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**THE OBSCURITY OF JUSTICE: HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN
CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD**

Shyamalima Kashyap, Research Scholar, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh
Dr. Shweta Saxena, Assistant Professor, Amity University, Noida, UP

Abstract:

Over the years, the society has been a witness to the struggles of the female gender in getting their voices heard and Feminism has been a game changing movement which has helped women across nations and over years to demand for equality. Women now are more empowered, educated and aware of their rights and can defy and challenge the demands the society has put for them. But within the shadows also lie a serious problem that the society has been piling upon on the male gender. The society expects men to behave in a certain manner as much as they expect from women failing which there are consequences. This kind of misguided demand that the society makes from men leaves them feeling obligated to make things happen, even crime. This paper deals with the concept of hegemonic masculinity which designs a lifestyle for men to follow, bringing a discord in the society.

Key Words: *male struggle, hegemonic masculinity, misuse of power, honour based violence.*

As a society, a lot many times, we have been a blind spectator to a lot of crimes being committed against women. Since a very long time, women have been under the shadow of men in general and it has only been in the last few years that they have been given a voice to express, educate and demand for equal opportunities in all aspects of their lives. The constant struggle that women face to get heard in the society is a visible scenario and the strong hold that patriarchy has had since eons only proves that women at large have suffered at the hands of their opposite gender. The 20th century world now has become very concerned with how women have been ill treated for so many years and with education and better opportunities at work, women now are more aware of their rights and able to lead a life of much better independence and recognition. The society at large is now trying to create a better environment for women by working towards their cause with them but lately, it has also been noticed how some women misuse this power and take undue advantage of the situation when their demands are not met, by either lying or making false accusations which brings to debate all the amount of hard work and sacrifices that has been directed towards the working of this cause.

Feminism always advocated for women's equal rights but nowadays the sensitivity of the society is such that if a woman blames a man for something, even without any evidence, he is branded as a criminal. Men have always been blamed for having an upper hand in the society and for putting women across continents and over centuries in perpetual pain. But the reality of the situation is a little more complicated than how it seems and the male gender also faces some serious issues within the society even after having assumed superiority over the other genders. These issues emerge from false instructions of how a society should function and how different genders should try to gain dominance over the other. Now that women are aware of certain provisions in the society that gives them added benefits and some of them trying to sometimes take undue advantage of that, men are being somehow used as catalysts by women in different fields for either gain or revenge. Whether its false accusations and allegations in the domestic scenario, or false harassment charges in the employment sector, men also have to go through severe issues that the society is failing to work upon. Men over the ages have been instructed that women are fragile creatures

and it is their responsibility to protect them at any cost. This stagnant thought not only puts women in a backward state but also puts immense pressure on men to uphold this duty that society expects them to undertake irrespective of the gender which demands this adherence.

Published in the year 1981, almost three decades after the original incident from which this novella has taken inspiration from, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* is a vivid and vital description of human emotions as a kaleidoscope, where honour is a rigid concept in the minds of the people and where the value of a human life is questionable. In the year 1951, in Sucre, Columbia, two brothers murdered Cayentano Gentile Chimento, because they found out that he had deflowered their sister before her marriage to another man following which, she was sent back home after the wedding. Marquez was an acquaintance of the family and taking this murder as the foundation for his novella, Marquez weaves a world of its own, where he depicts a similar occurrence and tries to explore human emotions attached with the murder and how the townspeople, who were all aware of the impending murder, let it all happen.

The story revolves around the murder of Santiago Nasar by the two Vicario brothers, Pedro and Pablo, who in order to avenge their sister Angela's honour, execute him. The novel has been written down in the form of a journalistic entry, albeit not chronological as the title suggests, from the perspective of an anonymous narrator, assumed to be Santiago's friend, trying to piece together the moments which led to the fateful day of the murder. The sense of personal judgement clouding one's morality and amidst the ambiguity of truth, propounded by misdirected rage, leading to carnage of human lives by the killing of one, is an extremely important point of reference in the entire novella. The murder was well known to take place, but hardly anyone did anything to stop it other than being a bystander to the massacre of a human life. But the striking feature of this novella is the instant decision to take a man's life by the sheer word of a woman. With no proof of Angela's accusation over Santiago, her brothers went ahead with the massacre and the townspeople aware made no efforts to question if there is any truth in the statement made by Angela.

