

'Gender' with the Spectacles of Feminism

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Abstract: *Gender even being a social construct it has always remained an integral part of feminism. It is hard to find any other field which has done such intensive work in this field. In the field of research sex and gender have often been used interchangeably (Diamond, 2002). The word 'sex' be used to refer to the physical differences between men and women, while the term 'gender' be used in connection to the behavior and cultural practices of men and women (Stoller 1968). Here we will focus on few theories from perspective of gender revolution feminisms because it questions on social order for clearness of the categories, this feminism reconstructs the power and privilege that one group of men more dominant and put everyone in the ladder of disadvantage. This paper gives a comprehensive analysis on gender using the approaches and theories of feminism.*

Keywords: Gender, Feminism, Culture, and Social structure.

1. Introduction

When a child takes her very first step into this world she encounters her family as the first educator of self-perception, roles, belief, transmission of fundamental values and strategy or styles to deal with familiar as well as new situations. When a child is born it is merely an organism, 'jiva' and through the process of socialization it becomes 'purush' or 'stri' in other words an individual. The culture that a family, community and society inculcates in her makes her 'manushya' or human being. This process is also influenced by cultural norms, traditions values and different cultural patterns of the group to which it belongs. The terms 'sex' and 'gender' are closely linked, yet they are not synonyms. Diamond has said (1992) at times, the term "sex" and "gender" have been used interchangeably in literature (Diamond, 2002).

At other times, "gender" has been attributed to women but ignored in the context of men. Therefore it is important to distinguish between "sex" and "gender" and to recognize that the concept applies to the social functioning of both males and females'. Robert Stoller, in the 1960s, has drawn the distinction between them. He suggested that the word 'sex' be used to refer to the physical differences between men and women, while the term 'gender' be used in connection to the behavior and cultural practices of men and women (Stoller 1968). This distinction is the basis for all the definitions of 'sex' and 'gender' that are provided in the literature nowadays. Later on Oakley (1972) pointed out that sex refers to the biological differences between male and female, such as visible differences in genitalia and related differences in procreative function. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the social classification of attitudes and behaviors into categories of masculine and feminine. Where Oakley has pointed specifically on the behavioral aspect for gender and biological functioning for sex, American Psychological Association has explained the difference between sex and gender as, gender refers to the attitudes, feelings and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex.

Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity (APA, 2015), Sex refers to a person's biological status and is typically categorized as male, female or intersex. There are a number of indicators of biological

sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs and external genitalia. (APA, 2015) This definition of APA for gender sex not only helps to differentiate the terms sex and gender but also focused on many psychological and sociological factors, which helped in bonding functions of these two different fields. Though this field gives an explanation for a lot more variables, still there are some factors which are left untouched for example ethnic and work background variables.

This gap was covered in the definition of World Health Organization (2017) gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviors – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places. When individuals or groups do not "fit" established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion – all of which adversely affect health. It is important to be sensitive to different identities that do not necessarily fit into binary male or female sex categories. This distinction between sex and gender helped feminist to move forward in diminishing the distinction between sex and gender, and gave a hope that these difference are created by society so there is possibility of change. In simple words, gender refers to differences in approaches and behavior, and these variances are supposed as a product of the socialization practice rather than of biology. Gender also comprises the different expectations that culture and individuals themselves hold as regard to the suitable behaviors of men and women. We should also note that gender does not concern women only, but it relates to both sexes. Gender issues are not women issues; they are rather issues pertaining to both men and women.

Viewing gender as a socially-constructed phenomenon implies that gender, contrary to sex, is not the same over the world. It varies between and within societies and it can change over time. A number of theories have been proposed to identify the differences between sex and gender, and how it is defined, learned and changed over time. Here we will give a brief account of progress of gender from feminist point of view.

Discussing gender issues without focusing on contribution of feminist perspective is incomplete. A number of theories have been provided by feminist to explain gender inequality of societies. Some of these theories have made crucial changes necessary for gender problems. These theories have helped in bringing out the untouched issues of related to gender bias and inequality. These include Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, Radical feminism and Socialist feminism. These theories give a deeper perspective on gender bias. They have focused that gender inequality is not the issue of individual matter but this concerns to whole society. These issues are related to society built in system of marriage, family, occupations and even the use of languages in a culture. Judith Lorber (1997), has grouped these perspective into three main categories. These are gender reform feminisms, gender resistant feminism, and gender revolution feminism. Gender reform feminism includes liberal feminism, Marxist and socialist feminisms, and development feminism. Gender resistant feminism includes radical feminism, lesbian feminism, psychoanalytical feminism, and standpoint feminism. Gender revolution feminisms are multi-ethnic feminism, men's feminism, social construction feminism, post-modern feminism and queer theory. Here we will focus on few theories from perspective of gender revolution feminisms because it questions on social order for clearness of the categories, this feminism reconstructs the power and privilege that one group of men more dominant and put everyone in the ladder of disadvantage. They also tail mass media which is the product of culture, because they often justify inequalities of society and treat this as daily life event by normalizing it. This perspective works with potential to change the social structure and values in a given dominant order.

