alienated from the mainstream which curtails their right to freely participate and act, and mars their prospect of proper functioning as an individual, thereby resulting in their exclusion. Their freedom is constantly curtailed and kept under check on the basis of various norms and rituals that are specifically designed by patriarchy to ensure their social exclusion: “...her wings are cut and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly” (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 660). Their body is used as a tool to subordinate, subjugate and exclude them as it is targeted impure and inferior to men. Further, instead of acknowledging the biological differences between the bodies of men and women, a woman's body and bodily processes like

menstruation is treated as a “curse” (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 62) rather than a blessing which supports life process: “The menstruating woman spoils harvests, devastates gardens, kills seeds, makes fruit fall, kills bees; if she touches the wine, it turns to vinegar; milk sours ...” (p. 202). The present paper attempts to unravel diverse forms of familial exclusion that Duggar women face due to rituals, cultural practices and their female body as a site of impurity.

Keywords: women, social exclusion, socio-cultural rituals, religion.

Introduction

The word ‘exclusion’ is broadly defined as the condition or practice of excluding certain person or group of persons from enjoying certain basic rights and liberties in their life. In the book *Understanding and Tackling Social Exclusion: Final Report to the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health from the Social Exclusion Knowledge Network*, ‘exclusion’ is defined as:

dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions—economic, political, social and cultural—and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country and global levels. It results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterized by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights which leads to health inequalities. (Popay et al., 2008, p. 2)

As such ‘social exclusion’ is a term which denotes exclusion or marginalization of a certain person or a group of people from enjoying basic human rights or from freely participating in various social, political, economic or cultural activities which a normal human being otherwise enjoys, and World Health Organization (WHO) defines the term as “a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state” (United Nations, 2016, p. 18). Thus, exclusion is a form of discrimination which occurs when a certain person or group of people are prevented from participating equally in various social, political, economic and cultural activities of their respective community. In India, social exclusion is generally based on identities like caste, community, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability. Social exclusion mars opportunities of development by denying socially excluded people the opportunities, facilities, choices, and a voice to claim their rights. Thus, socially excluded people differ from poor people due to the fact that like poor people they are not affected by the lack of resources

rather they suffer due to lack of access to these resources, thereby, causing greater levels of poverty in them. The causes and consequences of marginalization depend on various factors such as geographical, historical, political and economic conditions prevalent in a country. As a result of it the concept and definition of exclusion varies in different countries, though the aftermath and result of exclusion would be the same thereby, leading to partial development of both country and its people. In India people face exclusion because of various factors such as caste, color, creed, religion, minority-based exclusion, etc. The government of India conscious about the prevailing degraded condition of a large number of marginalized people in the country has taken measures from time to time to evade such unjust conditions. One such initiation is 'The Poorest Areas Civil Society' (PACS) program undertaken by Indian government in 2001 which explored the plight of five major socially excluded ethnic groups of India including women, Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, Muslims and people with disabilities with the aim to generate awareness among the socially excluded sections of the country and also to "cut the poverty rate in India in half by the year 2015" ("Poorest Areas Civil Society Program", 2006).

Culture

Culture is defined by *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as "the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group" (Hornby, 1997, p. 373). The word 'culture' is originated from the Latin word *cultura* which is further derived from the verb *colo* which means "to tend", 'to cultivate,' and 'to till,' among other things" (qtd. in Minkov, 2013, p. 10). As verb *colo* signifies animus or character, thus, culture is the cultivation of human character which results in the formation of identity of a person which thereby is embedded in a particular culture/society in which the person is raised. Although culture is the basis of civilization formation, however, sometimes the same culture becomes a source of oppression to some human beings leading to their exclusion and exploitation. The majority of world's cultures are patriarchal in nature as a result the various norms and cultures of society are male-centric. Patriarchal cultures place the interest of men in preeminence, consequently, the interests and welfare of women are generally neglected thereby rendering them to the periphery whereas men occupy the center of power. Women are treated as chattels and denied space as human beings in society, "Yes, women in general are today inferior to men; that is, their situation provides them with fewer possibilities" (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 33). Therefore, without negotiations, women also belong to the group of socially marginalized/excluded people and endure various types of marginalization. Women suffer

exclusion in almost every sphere including social, political, economic and cultural realm which is deeply influenced and molded by religion in shaping and forming various societal norms and regulations.

