

A BOOK REVIEW OF THE PATRIARCHS: HOW MEN CAME TO RULE (2022)

Nelufer Nazrul
University of Bergen, Norway.
Corresponding Email: nenaz6602@uib.no

Abstract: Angela Saini's groundbreaking book "The Patriarchs: How Men Came to Rule" provides a well-defended and integrated cross-disciplinary analysis of the roots of misogyny and the subsequent advancement of patriarchal structures worldwide. Saini, using perspectives from anthropology, archaeology, history and evolutionary biology, counters sexism as an elected tendency and not an original human trait. Instead, she gives a detailed account and a complex view of how they interacted with each other influencing gender roles and development of patriarchy. Using examples of indigenous societies of different continents, societies of the Paleolithic era, and effects of colonialism, Saini clearly shows that gender arrangements have not been cast in stone for centuries and are rather highly changeable and diverse. Revisiting traditional ideas about gender and emphasizing the potential of gender intertwines, "The Patriarchs" can become the key for reevaluation of current oppressive tendencies concerning women.

Keywords: Patriarchy; Gender equality; Colonialism; Biological determinism; Interdisciplinary studies

1 INTRODUCTION

In her groundbreaking book "The Patriarchs: In "How Men Came to Rule," Saini proceeds to undertake a systematic analysis of the evolution of the practice of patriarchy in societies. Thus, using the ethnographical and archeological data, as well as the evidence from history and evolutionary biology, Saini questions the nature of the masculine superiority. The web of her argument revolves around the fact that while patriarchy is not an instinctive type of system, it was established and the society adapted to it overtime [1].

I believe that Saini's work is valuable in its attempt to unpack the phenomenon and viewed from a sociology and anthropology perspective, which organizes knowledge in a different way than humanities and social sciences. She also points out the modern homogenic gender politics can be derived from the ancient and pre-aged gender specifics of the nations, the indigenous cultures and societies. On the contrary, to understand the birth of patriarchy Saini again moves to specific historical evolutions like the change from society based on hunting and gathering to farming or neolithic societies.

The fact is that despite some theoretical and methodological imperfections the book is rather valuable because it presents quite an unusual and consequently a more or less objective vision of gender roles and positions as they were before the definite triumph of the patriarchal model. Saini uses Frans de Waal, a primatologist whose studies suggest that using chimp society as a model for human one since the former features male aggression is misguided, and it is far more relevant to turn to the more civilised bonobos. These facts contribute to the weakening of the claims that existed in the framework of biological determinism to explain patriarchal relations, as well as reflecting the views on the gender division of work and the reconstruction of gender relations in various species and conditions [2].

Thus, referring to Saini's arguments, we, once again, focus on colonialism as the key factor that contributed to the dissemination of the strict gender roles worldwide. Saini (2022) looked into how all the European colonizers used their power to subordinate indigenous persons and erase of more gender equitable systems they had in place, imposing colonial gendered power dynamics. One should discuss about this background to better understand how culture, built upon patriarchal views, exists in the contemporary world and how women continue struggling for their right and equal opportunities[1,3].

In the end, "The Patriarchs" provides a sad and inspiring historical perspective based on sociobiological theories to explain how and why patriarchal structures developed and marched across the world, which could prove invaluable to figuring out the gender issues we face today. In questioning the construction of hegemonic masculinity and analyzing how different historical and social structures constructed gender, Saini offers a roadmap of how discursive practices support unequal gender relations and create a foundation for eradicating systemic gender disparities. This historical perspective is crucial in understanding the pervasiveness of patriarchy in contemporary societies and the ongoing struggles for gender equality.

Ultimately, "The Patriarchs" offers a groundbreaking, evidence-based account of how patriarchal systems emerged and spread, with vital implications for contemporary discourse on gender equality. By challenging the naturalization of male dominance and illuminating the complex interplay of social, cultural, and historical factors that shaped gender dynamics, Saini's work provides a powerful framework for rethinking and dismantling persistent gender inequalities.

