

CHAINS WITHIN THE HOME: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE OF BREAKING TIES

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21417670>

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the representation of the home as a contested space in Breaking Ties, challenging the conventional notion of domesticity as a site of safety and comfort. Through a feminist lens, the text reveals how the home can function as a space of control, restriction, and emotional confinement for women. It examines how patriarchal values are embedded within everyday domestic life, shaping gender roles, limiting women's autonomy, and reinforcing financial and emotional dependence. These forces create invisible "chains" that constrain women's identity, freedom, and decisionmaking power within the household. At the same time, Breaking Ties foregrounds acts of resistance, as women begin to question, negotiate, and ultimately challenge these imposed limitations. The narrative highlights the tension between tradition and selfhood, illustrating the struggle to reclaim agency within or beyond the domestic sphere. By analyzing these dynamics, the paper argues that the home is not a neutral space but one deeply influenced by power structures.

It concludes by emphasizing the need to transform the home into a space of equality, dignity, and mutual respect, where women can exercise autonomy without fear or constraint. Furthermore, the text underscores the psychological and emotional impact of domestic confinement, revealing how internalized patriarchy shapes women's sense of self and belonging. The home, rather than nurturing individuality, often becomes a space where silence, sacrifice, and obedience are normalized and expected. This internal struggle reflects the broader societal conditioning that discourages women from asserting independence. By bringing these hidden dimensions to light, Breaking Ties not only critiques oppressive structures but also calls for a

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reimagining of domestic spaces as environments that foster empowerment, selfexpression, and genuine freedom.

KEYWORDS: *Patriarchy, Domestic Confinement, Gender Roles, Domestic Labour, Intersectional Feminism, Resistance.*

Introduction

The home is often idealized as a sanctuary-a space of comfort, safety, and intimacy. Yet, as *Breaking Ties* demonstrates, this conventional perception overlooks the complex realities of domestic life, especially for women. From a feminist perspective, the home is not inherently neutral or peaceful; it is frequently shaped by patriarchal values that dictate gender roles, reinforce financial dependence, and impose social expectations. Within this context, women may experience the domestic sphere as a site of control, restriction, and emotional confinement, bound by invisible “chains” that limit their autonomy, decisionmaking power, and sense of self.

Breaking Ties explores these dynamics in depth, illustrating both the subtle and overt ways that societal norms confine women, while also highlighting acts of resistance that challenge these limitations. The narrative engages with themes of tradition, selfhood, and empowerment, questioning the structures that govern domestic life and urging a reimagining of the home as a space of equality, respect, and personal freedom. This paper examines these themes, analyzing how the text portrays the tensions between oppression and agency, and how it foregrounds the importance of reclaiming autonomy within the domestic sphere.

Research Objectives

- To examine how *Breaking Ties* represents the home as a contested space rather than a site of comfort and security for women.
- To analyze the impact of patriarchal structures on women’s autonomy, identity, and freedom within domestic and social spheres.
- To explore the roles of gender expectations, unpaid domestic labour, economic dependence, and cultural conditioning in reinforcing women’s oppression.
- To investigate how women in the text resist patriarchal constraints and assert agency, individuality, and empowerment.
- To highlight the contemporary relevance of patriarchal oppression and domestic inequality, drawing connections between literature and

ongoing social issues.

- To understand the role of literature as a reflective and transformative medium that critiques social norms and inspires dialogue about equality and justice.

Feminist Theoretical Framework

This paper employs a feminist theoretical framework to analyze the depiction of the home in *Breaking Ties*. Feminist theory, particularly from the perspectives of liberal, radical, and intersectional feminism, provides tools to understand how domestic spaces are socially and culturally constructed to reinforce patriarchal norms. According to feminist thought, the home is not simply a neutral site of comfort; it can also be a space where women's autonomy, identity, and agency are constrained by gendered expectations, financial dependence, and societal pressures.

The framework draws on key feminist concepts such as gender roles, power relations, and the politics of domesticity. Radical feminist perspectives emphasize how patriarchal structures systematically oppress women within private spheres, while liberal feminist thought highlights the importance of equality, choice, and access to opportunities within and beyond the household. Intersectional feminism further acknowledges that women's experiences of domestic restriction are shaped by overlapping factors such as class, economic status, and cultural norms, making oppression multidimensional.

By applying this framework, the paper examines how *Breaking Ties* portrays the home as both a site of confinement and resistance. It allows for a nuanced reading of the text, showing how women navigate the invisible "chains" of patriarchy and strive to reclaim autonomy, voice, and agency within the domestic sphere. Feminist theory thus provides a lens to critique the social structures that govern women's lives and envision transformative possibilities for domestic spaces as environments of equality, empowerment, and respect.

Patriarchy

In *Breaking Ties*, patriarchy is depicted as a pervasive system that governs both public and private spheres, particularly shaping the domestic environment. The text illustrates how patriarchal structures enforce hierarchical gender roles, positioning men as authority figures and women as subordinate caretakers whose freedom and choices are limited. Within the home, these structures manifest as expectations of obedience, sacrifice, and emotional labour, creating an environment where women's identities and autonomy are constrained.