Religion

Religion has a direct influence on the culture of a society, which further influences the socio-economic and political spheres of a particular society. As the relation between religion and culture is reciprocal, religious systems are also tinged with “social norms and patterns of social organization” (Klingorová and Havlíček, 2015, p. 2). The status of women in a society depends primarily on the “interpretation of religious texts and of the cultural and institutional set-up of religious communities” (p. 2), and patriarchy has therefore, inculcated exclusion of women through the enunciation of religion and socio-cultural rituals in antifeminist string to suit its vested interest of subjugating and dominating women. Since ages women in India have been dominated in the name of culture and religion which patriarchy easily influences and articulates according to its requirements. As a result, women are the direct victims of the socio-cultural and religious prejudices that patriarchy inflicts on them to curtail their freedom:

Lawmakers, priests, philosophers, writers, and scholars have gone to great lengths to prove that women’s subordinate condition was willed in heaven and profitable on earth. Religions forged by men reflect this will for domination: they found ammunition in the legends of Eve and Pandora. They have put philosophy and theology in their service (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 31)

In order to analyze the condition of women in a particular society it is essential to scrutinize the status of women accorded by religion as religion plays an important function in determining the position of women in a society. Further, culture and religion are interdependent factors. Thus, through the paradigms of culture and religion, chains of restrictions are imposed on women by framing and dispersing the concept of “good” and “bad” woman as they are taught that the good women are those who conform to the norms set by patriarchy. As per these norms women have ‘no say’ in any matter and must follow everything taught to them unquestioningly.

Women across India are often denied the space which they as humans deserve. Besides, women are prevented from freely participating in various rituals and ceremonies of their respective community, which further ensures their familial exclusion and marginalization.

Thus, a sense of inferiority is inculcated in women as they are made to believe that they are the 'other' or 'inferior' beings because their body is physiologically 'different' and therefore, 'the other' or secondary in comparison to men and which needs constant protection and care of men to survive as depicted in the ancient Hindu text *Manusmriti*:

A girl, a young woman, or even an old woman should not do anything independently, even in (her own) house. [148] In childhood a woman should be under her father's control, in youth under her husband's, and when her husband is dead, under her sons'. She should not have independence. [149] A woman should not try to separate herself from her father, her husband, or her sons, for her separation from them would make both (her own and her husband's) families contemptible. (Doniger & Smith, 1991, p.116)

Thus, in Hindu society a woman is never allowed to gain independent identity as her status is always associated with father or husband. The shackles of patriarchy molded in the form of religion and culture bind women to domestic unpaid labor and reduce their participation and status in the society.

Duggar culture

Duggar culture is basically a culture practiced by the natives of "Duggar Pradesh". The Duggar community is basically an Indo-Aryan, ethno-linguistic group mainly found in the south-east Asian countries including India and Pakistan. Jammu region is covered on the north by Pir Panjal range of the middle Himalayas, on south by Punjab, on east by Ladakh region and on west by Pakistan. Earlier confined to Jammu region, the community is now scattered in various parts of Indian states like Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and other parts of both the countries India and Pakistan and abroad as well and particularly uses Dogri language as their mother tongue which marks their ethnicity. The religious communities among the Duggars include Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist. Jammu region is populated mainly by two religious' communities, Hindu and Muslim. Hindus form the largest majority in Jammu whereas Muslims come after them as being the second largest in terms of population. Hence, the Hindus of Jammu region are mainly termed as Duggars, the most dominant community among Hindus in Jammu region, and are segregated from other ethnic communities through their culture and their mother tongue. Duggar culture is basically a rich culture full of festivals, fairs as well as folksongs like *bakh,geetru*, etc., and folkdances like *kud*, *Chhaja* Dance, *Heran* Dance (deer-dance), *ko* dance (crow-dance) etc. Duggar people basically represent the warrior tribe and artists whose credentials have been duly

acknowledged worldwide like their separate regiment in Indian army called Dogra regiment as well as their famous paintings, especially Basholi paintings, art, crafts and handicrafts. The paper focuses on the various socio-cultural evils hidden in the rich Duggar culture to underscore how these practices become a source of familial exclusion and exploitation of Duggar women.