1.1 Multi-ethnic feminism

Multi ethnic feminism focuses on ethnic aspect of a culture. Ethnicity and other variables like class, religion and gender comprises power, these variables are structured according to hierarchies of system. In hierarchical system upper class women and men oppress lower class women and men. In testing out the oppressions and exploitations, multiethnic feminism shows gender, ethnic, religion and social class are structurally intertwined. These variables works as a filtered door for our experiences, feelings, beliefs view points for us.

Multi-ethnic woman's rights take the viewpoint a stride further. It is insufficient to dissect a social institution or establishment of social idea from a women's perspective; the perspective has to incorporate the idea of women and men of various ethnic gatherings and religions and should also think about social class and financial conditions. Qualities, personality, and consciousness of self are established in all major social statuses.

One of the important contributions made by multi-ethnic is that, this approach takes into the account of multiple variables related to oppressed class, which gives an overall perspective. Multi ethnic feminism views art in work and production of women's everyday life of work like decorating home, making dishes, folk songs and embroidery.

A man from disadvantage group may feel oppressed from advantage group but a women from disadvantage group might feel this oppression differently, she may not feel loyalty and identity with "all women" and she may also feel alienated from the men of her own group as well, because they oppress women as part of their learned behavior from patriarchal culture or may be because they are themselves oppressed by men from top of the pyramid. The voice of suppressed men must need an expression because they may feel suppression from higher group. Women suppressed voice also need expression because she might feel suppression not only from higher group but also from her own group of men as well, this enlarges her burden men.

1.2 Social Structure Theory

Where multi-ethnic feminism is focused on effect of ethnicity and background in system of advantage and disadvantage group, social structure theory is focused on gendered social order in whole. This theory looks at gender as a wide society institution which handles the distribution of power, privileges and economic resources. Men and women's self-built up into a society where gender is most influential category for decision, the rules, norms and expectations from people related to their gender get rooted into the core of human being that is unimaginable to think differently.

Gender is so pervasive that its powerfulness leads people to think that gender is biological and very natural. Inequality is the base of gender it divides men and women differently and uniquely. Genders differentiate men and women socially. Thus it presents that gendering is the main source of inequality in men and women but this process is so deeply rooted in society that it is considered as organic. This theory focuses on the process which leads to gender difference and also makes the construction of gender invisible. This category of gender takes division of labor differently not only in household responsibilities but also to organization. In home women are assigned tasks like caring and nurturing babies, taking responsibilities for cooking cleaning and other things where as men are resource provider, similar thing happen in organizational settings. The role assigned to men and women are so sharply different that no one thinks off to look at similarities between genders. These roles create the boundary of appropriate and inappropriateness such as aggression is considered inappropriate for females and nurturance for men.

Social structure theory states that biological differences between male and female are also maintained and encouraged by society. For example men are assumed to have more physical power than women, these differences are encouraged from childhood, and physical labor is considered as something which belongs to men. Social construction also analyses gendering as a result of cultural and historical process which creates the script for gender. Gendering and sexuality is considered as a result of learning, social pressures, cultural values and norms. The violation of these norms and rules is considered as sinful and unacceptable by society.

These norms and rules get built into a individuals personality's sense of worth and identity, which makes people living in the same prescribed roles by culture. This gender identity is so important that transsexual have to change their identity papers like birth certificate to passport. It shows that gender is more than a category or variable. It is a basic identity, a status and a social class.

Social construction feminist knows that change in given social structure is not possible all at once, this is very long and tedious process to bring gender on equal space and it will need the effort of every social and politician.

1.3 Post Modern Feminism and Queer Theory

This theory views gender and sexuality as fluid, flexible instead of fixed and oppositional. They say that quality in gender will come only if there are so many recognized sexes, sexualities, and genders that one can't be played against the other. They explain the way in which ideology, cultural text define their beliefs about gender instead of focusing only on literature, art and newspaper. This approach takes into the account of text, historical context, movies which produced in particular time represents the status of women from that time. By analyzing movie videos, TV, popular music, advertising -- whether aimed at adults, teenagers, or children as well as paintings, operas, theater productions, and ballet. They say that these analyses can tell us about the status of male and female bodies, desire and gender role. These discussions influence the way we think of this world and our assumptions for gender and sexuality.

If social construction feminism puts too much stress on societies and structures, and not sufficient on individual activities, postmodern feminism and queer theory have just the differing Problem.

In queer theory, all the stress is on agency, impression management, and presentation of the self in the guise and costume most likely to produce or parody conformity. Postmodern feminism is mainly concerned with deconstructing cultural productions, neglecting the more iron-bound and controlling discourses embedded in organizational, legal, religious, and political texts.

2. Conclusion

Gender revolution feminisms claim that all the statuses that structure our lives are socially constructed. Thus, it is possible to have multiple variations and mixes of whatever humans can invent in behavior, emotional and sexual relationships, and identities. Identity politics becomes a lot more complex, but the possibilities for political coalitions also multiply.

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