Gender Roles

In *Breaking Ties*, gender roles are portrayed as socially constructed norms that dictate expected behaviours, responsibilities, and limitations for men and women within the domestic and societal sphere. Women are often confined to caregiving, household management, and emotional labour, while men are positioned as decision-makers and providers. These rigid roles reinforce a hierarchy in which women's autonomy, voice, and aspirations are subordinated to the needs and authority of men.

The novel highlights how these prescribed roles are maintained through both societal expectations and internalized beliefs. Women often internalize the idea that their primary value lies in supporting others and upholding family honour, which can limit their personal growth and sense of self. Similarly, men are socially conditioned to assert control and authority, reinforcing the unequal power dynamics within the home.

Domestic Labour

In *Breaking Ties*, domestic labour is depicted as a central site of women's oppression and invisibility within the household. The text illustrates how women are primarily responsible for unpaid work-such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, and managing household affairs-while these efforts are often undervalued or taken for granted. This labour is not only physically demanding but also emotionally and psychologically taxing, reinforcing women's subordination and limiting their opportunities for personal growth and independence.

The novel highlights how domestic labour is intertwined with patriarchal and gendered expectations. Women's work is frequently framed as a duty rather than a choice, tied to societal notions of femininity, sacrifice, and moral responsibility. Men, by contrast, are largely exempt from such expectations, benefiting from both the labour and the authority it reinforces. This unequal division of labour reflects broader structural inequalities and underscores how the home can function as a space of confinement rather than empowerment.

Breaking Ties as Reflection of Indian Patriarchal Society

Breaking Ties reflects the deeply ingrained patriarchal structures of Indian society, where gender hierarchies are maintained through cultural norms, social expectations, and domestic practices. The novel portrays the home not merely as a space of comfort but as a site where women's autonomy and identity are restricted by societal and familial pressures. Patriarchal authority is manifested in the enforcement of rigid gender roles, expectation of obedience, control over women's education and mobility, and the undervaluing of domestic labour.

1. **Restriction of Freedom:** Women often do not have complete freedom to make their own choices. They may need permission to study, work, or even meet others.
2. **Unpaid Domestic Labour:** Women are expected to do all household work, but this work is not seen as important or productive, even though it requires time and effort.
3. **Economic Dependence:** When women do not earn their own income, they become dependent on male family members, which reduces their power and independence.
4. **Emotional and Psychological Control:** Women are often expected to be obedient and sacrifice their personal wishes for the sake of family peace.
5. **Cultural and Social Conditioning:** From a young age, girls are taught to accept domestic roles. Society praises women who are “ideal wives” and “selfless mothers,” which makes these roles seem natural and necessary.

Judith Butler explains that gender roles are not natural but created by society and repeated over time, which makes them appear normal.

Representation of Patriarchy in Literature: Today's Relevance

Literature often shows how women experience oppression at home: Women characters are often shown as confined to domestic spaces. Their struggles, loss of identity, and silent resistance are highlighted.

Ismat Chughtai writes about women's hidden desires and their quiet resistance within the home. **Resistance and Agency:** even though women face many challenges, they find ways to resist:

- By getting education and jobs
- By questioning traditional roles
- By expressing themselves through writing and art
- By supporting other women

Modern feminism encourages women to change the home into a place where everyone is equal. **Contemporary Relevance:** Even today, many women face inequality at home. They manage both jobs and household work (double burden); they may face domestic violence or lack of freedom; and they are pressured to follow traditional roles. However, things are slowly changing due to education, awareness, and legal support.

Literature has long served as a mirror to society, reflecting and critiquing structures of power and inequality. In works like *Breaking Ties*, patriarchal systems are depicted as pervasive forces that shape women's

lives, restricting their freedom, agency, and self-expression. The novel illustrates how domestic spaces, gender roles, economic dependence, and cultural conditioning function as mechanisms of control, providing insight into the lived realities of women within patriarchal societies.

Conclusion

Breaking Ties provides a nuanced exploration of how the home, traditionally idealized as a sanctuary, can become a site of restriction, control, and psychological confinement for women within patriarchal society. Through its depiction of gender roles, domestic labour, economic dependence, and cultural conditioning, the novel reveals the invisible mechanisms by which women's autonomy and identity are constrained. At the same time, it foregrounds acts of resistance, showing how women assert agency, challenge societal expectations, and reclaim a sense of self.

The text reflects the realities of Indian patriarchal society while also highlighting universal themes of oppression and empowerment. Its relevance today is evident in ongoing struggles over domestic inequality, freedom of choice, and social justice for women. By portraying both oppression and resistance, Breaking Ties encourages critical reflection on the structures that govern domestic life and inspires the reimagining of homes and societies as spaces of equality, dignity, and mutual respect. In doing so, the novel underscores literature's enduring power to illuminate social realities and advocate for transformative change.

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