

## **Framed and Reframed Identities of Gender under Power Politics as evident in Media and Literature**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the preliminary level, this paper attempts to analyse the sociocultural ideas which defines the Gender dynamics. Particularly how the power divides the Gender based on ideologies. Then it concentrates on cultural transformations which has been taking place through different rationalistic moves in various modes at different times and places. The study reveals that gender and power are intertwined. It is playing a vital role in framing and reframing the status of people. To support the argument, it tries to illustrate how the access to education and employment (refereeing Media and Literature) leads to the emancipation of the hitherto neglected voices and reinforcement of more acceptable norms than before. Thus, the study concludes that the healthy development of socio-political institutions will definitely equalize the power relationships among all and slowly dismantle the idea of Gender identity apart from the basic biological differentiations.

**Keywords:** Gender, Gender dynamics, Socio-cultural and Socio-political Ideologies, Norms, Institutions.

Identity is ever dynamic; it was already framed, but it can be reframed or even formed in a complex process of representing other or ourselves. The identity of a child as male or female by the biological sex organs at birth confines their roles and position in the society. Thus, the biological identity decides the cultural and social life of a person. As Juliet Mitchell says 'since boys and girls are born into patriarchal cultures, both of them learn to find their place in the superior or inferior positioning that patriarchy ascribes them. This positioning becomes intimately linked to the unconscious, which cannot be separated out from external reality' (Papa 374). The society has already framed a set of rules to control the lifestyle of male and female with mutual support in the system of patriarchy. Because patriarchy is a phallogocentric system, which has framed all its ideologies to promote power relation in pyramidal structure. The enforced practice of gender norms, gender roles and

responsibilities are always cultural bound. The word gender, which was used first in the grammar to learn male (masculine) and female (feminine) nouns of animals in usage was later adopted to identify the nature and behaviour of man and women in relation to their sex. The practice of gendered rules has gradually taken the form of standard conventions to measure the good nature of a woman in relation to culture and society she belongs. In the traditional setup, gender was stereotypical. Therefore, the society expects men, as to be men, women as to be feminine any changes or opposition, was strongly objected and publicly defamed. Because patriarchy being the prominent cultural unit structured the identity of a person under the name of gender and controlled the society from its ideologies. Here the centre is conscious of its act of implementing the ideas, and the other is accepting its ideologies as natural and unavoidable to organize the society. As in earlier times ideology was considered as a "veil over the eyes of working class" or a tool to construct the "'false consciousness' of the self and of one's relation to history" (qtd.in Turner 19)

Based on these cultural ideologies gender in literature is represented with lots of biased notions. Women characters are basically modelled to uphold the societal expectations. Thus, Patmore's women as the Angel of the House is glorified with all sociocultural attributes. Any unfeminine wishes are being socially degraded and denied as not virtual quality of a good woman. Especially in the Victorian period the dominant male society tried hard to suppress the voice of female in all the walks of life which was reflected in the literary texts of that time. Many prominent women writers knowingly or unknowingly expressed their strong views by writing on the themes of marriage, quest for identity, economic independence, importance of education and ultimately emancipation. In the novel like *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen had shown for women of lower class or

middle-class marriage is the means of attaining financially secure life rather than for true love. In contrast, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* breaks all the stereotypical images and gives the picture of true woman. Jane set back all the gendered role of a woman for the first time in the Victorian world. Throughout the novel Jane is portrayed as a strong opponent of sociocultural and socio-political norms. Then Emily Bronte in her novel *Wuthering Heights* put forth the femaleness than feminine qualities in the character of Catherine. This view is supported by the follower of Lacanian theory, Lucy Irigaray who aimed to liberate "feminine" philosophical thought from "masculine" philosophical thought.

Parallel to these writings Indian writers also depicted women as dependent, submissive, passive, patient and weak. The typical conventional image of woman with all stereotypical notions was glorified in the name of good wife, kind mother, gentle mistress or a mere sex object. For instance, Sita of Ramayana, Gandhari of Mahabharata etc. But as the time went on the image of woman changed under many circumstances. Mahashwetha Devi's *Rudali* depicts women's helpless condition in the male dominated society. Then Jaya of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* gives the typical image of Indian woman. Jaya's grandmother represents the socio-political tool of imparting patriarchal ideologies in maintaining the gender differentiation.

In the other hand, the changed position of women in the twenty first century after attaining freedom and political rights to a larger extent is not so different. Though the education and employment opportunities have given moral strength and economic stability for women, she is not entirely free from the power politics. Today's institutions like media including newspaper, magazines, TV channels, movies creating the new image of woman who is bold and beautiful. The television world is flourishing hegemonic rule to support capitalist agenda. As we notice in commercial ads beautiful, educated, working women are

advertising almost all the finished branded products. The advertisement regarding dish wash, detergents, toilet cleaner, instant cooking items many more use the female models which indirectly directs the society to stick on to the traditional stereotypical images of woman unknowingly. Because these advertisements are being watched by millions of people irrespective of their place, culture, educational and economic background. They are psychologically influenced and ruled by hidden ideologies even today. As Judith Butler says gender identities are not natural or fixed; rather they are attributed to the performed act. So, the act on screen or any media makes a huge impact in gender dynamics.

By all these, it is evident that gender is an implied ideology. Masculine and feminine qualities are adoptable. The society is implementing these traits through socializing the children under the guidelines of patriarchy. Otherwise through psychological impacts in different means and levels. Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* argued that the subjectivity of female is partially constructed by sociological and psychological experiments in the power politics of the male. She acknowledged culture as 'shaping behaviour' (Millett 27) in determining the gender difference between biological sexes. So, both sexes are deprived of certain natural abilities which are there from birth under this political influence.

Here, another important argument is not only female but the male also facing the identity crisis. He under the pressure of upholding the aggressive, bold, unemotional, brave and strong nature he has forgotten the true self. Emily Bronte in her novel even portrayed the men under gender-oriented rules. The contrasting picture of Heathcliff and Edgar Linton - uncivilized and civilized, barbarian and cultured, cruel and calm, unprivileged and privileged, subaltern and centre so on gives us the clear picture of power politics. The macho character of Heathcliff attracts Catherine more than the mild character of Edgar. It shows powerlessness is equated with feminineness. Thus, to establish equality a change in

traditional role is necessary. Men and women in the family as well as society should be given equal opportunities in all the arena. Men should be sensitized through gender awareness programme.

Especially in the present scenario, the urgency is there to create awareness about third gender who are facing more discrimination than other two. When we turn back to find out at least the traces of this neglected gender in literature its hardly a few writings we get. They are actually portrayed in the view point of the other gender more than their own. So, it is the time to make and give space for third gendered people to express their own condition with their own language. It's the high time for the hitherto neglected voice to be strengthened and supported to create their independent identity as it was done so far in the case of feminine gender. Ismat Chughtai's *the quilt* and Deepa Mehta's movie *Fire* are most controversial works on homosexual relationship in representing the suppressed voice of third gender. It questions the heterosexual marital relationship which the patriarchy has enforced to establish the male dominance. Normally, heterosexual marriages will not take place on the egalitarian notions. Women are treated as caretaker of husband and his children more than an equal partner to manage the family affairs. So, any adverse steps to encourage homosexual or lesbian and bisexual relation will definitely dismantle the long run power politics behind the framework of 'Gender'. Hence, the identity of Gender is under the continuous process of framing and reframing under the power politics.

In this way the paper tries to present gendering is a conscious process of defining the identity of a person through various apparatus. But now it is at the verge of deconstruction from the exploited other (Female and Third gender).

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