2 SUMMARY OF KEY ARGUMENTS

2.1 The Origins of Gender Inequality in Early Human Societies

Saini's analysis extends an attempt to understand why, when moving up from equality of primitive societies where men and women gathered food and hunted, gender differences became magnified. Using evidence from archaeology and anthropology, women attest how the transition from nomadic hunting gathering to a settled agriculture society altered these earlier egalitarian relations of nomadic forager bands.

Perhaps the biggest was the emerging tendency of centralization of the control over resources and the means of production. As people started to settle down, rely more on agriculture their food started to pile up and so started the process of acquisition and ownership. The fact that so many resources were invested in the hands of some individuals led to the emergence of power relations and, in many cases, the subjugation of women's position and decision-making powers.

Moreover, Saini discusses the part played by the organized religions in shaping male power and authority as normative forms. Patriarchal attitudes and ideologies formed the foundation many cultures and mythologies of the past where male gods were portrayed as dominant and superior beings, while female characters were submissive and inferior. These religious narratives helped in enhancing and sanctioning the oppression of women as appropriate within the emergent socio-economic order.

2.2 The Global Spread of Patriarchy through Colonialism

Continuing her assessment, Saini expands to how European colonialism helped take and disseminate deeply 'assigned patriarchal bequests' to the rest of the world. To highlight this more, as the colonial masters embarked on their imperial expansion, they would introduce their own social gender relations structures to the subjects, leading to the extinguishing of less patriarchal structures among the conquered.

Patriarchal structures was imparted by European gender systems was an essential aspect of colonialism as it sought to undermine traditional indigenous systems of governance and put in place the domination of the colonizers. Those indigenous people who practiced postmodern gender relations, recognising matrilineal descent, or women's agency were considered to be 'savage,' and the colonial subject to be 'civilized' thus inscribing indigenous women with patriarchy.

This colonial practice as compiled by Saini has reinscribed power relations and held the gender inequalities intact in many a colonised regions even post colonial rule.

2.3 Patriarchy as a Social Construct

To understand the ontological foundation of Saini's work it is critical to focus on the fact that the core message of the lens, which is patriarchy, does not have its root in genes or in the way human physiology and anatomy is designed. She goes on to refute the related argument that male tyranny is inherent – as the societal structure here proves that power relations are not set and fixed, but fluctual and cultural.

In this case, Saini, making use of her vast experience and with her multidisciplinary work, deconstructs the biological determinism rationales that are upheld to support patriarchy. Regarding the issue of genders, she cites the state of affairs that was revealed in the unformatted societies with sanctions of hunting-gathering bands and indigenous peoples, where she proves that patriarchy is not the invariable law of human development, but a historical phenomenon, which appeared in particular historical conditions.

In mapping out how social, cultural, economic, and political forces led to the creation of patriarchy and to sustaining gender inequality, this book provides better recommendations for the realities of women based on facts that can be observed and analyzed [4-5].

3 STRENGTHS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

3.1 Interdisciplinary Synthesis: A Holistic Approach to Gender Studies

Probably the biggest strong suite of the written work of Saini is its interdisciplinary that combines elements of anthropology, archaeology, history, biology, and gender studies. Bringing together a vast wealth of such knowledge, Saini presents a broad and intricate picture of how various factors have skewed gender relations in societies across the spheres of human development.

Such an approach is especially useful when working in the sphere like gender studies when its crucial distinct features and effects to reduce the problem into several part, to combine it with some other branches of knowledge. Of course, this skill of Saini to use data from different disciplines, make arguments more credible and comprehensible This way of constructing facts not only makes it easier to believe and come to terms with the existence and continuity of patriarchal formations, but also offers the reader Problem more thorough and diverse[6].

Also, for this particular case it became more effective because it breaks the barriers of disciplines that are set in academic institutions and focus on integrated approach while working on the subject. Overall, through the connections made between the areas of study that may not traditionally overlap, Saini's work sets foundations for further innovative and interdisciplinary research specifically in the area of gender studies, as well as in other fields[7].