Like different cultures spread across India, Duggar culture, too, is a patriarchal culture. Patriarchy has delimited and defamed the efficacies of women by limiting the role of women to producing offspring and taking care of household chores as it considers women weak and inept to support and take care of themselves. While describing the various duties associated with women it is clearly mentioned in *Manusmriti*, the sacred Hindu Civil Law or '*Manav Dharma Sastra*' that women, the secondary beings should be restricted to home only and should be kept busy with the menial homely chores, "The birth of children, the nurturing of those born . . ." (Acharya, 1990, p. 19) rather than indulging in acquiring knowledge or engaging in politics like men. Women are treated as objects of possession and men are declared sole owner of women and are advised to engage women in depreciating tasks so as to prevent them from acquiring knowledge, skills and education to establish their independent identity "he should keep her busy amassing and spending money, engaging in purification, attending to her duty, cooking food, and looking after the furniture" (Doniger & Smith, 1991, p. 170). Women are strictly instructed to adhere to the men of their family like father, brother or husband in order to gain respect in the society because her identity is always associated with men: she is known in the society with respect to her relation with men of the family:

A woman should not try to separate herself from her father, her husband, or her sons, for her separation from them would make both (her own and her husband's) families contemptible. [150] She should always be cheerful, and clever at household affairs; she should keep her utensils well-polished and not have too free a hand in spending. (Doniger & Smith, 1991, p. 116)

which shows that all the laws are framed governing the patriarchal norms to serve the vested interest of men by keeping women at unfavorable and conciliation position. The qualities like honor and virtue are always associated with women of family and special focus is laid on guarding their virtue as they are considered 'sensory beings' who are easily swayed by passion which could lead to corruption of family lineage, "Men must make their women dependent day and night, and keep under their own control those who are attached to sensory

objects. [3]" (Doniger & Smith, 1991, p.170). The prevalence of such notions over a period of time has segregated women only for the purpose of reproduction in order to continue the family lineage, "Women were created to bear children, and men to carry on the line; that is why the revealed canon prescribes a joint duty (for a man) together with his wife" (Doniger & Smith, 1991, p.174). Accordingly, the status of women is reduced to mere 'reproducing machines' rather than being humans and equal to men.

As Duggar culture is also embedded in Hindu religion, women of the community face similar segregation, injustice and discrimination on the basis of religion which becomes an inevitable part of culture. The plight of Duggar women as such is no different from women of other communities and tribes. They also suffer atrocities and subjugation on the pretext of various religious and socio-cultural norms prevalent in the community. Their plight is depicted in a Duggar folk tale entitled "Rulla's Water channel" in which the deplorable plight of a Duggar woman named Rulla is presented as an object of sacrifice like animals for the construction of a water channel by her father-in-law in the absence of her husband, "You have to be sacrificed and you should come to your in-laws' palace early" (Dogri Folk Tales 115). Her plight as an object of immolation represents the plight of common women whose life solely depends on the decisions taken on their behalf by the male members of their family. The brutality with which Rulla is killed in the absence of her husband is depicted through the various requests she makes to the masons who walled her up between stones:

Brothers, raise the stones to cover everything but let my arms remain free, otherwise how will I put my arms around my beloved's neck, when he comes?" . . . Brothers, masons, do not cover my eyes. My beloved will surely come this way and I'll have a chance to see him for the last time" (p. 116).

Thus, like Rulla, Duggar women are considered as scapegoats born to obey, serve, and to die for their men:

She should always be cheerful, and clever at household affairs; she should keep her utensils well polished and not have too free a hand in spending. [151] When her father, or her brother with her father's permission, gives her to someone, she should obey that man while he is alive and not violate her vow to him when he is dead. (Doniger & Smith, 1991, p. 116)

Thus, becoming an 'object': "since woman is destined to be possessed, her body has to provide the inert and passive qualities of an object" (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 211).