The position of men in the society is of unquestionable power but it also comes at a cost that none of the genders seems to understand. In order to uphold the honour of their family associated with a women's virginity, two men without any fear of consequences, murdered another man in broad daylight. Although the murderers faced charges against the crime, a large section of the town was also responsible for the death of Santiago. The very notion of what a man is supposed to do is the root cause of a lot of different scenarios in the society where men feel obligated to do certain things, even crime.

The term Hegemonic Masculinities, as explained by R.W. Cornell, is defined as a practice that sanctions and legitimizes the dominant position of a man in the society and validates the submissiveness of women and its other forms of subordination and the other ways in which a man is considered to have feminine traits of not masculine enough by the society standards. (Cornell). It is the idea that there exists a certain set of rules and prescribed manner in which a man is ascertained to behave in terms of masculinity and stands as a corrective idea to which men are held responsible for if they fail to perform as prescribed. Men are often rebuked and face social shame when these standards set are not met by them and receive praise when done as expected. This very concept put a huge amount of pressure on the Vicario brothers of fighting for their sister's honour which led them to murder a man who till his death was not proved guilty of the accusation made by Angela. They had no remorse over killing a man, stating that "in the eyes of not just God but men too, we are innocent for we fought for honour." (Marquez, 29)

Since the conception of time, men have been bounded and hounded by the idea of upholding honour. A lot many crimes till now are being committed against men and women alike in the name of honour. Patriarchy has played a dominant role in shaping the minds of the society which accepts and adheres to the responsibilities assigned to the male gender and expects that only the socially constructed and defined forms of masculinity is the correct form of it. Santiago Nasar was no God; he had his flaws and

was a product of a male dominated society as outlined by the writer. He was engaged to be married to Flora but still indulged himself in other physical services provided by Maria Cervantes. He was a good looking well known youth and yet on the day of his murder, none came forward to stop it in the name of honour.

Throughout the narrative we are presented with characters, who were of high ranking and aware of the crime that was about to be committed, but chose not to act because of their own personal reasons. Colonel Lazaro Aponte, the mayor of the town believed that he was in no real danger. Father Carmen Amador, local priest is warned of the murder, but forgets about it in the excitement of the Bishop's visit. Officer Leandroy Pornoy just passes along the message to the Mayor. In spite of being men of the law, they overlooked this matter with a trifle eye and were equally responsible for the murder of Santiago Nasar, if not directly. It was not until the very end when Santiago decided to visit his beloved's house and she believing that it was Santiago who had deflowered Angela before her marriage as the rumour implied, threw all his letters of love that Santiago realised of his impending death. Even when death was at his face and he was being butchered, he had no clue as to why he was being killed.

Twelve days after the crime, when the Investigating Magistrate came to the town to take records, he was shocked by a death so clearly foretold. What appalled him was even after excessive diligence, he found not even a single indication that Santiago Nasar had been the "reason of the wrong" (Marquez, 58), that he was the actual person who had taken away Angela Vicario's virginity. It was only on the word of their sister that the Vicario brothers killed a man, a man who no one had seen with their sister before, a man not even her closest companions were told of. He believed, like the rest close to Nasar that "the way the victim's face was still full of questions as the last ounce of life left his body was proof enough that he may have been innocent of the crime he was accused for." (Marquez, 65)

Although the writer has talked about the gender roles in the society, demarking what each gender can and cannot do, it doesn't diminish the fact that a man was murdered because a woman said so. For a society that is patriarchal in nature, and women designated with roles of homemaking and childbearing, the highest form of honour is also somehow attached to a woman. To protect the honour of a woman, a man is killed without even giving him a chance to know and speak. People, who could have prevented the crime and didn't do so, consoled themselves with the pretext that "everything related to honour is sacred in nature and only those who have a relation with it can have access to it" (Marquez, 57). Society doesn't just subjugate women; it also burdens men with a sense of misdirected duty. The cultural aspect of the society demands from men that they do whatever it takes to uphold the honour of the family, even if it is a crime and no matter whatever the consequences, the misguided sense of masculinity that all the genders put on men must be maintained.