3.2 Dismantling Biological Determinism: Challenging Entrenched Narratives

One of its best features is that "The Patriarchs" is a work that gives an unyielding counter to the ideas of biological determinism, while using it to elucidate the reinforcement of masculine authority. Saini also systematically dissects discriminating patriarchal culture from biology, presenting a plethora of evidence from primatology, evolutionary biology, and anthropology[8].

Saini does this by pointing out that in many primate species, gender relations exist in a range of forms that do not portray dominance of men; she also explains how in all pre-agricultural societies, which harbored repressive male dominance to the point of wife-beating, gender relations were far more egalitarian. Her arguments therefore highlight the fluidity and dynamics of gender, as opposed to rigid classifications that essentialize gender while advancing the domination systems.

Moreover, in the context of gender studies, Saini's critique of biology is also meaningful beyond it, as she locates it within the parameters of science, culture, as well as interrogates the interrelations of power. Through making clear how both the limitations of scientific rationality and the narrative of human progress reinforce these dynamics, Wadell's work has valuable nuances that Saini's work performs in her task of reminding the world of the ways in which the processes of knowledge production require critique and decolonization.

3.3 Nuanced Perspectives: Embracing Diversity in Gender Arrangements

Analyzing Saini's argument, one of the key features that seems particularly notable is her recognition of multiple gender arrangements that existed before patriarchal structures appeared. Unlike other authors who delve into the topic with a black and white mentality and approach the concept of masculinity and femininity in humans as simplistic, Saini explores the subject by willingly accepting the fact that gender roles and power relations have always been a part of societies around the world at different eras.

For expanding the geographical and temporal scope of the analysis, Saini explores the gender systems of multifarious indigenous cultures and pre-farming societies to demonstrate the versatile ways the gender concept has been understood, discussed, and embodied throughout history. Engaging with ideas of descent, gender identity, decentralised decision-making, and kinship, Saini's writing works against eurocentrism and undercuts typical constructions of what could be seen as mainstream gender studies methodologies.

It does so while offering a much richer conception of gender than are typically regions along with shifting gender dynamics also provided a useful corrective to the erasing impulse of patriarchal structures. Saini's work offers potential for examining diverse and more complex forms of pre-patriarchal gender systems that can be useful as research to understand and envisage how gender relations can be reconstructed in today's societies.

3.4 Amplifying Voices from the Global South

The last strength of "The Patriarchs" lies in its active intentionalization of women voices and experiences from the global south. Saini's writing and speaking bully the Eurocentric and colonialist approach to gender and feminism which privileges the experience of the Global North communities across the globe.

It is within this frameworks that the reclamation of women voice from indigenous knowledge systems, histories and first person narratives from different parts of the global south is a counter discursive move and offer s the reader an engaging narrative that challenges the western hegemonic imaginary of gender relations. Therefore, this decolonial approach not only provides the oppressed communities with voice and agency but also challenges oppressive knowledge that has colonized not only the oppressed people but also the minds of the overpowering oppressors and justified oppressive structures.

Further, Saini's focus on Global South makes it a strong rallying point for the understanding of how gender discriminations and oppression intersect with other forms of oppression, such as colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism. Thus, Saini's work extends beyond merely documenting how 'men are not the only victims,' and instead offers a text that adopts a more intersectional understanding of layered oppression and inequality rooted in gendered, racialized, and classed-power relations.

3.5 Accessible Rigor: Bridging Academia and Public Discourse

Though "The Patriarchs" is written as a truly scholarly work, this is one of the major advantages of Saini's work; the author has managed to explain many concepts, issues and ideas easy and fun to comprehend. The plurality of her work is that these distinctions do not make her style of writing too technical and unapproachable for lay readers while making it academic enough for academics.

It is greatly useful in a field like gender studies, since the accumulation and sharing of the information, as well as popularisation of the discourse is the primary way to provoke shifts in social paradigm and change the culture of oppression. Employing rational, logical and persuasive approaches, Saini is able to structure her work in such a way that it is informative and goes beyond the scope of the academic circles; it becomes relevant to contemporary culture and is capable of fueling the global discussions associated with the realization of gender equality and social justice.