Exclusion of women during rituals and ceremonies

Duggar community has a rich cultural heritage. There are many rituals and ceremonies prevalent in the community which distinguishes it from other communities. Generally, Duggar women engage themselves in performing various rituals and prayers throughout their lives; however, the irony is that these rituals are generally centered around men rather than on themselves as these rituals and prayers are meant for the well-being of men and male children in the family rather than for both men and women who are vital for a balanced family. Like other societies in the country, Duggar community is also a male-dominated community and women's role and status is generally limited to the relationships they hold in the life of the men of the family such as being mother, daughter, sister or wife to them, "A woman should not try to separate herself from her father, her husband, or her sons, for her separation from them would make both (her own and her husband's) families contemptible. [150]" (Doniger & Smith, 1991, p. 116). As such the various rituals are also generally centered on men, son or husband. One such ritual is *Pugga vrata* also known as *Sakat Chauth*, *Ganesh Chauth* or *Tilkuta Chauth*. On this day Duggar women observe fast to please God seeking long and healthy life of their sons. On this occasion, a special type of sweet called *Pugga* is prepared from sesame seeds (*til*) and jaggery which is offered to God as *prasad*. The deities worshipped during this fast are mainly Lord Ganesha and Moon God to whom *pugga* is offered to seek their blessings by mothers for the prosperity of their sons. Women observe fast from the early morning and in the evening they end up their fast by offering *arghaya* (holy water and *pugga*) to Moon God, after which women eat *pugga*. The myth associated with the *pugga vrat* is that once a woman accidentally killed a young one of an animal. The misdeed angered gods and they punished her by killing all her children. She then observed *pugga vrat* to repent for her sin after which gods were pleased with her repentance and bestowed blessings on her by returning all her children alive back to her. After that, the tradition of observing *pugga vrat* continued in the community and mothers celebrate the ritual by observing fast for their children. Though earlier the myth observed a gender-neutral behavior but since culture influences religion and rituals greatly so over a period of time the festival became limited only to male children of the family rather than for both male and female children. Thus, it is evident from this ritual that son preference is an inevitable part of Duggar culture which results in exclusion and marginalization of girl child. Son preference is a major practice in South Asia. Son is considered as the only way of maintaining family progeny as well as performing various rituals related to the death of parents. Therefore, girl children are

neglected because they are tagged *praya-dhan* (estranged property) which becomes a major impediment in the education and holistic development of girl child. Son preference becomes a major impediment in the education of girl child as focus is provided to educate male child so that he can serve the family whereas girls are considered as property of others as they are to be married to another family and as such cannot look after their parental family. After marriage a woman generally faces compulsion both in evident and in evident forms by her in-law's family to produce a male heir. Further, her status in the family solely depends on how many male children she is able to give to the family. If a woman is unable to bear a child, especially male child she is treated as burden and unwanted family member and she is subjected to various types of mistreatments and even violence. She is even sometimes ostracized by her in-laws as the concept of men being the only rightful heir is highly inculcated in the various South Asian communities including Dogra community too: “. . . in South Asia, women benefit from having sons and, conversely, suffer from having daughters” (Rew et al., 2013, p. 154).

Another ritual of the Duggar community which leads to the alienation of women is *Bachh Dua*. This ritual is also dedicated to the male members of the family. The ritual falls in the month of September-October every year. On this day, women observe fast and perform pooja (obeisance) to the local deities and offer them sweet waffle or bun called *rutt*. In this ritual too, women observe day fast and visit temple and offer the *rutt*, soaked chickpeas and turmeric to God. Further, oxen and bull, which symbolize men, are prepared of flour dough and are worshipped and offered to God for the long life of male members of the family. The worship of oxen and bull represents the praise and admiration of male sex which is considered as the primary sex. Further, this ritual is also observed by women for the sake of having male children. The myth behind this ritual tells the tale of miscommunication between a woman and her daughter-in-law where she told her daughter-in-law to cook '*mach*' (fish) but due to miscommunication of the word *mach* with *bach*, she instead cooked '*bach*' (male-calf). In Hindu culture, cows are revered and considered as sacred being so cooking calf is considered sin as well. When both of them realized their mistake, they immediately prayed to God to return the '*bach*' before the mother cow returns from grazing as she could not bear the pain of parting with her young one. And God fulfilled their wish and returned the male calf or *bach*. Since then, the occasion of benevolence that God showered on both the women is marked by observing fast and making oxen and bull which are offered to God and prayers are made for male children of the family. Thus, *Bachh Duais* entrenched in patriarchal culture of Dogra

community. Thus, dominant patriarchal string of the Duggars becomes a hurdle in developing gender-neutral society which is progressive both for men and women. Though various rituals like *Bachh Dua* are celebrated by women but in reality, these very rituals become a mark of distinction on the basis of sex which ultimately becomes unhealthy and harmful for the proper development and education of daughters and becomes a source of discrimination and exclusion of women. The dedication with which Duggar women observe the ritual for having a male child highlights the prevalent patriarchal string of Dogra community where men are preferred as being warriors and protectors of both tribe and family and women are considered 'weak' and neglected beings who constantly need security and shelter.