Honour based violence encompasses the killing of a family member or a member of a community when believed to have brought shame or dishonour upon the family's name, religion or community by violating the principles set. For a very long time, The Human Rights Watch (HRW), an International Non-Government Organisation, defined honour killing as crimes only committed against women. Now it also encompasses men as victims of honour based killings. Although if Angela's word is to be considered, she is then equally responsible for have brought about shame to her family's name but whereas the assumed accused was brutally murdered, she was severely beaten and after being left by her husband, went away with her family which goes on to show that men are as much as in danger as women are when crimes based on honour are concerned but owing to the mindset of the society, crimes against men are not taken seriously when masculinities are in question.

Connell also states in his book that there are several evidences towards the existence of multiple masculinities which have changed over the years. It's not just men but women also, who play a vital role in not just implementing them but making them as well. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* too, when the Vicario brothers stop at the house of Pablo's fiancé, Prudencia Cotes, her mother instead of stopping them, said, "I can understand your hurry to get it done as soon as possible for honour cannot wait." (Marquez, 37).

Even Prucendia, Pablo's fiancé knew but only pushed him more towards a crime. She later recounted to the narrator that "I was aware of what the brothers had planned on doing and not only did I agree with their decision, I told him that I wouldn't marry him unless he does what a man is supposed to do" (Marquez, 37), thereby pointing towards this responsibility that men are supposed to feel and act upon failing which the society will look down upon them. Women have also assumed this thought in their minds that unless and until a man performs or behave in a prescribed manner, he may not be manly enough. And if their demands are not met, sometimes they resort to their means of power and harass men who already in fear of being stigmatised, refrain from making any complaints successfully reducing the number in the statistics of male victims in honour based killed.

Today's society is well educated and aware enough to understand certain aspects of the society that doesn't fall into the humane way of how any individual should be expected to behave. The gender roles are changing, men are staying at home and looking after children while women go out to work, a new world is emerging but still there are areas that are still struggling under the prejudice and subjugation that is levied upon the male gender over masculinities. Any challenge against any form of socially constructed masculinity is looked down upon and men are often rebuked and ridiculed when they defy norms attached. Crimes are being normalised when they are done by men in order to retain their masculinities and the society stands as a mere onlooker. What happened to Santiago was a form of honour killing by imprudent forms of masculinity. Although the statistics against women based family violence is much higher, male victims of such crimes are almost entirely overlooked and neglected due to many contributing factors, primary being lack of awareness. The idea that men cannot be counted as victims and that women need to have more priority in these crimes adds to these victims to being put under the shadows. When any honour based crime is committed it is justified in the eyes of the family and community thereby remaining unaffected from the remorse point of view.

The definitions of hegemonic masculinity have led to a series of destruction since ages. It has given rise to loss of identity, crime rates being higher and no form of stability in the mind and soul of men. While its stands true that number of crimes against of any kind is much higher than women, it can't be neglected that the contributing reason as to why there are less crimes against men is also because of the two fold shame that men receive, the first being for the crime committed and the second for not being masculine enough to avoid it. Time and again, this very prevailing thought kept the Vicario brothers motivated towards killing a person with whom they had shared a night of merry making just the previous night. The entitlement of being masculine enough to sort issues was so high that it didn't even come to their minds that for justice to be served the crime has to be proved. For them, only one thing mattered- upholding of honour and defending their masculinities by doing so. For them justice can only be served only when their masculinity is satisfied.

The glaring references in the society as well as the instance put forward by Marquez, it comes as no surprise that the society is judgemental towards both the genders, and that even men are subjugated and forced to perform in a certain manner to uphold their positions in the society. The society as a whole must first accept that this psychological manifestation of the socially constructed form of masculinity that has formed in the minds of all men, must be released failing which the world will never see real progress in gender issues. Accepting and understanding that Patriarchy not only debunks equality for women but also chastises men for being human, is a serious concern for everyone that needs immediate attention to. This form of marginalisation is evident, although masked with cultural entities, but still very much in existence thereby leading to an obstruction of justice and loss of lives in *The Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.

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