

PLAYING THE VICTIM: DISMANTLING MENINISM

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“Patriarchy is dehumanizing men”
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Abstract: The article is an attempt at explaining and deconstructing the foundations and misconceptions of the narrative of 'Meninism'. The self-proclaimed baseless 'discourse' of 'Meninism', has departed from its own original foundation and has no rational validity of anything that this distorted view of meninism propagates as of course, it has shifted from its original meaning i.e. Kay's conception. We must change the whole debate of meninist approach if not do away with it as it has now become intrinsically corrupt and radical as well as toxic in nature. The article tries to provide an in depth understanding of the history of the term 'Meninism' and further, tries to dismantle its new meaning and narrative of men being the victims of feminism and feminist thought by providing rational and factual basis on which feminist thought is based. It provides a critical understanding of Patriarchy and highlights the hidden repercussions of the practice of patriarchy for men as well as women, hence explaining patriarchal thought as a 'double edged sword'.

The article further tries to provide a more rational thought that a critical and factual lens to the reader about, feminism, Meninism, Patriarchy, Patriarchy vs. Patriarchies.

Keywords: Meninism, Feminism, Patriarchies, Dehumanization.

The term 'Meninism' or 'Meninist' first came in to discourse by Feminist.com. The terminology was used in a manifesto in the year 2001, which described “meninists as an organization or group of the men who supported the women's struggle for equal rights and representation. In easy words, men who are feminists hence, meninist (Feminist.com:2001). The organization was found by Tom Zatar Kay, the husband of Marianne Schnall, the founder of feminist.com.

THE MISINTERPRETATION

Misinterpretation becomes a hurdle in the achievements of Social Movements and struggles like the meaning of feminism is expanded in a wrong way through popular politics and actions in simple words Feminism is a fight between Women vs Patriarchies. Anru Lee believes that patriarchy is interwoven with other social structures. On ground a popular opinion has been established that feminism is against men. Sadly, however noble and rational Kay's conception of meninism was, it did not hold up for long. It was not long before the term 'meninism' started gaining ground as the term which supports the idea that men are much victimized in the 21st century by women and their needs and demands need to be heard. Worth noticing is the fact that, feminism started as a movement against oppression, it has its struggles in history and is still going strong, and has become a way of living and articulating life. Feminism as a struggle started in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, it started because it was evident that the status of women needed to be uplifted as they were at bay from the political, social, economic or any kind of rights that a human in a society governed by institutions can and should have.

Meninism started gaining this radical meaning through a campaign on twitter- #MeninistTwitter, started by Ti Balogun, who in an interview in 2013 with the *Huffpost*, apprehensively said that 'feminism has its place in the society and there are clearly women who are oppressed'.

WHO ARE MEN FIGHTING?

The sad part is, many among our youth are quickly impressed by this notion of men being oppressed and start victimizing themselves as oppressed. In a conversation with a friend, he very passionately happened to mention this and started counting all the things that we as men have to go through and how bad it is for us and why women should be thankful to have men like us around. It is mentioned quite a bit in personal as well as public spaces that women are taking unjust advantage of the laws pertaining to their safety and men are the ones who are bearing the brunt of that.

While this cannot be negated that there are fake cases on men, the question still remains how much? Is the number of men facing such issues higher than the women that are at the right side of things? Since when are men facing this issue, because truth be told, the need for women's rights and laws are evident since the advent of time.

It is also a topic of conversation for these “meninists” how men work so much have their work struggles and still put their head down and never express their feelings and have to gulp their trauma.

Granted, society has for a long time told men it is not okay to cry, it is effeminate to express emotions and they have to be always like a rock which does not have any feelings. But, come to think of it, who made these rules? Society. And who made the rules in the society? With an in -depth perusal of history, we can say the answer is- men.

To better understand this, we must study the 'patriarchies' as highlighted by the noted scholar and activist Kamla Bhasin, Bhasin provides a holistic perspective towards patriarchy and patriarchies, she highlights the fact that the practice of patriarchy is a double edged sword, in that, it is clearly evidently that it hurts women, but it is also worth noticing that it also hurts the perpetrators i.e men on many different levels, for example the patriarchal norm of men not crying and expressing themselves, alienates them from themselves, their feelings and their individuality and hence, stops them from ever fully being themselves and reaching their highest potential.