Drubdiis another similar kind of ceremony celebrated among Duggars where women worship Goddess Laxmi and observe fast. The sweet bread or '*rutt*' is prepared and offered to the Goddess along with soaked chickpeas. the ritual is usually celebrated near some water body or even in a temple and a Dogri folksong is sung while making offerings to the Goddess, the lyrics of which are: *Ek, do, teen, chaar, panch, chae, sat, aath, naw, das, gayarah, bahrah, teerah, chodahh, pandrah, solahh/solahh gandhan solahh tandha/taggha badha dudh puttar nawablabba/ rani pujje raje di main puja suhage di/rani raj main Suhag/pani detta darbar*(one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen/sixteen knots are tied in a sacred thread bound on the wrist/milk like precious and princely son is what I got/the queen prays for king whereas I pray for the long life of my husband/queen got king and me a husband/I offer water in the temple) (trans. by the paper writer). The ritual is observed to pray for the long life of males, especially husband, father and sons. This ritual like other rituals also denotes how women's existence is negligible in contrast to the male members of the community.

Besides, there are many other rituals dedicated to the celebration of the birth of a boy in the Duggar culture. *Sutrade* notes one such ritual eminent in Dogra community which is generally celebrated on the eleventh day after the birth of a baby boy in the family. Customarily, relatives and friends are invited to share the happiness of the family and thank giving prayers and *shagun* (money as gift) is given to the newly born boy as blessings. A pious thread called *sutra* is tied to the wrist of child which becomes a pious sign that the new born boy has become a member and heir to the family and will ensure the continuity of progeny of the family unlike a girl child who ultimately has to be sent away in marriage and thus, does belong to the family. This notion marks the distinction and superiority of having boy over girl and as such family feels blessed for having an 'heir' to the family. Therefore, in the ceremony

of *sutra* blessings are showered for the well-being and long life of boy born in a family. When a boy reaches the age of two years tonsure ceremony called *Mundan* takes place among Duggar community. To mark the occasion the hair of male child is cut by his maternal uncle and a grand feast is organized by the family in which sweets are distributed. Prayers are also offered to the local deities in order to thank them for blessing the family with a male child, thereby continuing their progeny. Thus, the various ceremonies related to child birth are dedicated to the male child only which thereby becomes a source of gender discrimination prevalent in conscious form in Duggar society.

Since times immemorial, marriage is provided a huge importance in societal setup. It forms a basic institution of identity creation, especially for women as the status of a woman after marriage is associated with a man which gives her recognition and marks her place in the society. The significance attached to marriage can be examined through the downtrodden status which is provided to widows and unmarried women who are considered as liabilities on society. Hence, in patriarchal society the identity of a woman is always associated with men in one way or the other whether being with father before marriage, with husband after marriage and with son after the death of husband. Ancient Hindu laws written in *Manav Dharmasastra* or *Manusmriti* also advocate woman a subordinate being in need of constant support and care of men in the form of father, husband or son to sustain her life:

Men must make their women dependent day and night, and keep under their own control those who are attached to sensory objects. [3] Her father guards her in childhood, her husband guards her in youth, and her sons guard her in old age. A woman is not fit for independence” (Doniger & Smith, 1991, p. 170).

Tulsi (Basil) Puja is a ritual observed by Duggar women. It is celebrated “on any of the days between the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of the Hindu lunar month Kartik to the full moon day (Purnimā) of Kartik” (*Spiritual Significance of Tulsi Vivah*). The festival is marked by the celebration of Tulsi-Shaligram¹ wedding where in women also perform puja of revered Tulsi plant and observe fast. Tulsi plant holds sacred significance in Hindu religion besides being known for its medicinal properties as it is the symbol of faith and hope. The Tulsi plant is decked up like a bride along with ornaments including bangles and a red dupatta (veil) is draped around it. In the evening, the marriage ritual is performed and the idol of Shaligram is moved around the Tulsi plant seven times like the marriage rituals performed in Hindu society to mark the culmination of the ceremony. This Puja is performed by married

women for marital bliss. Young girls also perform the *puja*(worship)for suitable husband. Thus, marriage is considered an important institution in Duggar society:“The destiny that society traditionally offers women is marriage. Even today, most women are, were, or plan to be married, or they suffer from not being so” (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 502).

