"One is not born, rather becomes
a woman"

Outline:

1- Introduction

Thesis statement: Womanhood is
not biologically determined, rather than
it is social construction as social
cultures, patriarchal structures, lopsided
religious interpretation and media
portrayal of women compel women to
align their behaviours with societal
expectations. However, with societal
evolution, the feminist activists and
multilateral institutions have challenged
these cultural norms of assigning
gender roles to women.

2- How womanhood is defined by different
societal factors, rather than biologically?
2a) Role of social cultures and norms
in defining gender roles
• Margaret Mead's study of
different societies

2b) Gender socialization reinforces womanhood
  - Example: dolls for girls and cars for boys

2c) Patriarchal structures define cult of domesticity for women
  - Hidebound cultural norms in Pakistan

2d) Lopsided interpretation of religion assigns rigid roles for women
  - Extremist law for women in Afghanistan

2e) Media glorifies submissive femininity

2f) Literature reemphasizes gender stereotypes
  - Example: women cannot shout

2g) Systemic barriers create glass ceiling for women
  - women in nursing, doctors and teachers role

2h) Intersectional view about women discrimination
  - Kimberle Crenshaw intersectionality

3- How societal evolution has challenged gender constitutions in society?

3a) Role of feminist movements in advocating women's rights

- Suffragist movement

3b) Enhancing women's empowerment through digital media

- Aurat march, MeToo movement

3c) Cardinal role of global organization in imparting female education

- UNDP, UN for women

3d) International law to eliminate discrimination against women & panacea

- CEDAW

3e) Awareness dissemination among women through information technology

4- Conclusion

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**" One is not born, rather becomes
a woman"**

A woman is not a seed that
grows on its own, but a garden cultivated
by the hands of culture, watered
with tradition and pruned by
expectations. Although females are
sexually different from males, their
roles and behaviours are not biologically
different from males. These gender
roles are assigned to girls by
society after their birth. In the
process of their socialization, they
learn different cultural values,
norms and ethics, which society
expects from them. Therefore,
femininity is not biologically determined.
It is emphasized by social environment.
Social cultures impose women to
become a woman. The exploration
of multifaceted social factors
that make women a woman will
help to deeply understand that

a woman is not inherently made a woman. Undeniably, womanhood is not biologically determined, rather than it is social construction as social cultures, patriarchal structures, lopsided religious interpretation and media portrayal of women compel women to align their behaviour with societal expectations. However, with societal evolution, the feminist activists and multilateral institutions have challenged these cultural norms of assigning gender roles to women. As Adrienne Rich, a renowned American feminist, reinforced this fact as:

"Women are made, not born, and that making is a social process"

Starting with the social cultures and norms as determining factors for womanhood, they ensure the subjective roles of women in society. To study

gender roles in different cultures,
Margaret Mead studied three different
societies in Oceania: The Arapesh,
Mundugumor and Tchambuli. She
wrote a book on these societies
named "Sex and Temperament
in three Primitive Societies". She
observed that in the Arapesh,
both males and females were
cooperative, nurturing and gentle.
While in Mundugumor, both gender
were aggressive and competitive.
Then, in Tchambuli, women were
dominant, independent and economically
active while males were passive,
emotional and aesthetic. She concluded
that gender roles are not inherently
made, rather than societies define
them, emphasizing the societal
construction of femininity.

        Building on this perspective,
the femininity is reiterated during
the process of socialization. When

females are born, they are only sexually different from males. However, their social circle teaches them the ways to live in a society. For instance, society enforces girls to play with dolls, to stay at home and to be gentle and emotional. This kind of socialization made them a woman. On the other hand, males are socialized into masculine behaviours, such as dominant, independent, aggressive, apathetic and rigid. Therefore, society plays pivotal role in making woman a woman, not biology.

To further understand the fact that womanhood is a social construction, patriarchal structure of societies reinforce cult of domesticity for women. The patriarchal norms and cultures confine women in private sphere,

deprive them of gaining education
and make them economically
dependent. The hidebound cultural
norms in different regions of
Pakistan, particularly in Sindh
and Baluchistan, restrict them
from achieving their rights. Some
brutal and repressive patriarchal
norms such as wани, Karo Kari
and honour killing erode their
right to self-determination. It
highlights that social roles of
women are emphasized by social
patriarchal structures, not assigned
by birth.

   While repressive structures
of society define women, the
lopsided interpretation of religion
further compels women for
submissive and rigid roles.
The extremist narrative of
some religious scholars skews
the perception of masses about

women role in a society. Its
egregious example is subjugation
of women in Afghanistan under
extremist narrative of Taliban.
The Taliban government in Afghanistan
has made extremist and oppressive
laws for women. Recently, they
enforced a law that women
cannot even talk with each other
in public places according to the
United Nations report. It reflects
that how women behave in a
society is imposed by society by
politicizing religion. These behaviour
are not applied to them inherently.