Another problem with this notion of the society is, that, by propagating such behavior, theories, definitions etc. Males are being conditioned to fit into the societal construct and notions of what is a 'man', and this socialization actually contradicts the notion of the 'powerful man' as the male is never left free to his own will-to choose, select, behave or react in a manner of their own choice! So, essentially, the power display that is patriarchy, robs the perpetrators themselves of any power over themselves and their choices in life.

And as far as the point of quietly working goes, answer this- comparatively, who has got the liberty to work? Who still has to face the patriarchal norms set up for them by the other sex? I'm sure we have the answer.

GENDERED SOCIALIZATION

According to a study- "Theoretical work on masculine norms suggests that these norms are learned through policing and fear-based learning which can, in turn, bring about increased risk-taking behaviors (Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010). Researchers and clinicians have argued that additional aspects of masculine gender socialization may predispose some men to engage in suicidal and self-damaging behaviors, including the desire for emotional control and self-reliance (Green & Jakupcak, 2015)."

In other words, men who are overly constricted by their gender, whose fear of being ridiculed for behaviors that are not "masculine enough" have an increased likelihood to release the tension from their repression in negative ways. "Studies examining sex differences in self-harm report that men are more likely to burn, self-hit, bang one's head against objects, punch walls or other objects, and engage in generally risky behaviors (e.g., driving dangerously)." The threat to men who have accepted a narrow definition of what it means to be a man is very real. Self-harm, depression, anxiety, and aggressive attacks on others may be the consequence of having to hold in any thought or feeling that could expose a man to ridicule or judgment. (Psychologytoday.com, 2018)

POINTING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Not astonishingly, this is not a debate of who has it worse, rather it is a question of who needs it the most? There are men that refuse to speak up and recognize the fact that men have had sufficient privilege in society to uplift their status, far longer than women have. This is not to say that the fake cases are justified by any means, but, rather than pointing towards the other gender, there is a need to ask the legislature a way to impart justice as soon as possible in such cases. There needs to be a fast-track investigation of the facts and figures of such cases and the plaintiff, if found guilty, needs to be given adequate punishment for trying to rob another human being of the right to live with dignity. In a democracy the people choose their leaders to lead them, think of their best and protect them from injustices, my question is why are we as men pointing in the wrong direction, towards another fellow human being of a different gender who has rightfully gained all that there is today and is still made to feel like an inferior gender because of different capabilities. The right thing to do would be to point in the right direction, that is, towards the authorities for the rightful, just and timely delivery of justice irrespective of caste, class, religion and of course, gender.

Conclusion

The self-proclaimed baseless 'discourse' of 'Meninism', has departed from its own original foundation and has no rational validity on anything that this distorted view of meninism as of course, it has shifted from its original meaning, i.e. Kay's conception. We must change the whole debate of meninist approach if not do away with it as it has now become intrinsically corrupt and radical as well as toxic in nature.

The concept of 'Patriarchy vs. Patriarchies', outlines the hidden dangers of patriarchy for women as well as men, hence terming it as a 'double edged sword'. Patriarchy harms men as well women, as it robs the men-the perpetrators, of making a conscious and rational choice or decision i.e, using their own rational faculty and exercising their individuality to its fullest. They subconsciously or consciously, make choices based on the norms, duties, values and roles that were outlined for them by the society and hence, to conclude we can say that,- The concept of 'meninism' is an utterly baseless and illogical claim that is being used by the custodians of society that have corrupted its original meaning in the wake of serving their own propaganda and interests.

Men themselves have to understand that this line of thinking and action is harming their own self interests and there is no logic in holding the female counterpart accountable for their own flawed conception of gender and heteronormativity. Instead, there is power in unity, and thus, we should all come together and hold accountable the people and institutions that we have chosen to provide us with a just and equitable society, as it has no rational basis of holding our female counterpart accountable in what the men in our society have to face, quite simply put, It is a fight that men have against themselves as well as the existing structures of heteronormativity and masculinities hence, its is not and should never be a fight against women or you vs. them, in all of its entirety and logical basis, men have to rise up to this fight and regard it as what it is, i.e., You vs You.

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