Lastly, This scholarly content which is heavily documented is written in a simple language by Saini, which is an ideal way of presenting research data to the populists without diluting the information, its essence and value. This does more than increase the effectiveness and dissemination of her work; it also helps in closing the perceived gap between analysis and regular citizens.

In conclusion, *The Patriarchs* can be claimed to be a profound work which revealed different and rather complex aspects of the issue at hand, conceptions of male dominance. In this regard, the transdisciplinary approach, eradicating the reduction of gender issues into biological determinism, the openness to variety in gender configurations, equalizer representation, inclusive language, and an engaging but academic writing style make this work a valuable contribution to the field of gender studies and beyond.

4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Despite the interesting and informative idea and documentation of actual patriarchal systems seen in "*The Patriarchs*," it is high time to provide critical evaluation and review of the book's detailed points, arguments and possible drawbacks. This section is to discuss about how relevant Saini's claim is, whether she is bringing a fresh perspective or reframing the existing narratives of CW and, whether and how her work fits into the ongoing and emerging debates in feminism.

4.1 Evaluating Evidence and Arguments

Yet another strong aspect of Saini's work is the focus on the pragmatic approach and ample examples from various fields to support her main argument. However, the flaws and strengths of her argument and evidence should be questioned and evaluated individually; so should the conclusions drawn and interpretations made. While Saini effectively dismantles biological determinism arguments, it is worth examining whether she adequately addresses potential counterarguments or alternative explanations that could offer different interpretations of the evidence presented.

4.2 Strength of Evidence

To elaborate his argument, the author uses materials from archaeology, anthropology, history, and research, including history sources. The mentioned evidences help in corroborating her defense and also highlight that she has borrowed knowledge from various fields. However, it also merits discussing whether all the relevant evidence has been included and whether there may be a potential blind spot in some aspects or if the data are skewed in some way.

4.3 Addressing Counterarguments

The author in this article does a good job of debunking certain biological determinist arguments and questioning the given hypothesis of patriarchy as a necessarily natural mode of the human society, on the one hand; however, it may be questioned whether sufficient points responding to the possible counterarguments or other explanations are raised by the author, on the other. Are there any kind of theory or view that might compromise different explanations of the evidence introduced above?

4.4 Framing and Scope

4.4.1 Intersectionality and complexity

There are probably some intriguing avenues for continued research after reading Saini which are: Whether her arguments effectively address the ways in which gender interacts with other forms of oppression and exclusion, including race, class, and sexuality. Despite this, she seems to recognize colonialism and how the caste system has influenced gender roles; therefore, a further analysis of how colonialism reshaped the gender roles and the caste system would make her argument stronger. One potential area for further exploration is the extent to which Saini's analysis captures the complexities of how gender intersects with other axes of oppression and marginalization, such as race, class, and sexuality.

4.4.2 Cultural and regional representation

It would also be interesting to know more about how many cultures and countries have been depicted in Saini's productions, for instance. Overall, she uses examples from numerous indigenous cultures and locations, but it will be insightful to assess if there are some significant limitations that could enhance the author's argumentation even more. The review suggests that it is worth examining whether there are any significant gaps or underrepresented perspectives in terms of the cultural and regional representation in Saini's work.

In relation to contemporary feminist discourse, it can be said that the book is most relevant at the theoretical level, mainly because of its critique of the post Roe v. Wade era cultural representation of the 'primer objeto del deseo': the white, middle-class, reproductive female body.

4.4.3 Advancing understandings of patriarchy

With no doubt, Saini's work should be seen as contributing towards expanding the understanding of the nature of patriarchy as a concept that is diverse and interacted with at multiple levels. Using the historical analysis and arguing against the inevitability of such structures, she brings a useful theoretical background for combating the existing gender disadvantages. However, more attention needs to be paid to how her ideas and interpretation can be best incorporated into the current concerns and processes of postmodern/poststructural feminisms. In what ways can her work contribute to future attempts to deconstruct the patriarchal model and work toward equality for women within different facets of society including political, economic, and social aspects?