     Having established this
fact that religious interpretation
highlights gender roles, media
further glorifies subservient roles
of women. By demonstrating
the ideal picture of women in
shows, dramas and podcasts, media
amplifies the deeply entrenched

tasks of women in society. Media
plays cardinal role in changing
the perspective of people about
social cultures, norms and
behaviours. Moreover, digital
media enhanced the narrative of
gender discrimination and marginelization
of women in a society. It showcase
that media has the power to
propagate the gendered image
of women. Hence, woman are
not biologically determined a woman,
rather then socially defined.

        Furthermore, literature
also shapes perception about
gender stereotypes. Literature
uses gendered language to
explain the characteristics of women.
For example, gendered language
of literature, such as women cannot
shout; they are emotional, sensitive
and gentle; women are caretakers
of the house, regurgitate gender roles.

It highlights feminine behaviours. On the flip side, gender stereotypes incorporate musculine behaviours in a society such as, breadwinners of house, economically independent and dominant. It underscores the fact that literature is one of the key factors that defines women, not their birth factor.

Besides this factor, the systemic barriers in a society create glass celling for women and redefine gender roles. In different societies, different glass cellings exist that hinder women progress and development. Societies assign roles for women such as nursing, doctors, teachers and low scale government jobs. Women are not allowed to enter in politics and leadership roles. They are considered weak to be fit for high-profile jobs. So,

these are systemic barriers that restrict women from growth and progress, emphasizing that their birth plays no role in it.

Lastly, womanhood also varies across different cultures, races, ethnicity and castes. Kimberlee Crenshaw further explains women intersectionality concept that discriminates women on the basis of race, caste and ethnicity. For instance, African-American women face racial-based discrimination. Similarly, in India, Dalit women face both caste-based discrimination and gender-based oppression. Moreover, the elite-class women gain more rights than lower-class women. Same disparities exist between rural and urban women. Such discrimination reinforce the idea that womanhood is socially

constructed, rather than biologically.

After expounding the factors of society that determine women behaviours, it is crucial to discuss the changing narratives of society about gender roles with societal evolution and technological advancement.

Firstly, the feminist movements have significant role in raising voice about gender apartheid. Starting from the first wave of feminism, the feminist activists initiated suffragist movement, demanding voting rights for women. Moreover, they started different campaigns to provide reproductive rights to women. Mowing to second wave of feminism, more social rights have been ensured for women such as right of abortion. With evolving society,

third and fourth waves of feminism further preserved legal, social, economic and political rights for women. These movements and the engendering of women's rights reflect that women are not born women, rather than they become ones.

Secondly, the advancement in digital technology spreaded awareness among women about their social, political, economic, legal and other rights. They incentivized them to be vocal about their rights. Therefore, they challenged social norms of gender contruction. It can be evidenced by social campaigns, such as Aurat March and MeToo movement. In these movements, they demanded right of self-determination. However, society alleged them for raising controvertial

Fourthly, International laws have ensured to eliminate gender discrimination worldwide. It is also a positive step to challenge socio-cultural norms in different societies. For example, United Nations Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) seeks to enforce this law in member countries to eliminate gender discrimination. This law focuses on domestic voilence against women and forces countries to comply this law. Such laws have significantly empowered women to challenge traditional norms, trying to eliminate gender stereotypes.

Fifthly, information technology has substantially created awareness among girls about their rights. Before

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Fifthly, information technology has substantially created awareness among girls about their rights. Before

technological development, women considered conventional norms of society as their fate. They considered social conformity as their duty. However, information technology has revolutionized societies. Now, women's rights are mostly under discussion in social media. Women are now more empowered than in antiquity. It shows that as societies are evolving, the traditional gender roles have become slightly obscured.

In conclusion, society, cultures and traditions compel women to conform with societal expectations. The birth of females has no role in assigning gender roles, gender stereotypes and gendered behaviours. Multifarious elements in a society contribute in exerting already established tasks for women, which make

them a woman. Gendered socialization, gendered interpretation of religion, feudal systems, and intersectional gender norms compel women to fulfill their gendered roles. However, women have potential to challenge these traditional customs, reiterating that womanhood is a socio-cultural construction. The global feminist activists, institutions and organizations have played cardinal role in empowering women to challenge social norms. It underscores that the role of society in shaping women's lives can be minimized by making them economically independent. It provides a beacon of hope that gender discrimination can be reduced in contemporary world.