Another ceremony to mark the importance and dependence of men in women’s life is *Raksha Bhandan* festivalin which women and girls pray for the long life of their brothers and tie *rakhi*, a colourful thread on the wrist of the brother, which symbolizes the sister’s prayer for protection of her brother and hope of help in adverse circumstances from him. Woman considered weak, unable to protect herself is made to rely on her brother, father and husband for protection throughout life. Thus, a sense of inferiority, powerlessness and subjugation is inculcated in women and girls through such patriarchal customs and traditions so as to prevent them from realizing their full potential and rendering them as mere vulnerable victims at the hands of patriarchy.

Karva chauth is another important fast ritual observed generally by married women throughout India includingDuggar women. It is celebrated by Hindu women on the fourth day after *Purnima* (full moon) in the month of *Kartikey*, the eighth month ina traditional Hindu calendar, and the tenth month in the English calendar.On this day, women observe fast to pray for the long life of their husbands. In the early morning before sunrise women eat *sargi*(first meal) and after that they fast for the whole day. Women apply henna, considered auspicious, on their hands. In the evening, women decked in bright, glittery clothes and jewelry sit in a circle exchanging their *puja thalis*(prayer plates) and one woman narrates mythical story associated with the fast. At night after seeing moon through sieve and offer ingrice, sweets, dry fruits and water to Moon god they touch the feet of their husband and parents-in-law to seek blessings. There are various myths related to the fast.² Thus, *Karwa Chauth* is a ritual observed to celebrate marital bond and a prayer to make it life-long as “widowhood victimizes the woman” (Ngongkum,2016, p. 138), and as such is treated as a curse in patriarchal society. Thus, the various socio-cultural practices become a source of prejudice against women as these rituals are largely based on myths “which recommend, prescribe or validate the society’s norms, values, code of conduct, social . . . and society’s sense of identity” (Kolawole, 1998, p. 7). In a patriarchal society, woman is regarded passive though she is equated with mother nature, the prime soul of all beings: “She is earth and man seed; she is water, and he is fire” (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 198).

Exclusion of women due to myths and taboos

Further, women face exclusion and marginalization because of their body and bodily processes based on various myths propagated by religion and socio-cultural pretext. Menstruation 'the curse' is one such notion articulated by patriarchy to marginalize women on various religious and cultural ploys. Menstruation is a biological process which plays a crucial role in carrying out reproductive cycles, though, "since patriarchy, only harmful powers have been attributed to the bizarre liquor flowing from the feminine sex" (p. 202). Duggar women are excluded from performing various religious rituals during this period as they are believed 'impious' and 'impure'. They are prevented from entering a temple or performing puja or touching any holy objects or sacred books as it is believed their touch would defile the divinity of holy objects as affirmed by an old English saying, "Oh! Menstruating woman, thou'rt a fiend/From whom all nature should be closely screened!" (p. 202).

Besides, exclusion on religious front Duggar women are also controlled through cultural norms during menstruation days. Women are not allowed to enter in kitchen or even to touch pickles and the food cooked for male members of the family as it is believed that their touch would defile their purity and would be ominous for the men in the family. Thus, women face exclusion and marginalization on both cultural and religious fronts on the basis of various myths and superstitions associated with menstruation not based on logic but still commonly practiced among various societies as pointed out by Beauvoir (2011):

The menstruating woman spoils harvests, devastates gardens, kills seeds, makes fruit fall, kills bees; if she touches the wine, it turns to vinegar; milk sours..." (p. 202). Among the restrictions imposed on women, menstrual taboo is a major halt to their development as "it has always been surrounded by taboos and myths that exclude women from many aspects of socio-cultural life. (Garg & Anand, 1997, p. 184).

Disregarding the scientific reason behind the menstrual process, Duggar women like their counterparts in many societies, are debarred and excluded from various rituals as a menstruating woman is considered 'impious' and hence her participation is restricted in religio-cultural functions. Thus, patriarchy has manipulated religion and culture and utilized it as propaganda against women for discrimination:

And if a woman has an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even. And everything that she

lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: everything also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean. And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 202)