4.5 The Gender Justice and Its Intersectional Analysis

4.5.1 Intersectional approaches to gender justice

Additionally, it will perhaps be useful to consider how Saini's writing fits into intersectional methodologies for promoting gender equity. It is for this reason that her analysis proves beneficial inasmuch as it reveals gender arrangements and patriarchy as constructed and diverse, yet it should be asked how these may be used to eliminate intersectional oppressions and marginalizations of 'others' in meaningful ways given experiences of people with multiple identities and power relations.

4.5.2 Remaining questions and future directions

In addition, it is possible to consider what has not been said about Saini and her work within the frameworks of intersectionality and gender justice. While her arguments do concern the variety of gender configurations, as well as the social construction of patriarchy, her concept provides valuable lessons on how these ideas can be utilized to combat intersectional oppressions and exclusions that still affect people and subgroups based on their spiritedness.

4.5.3 Open questions and future trends

Thus, it is only important to point out certain inconsistencies and possible questions that remain unanswered in "The Patriarchs" despite the author's commendable and highly informative research on the topic. Thus, Saini's work may be helpful to expand the scope of research and discussion, and thus can offer valuable insights into studying the gender in diverse cultural and historical contexts.

Moreover, it would also be pertinent to examine the manner in which Saini's insights could be applied and furthered in the process for eradicating existing patriarchal practices and thus contributing to the advancement of improved and more progressive gender relations. The intent of this discussion is to critically examine some of the work she has done in proposing policy, activism, and organizational development interventions for gender equality and identify practical implications for social justice activity.

All in all, the "The Patriarchs" is an example of a valuable contribution to the question of gender studies and the female perspective, but it is essential to assess the idea behind the work, its supports, and the possible flaws that might be present. In the following discussion, I examine the validity of some of the arguments made in the book- how some aspects of it are framed, and assess the potential for enlargement of scope, I consider the manner in which Saini's work relates to the current state of the feminist popular literature and scholarship and the broader goals of achieving gender parity, and how it might further be developed or expanded to advance the goal of achieving gender equality.

While the review touches on the relevance of Saini's work to contemporary feminist discourse, it could further explore the practical implications of her insights and analysis for policy, activism, and social change initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality.

5 CONCLUSION

In "The Patriarchs," Angela Saini presents a groundbreaking and meticulously researched account that challenges the long-held assumption of patriarchy as an innate or natural phenomenon. Through her interdisciplinary synthesis of evidence from anthropology, archaeology, history, and evolutionary biology, Saini compellingly argues that patriarchal systems are socially constructed and emerged under specific historical circumstances, rather than being biologically determined.

The significance of Saini's work lies in its potential to reshape both academic discourse and public understanding of gender dynamics. By dismantling the biological determinism arguments that have historically been used to justify and perpetuate male dominance, her book provides a powerful framework for rethinking and dismantling persistent gender inequalities. Moreover, her nuanced exploration of the diversity of pre-patriarchal gender arrangements and the amplification of marginalized voices from the Global South offer fresh perspectives and insights that enrich our understanding of gender relations.

While Saini's work represents a significant contribution to the field of gender studies, it also opens up new avenues for future research and inquiry. Her insights into the constructed nature of patriarchy and the complex interplay of social, cultural, and historical factors that shaped gender dynamics raise important questions about the practical implications for

policy, activism, and social change initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality. Additionally, further exploration of the intersections between gender and other axes of oppression, such as race, class, and sexuality, could provide even greater nuance and depth to our understanding of gender justice.

Ultimately, "The Patriarchs" raises the bar for rigorous feminist scholarship by combining meticulous research, interdisciplinary synthesis, and a commitment to amplifying marginalized voices. Saini's accessible yet intellectually rigorous writing style ensures that her work resonates not only within academic circles but also contributes to broader public discourse on gender equality. By challenging entrenched narratives and offering a fresh, evidence-based perspective on the origins and persistence of patriarchal systems, Saini's book represents a significant milestone in the ongoing pursuit of gender justice and social transformation.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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