Another perpetual belief of impurity is associated with childbirth ;though motherhood is a blessing. After childbirth the mother is considered impious and unfit to return to her daily chores and thus, is kept secluded and her movement is restricted within a single room for twenty-one days. After eleven days, she and the new born baby are given ritualistic bath according to the customs of the Duggar culture which vary according to different tribes within the culture. After this ceremonial bath the mother is considered pious and she is permitted to return to her normal life. Though it is evident that both father and mother are involved in the birth of a child, however, during the process of childbirth, it is only the ‘mother who is considered as impure rather than father which becomes a source of exclusion of new mother from mainstream as it restricts her movement and freedom, “The pollution caused by a corpse affects all (co-feeding relatives), but (the pollution of) a birth affects the mother and father. (The pollution of) a birth is just for the mother, for the father becomes unpolluted by washing” (Doniger & Smith, 1991, p. 112). However, this belief of impurity of ‘new mother’ being associated with childbirth is witnessed not only in Duggar community and among various communities across India but in various cultures prevalent throughout the world, for example, the religio-cultural beliefs of Jews also consider a new mother as impious and thus, inefficient to perform her daily obligations:

Any woman who conceives and gives birth to a male (infant) will be impure seven days; according to the days of the separation of her menstruation she will be impure . . . And thirty-three days she will remain in her impure blood. She will neither touch anything holy nor enter into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. (Thiessen, 2012, p. 16)

Thus, Duggar women including women around the world are forced to remain confined to the plight of their tagged ‘inferior sex’ and are barred from participating in various socio-cultural and religious customs and rituals of their respective community on the precepts of culture and tradition molded and motivated by patriarchy for the vested interests of men to hold power and to keep women in a subordinated position. The subordination of women can be defined as:

. . . ‘women’s subordination’ refers to the inferior position of women, their lack of access to resources and decision making etc., and to the patriarchal domination that women are

subjected to in most societies. So, women's subordination means the inferior position of women to men. The feeling of powerlessness, discrimination and experience of limited self-esteem and self-confidence jointly contribute to the subordination of women. (Sultana, 2012, p. 7)

The present paper highlights the gender-based prejudices and discriminations faced by Duggar women based on the context of various socio-cultural and religious rituals and customs prevalent in Duggar culture, which directly or indirectly become a medium of seclusion and exclusion of Duggar women in the present time of development, technology and globalization. Both 'sex' and 'gender' differences between women and men, intertwined with socio-cultural norms contribute to create differences in men's and women's spaces within familial relationships, placing women at a disadvantaged position of inferiority as compared to men because all celebrations and markings :birth, feasting, fasting are reserved for men whereas women, the one who nurture life by giving birth to them are excluded on the pretext of being 'impure', 'polluted' and thus 'insignificant'.

Notes

¹In this ritual, marriage of Lord Vishnu in the form of Shaligram is performed with Tulsi plant which is believed to provide a boon of good luck and happy marital life. Unmarried girls also observe the fast to get a good husband. The religious myth behind the ceremony is that once Tulsi devi because of the curse from Lord Ganesha became married to a demon Shankhchur. As the torments of the demon increased Lord Krishna wanted to kill the demon but could not do so because the religious uprightness of his wife Tulsi became a shield for him and it was impossible to defeat him. Therefore, in order to break her religious piety, Lord Krishna disguised himself as Shankchur and went to Tulsi and engaged in romantic passion because of which it is believed that her religious purity and chastity was destroyed due to which Lord Krishna was finally able to kill Shankchur. However, Tulsi Devi immediately came to know his trick and asked him to come to his real form. When Lord Krishna finally revealed himself, she was astonished to see her deity engaged in polluting her morality. So she cursed Lord Krishna that as his heart has become of stone now because of which he has committed such a sin so shall he be converted to a stone. However, Lord Krishna blessed her with the boon that while in the stone form or *shaligram* he will always remain close to her who will reside in the sacred form of Tulsi plant. Thus, the marriage of *shaligram* and Tulsi plant is celebrated to mark the union of God with purity.

²One such popular myth associated with the fast is that once there was a beautiful queen, Veervati. She was the only sister of seven brothers. She observed her first *Karwa Chauth* in her parents' house. She began strict fast from early morning but in the evening, she was desperate for the arise of moon as she could not remain without food and water for much long. Her brothers were not able to tolerate her pathetic condition and hatched a plan. One of the brothers climbed the tallest tree and held up a sieve behind a lamp which gave the impression that moon has arisen. The other brothers called her out to make her see the so-called moon. She believed them and broke her fast. However, after sometime she received the news that her husband has died. She prayed to the Goddess who informed her about the reality. She then asked her to return to her husband's house and remain with his dead body for a year. On the next year when *Karwa Chauth* would be celebrated she should observe a strict fast after which her husband would come to life again. She did as she was instructed and was thus, able to be reunited with her husband.

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