

"One is not born, rather becomes a woman"

Outline:

1- Introduction

Thesis statement: womanhood is not biologically determined, rather than it is social construction by social cultures, patriarchal structures, religious interpretation and media portrayal of women compel women 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.

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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 contributions in society?

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

- Suffragist movement

3b) Enhancing women's empowerment through digital media

- Auzat march, MeToo movement

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

- UNDP, UN for women

3d) International law to eliminate discrimination against women

- CEDAW

3e) Awareness dissemination among women through information technology

4- Conclusion

"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, **Good** watered with tradition and pruned by expectations. Although females are ~~sexually different~~ **Biologically 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 & 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:

“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 genders 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 contribution 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, assertive 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 wani, 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 biased 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 behaviours are not applied to them inherently.

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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 marginalization of women in a society. It shows that media has the power to propagate the gendered image of women. Hence, women are not biologically determined a woman, rather than 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, relegate gender roles.

It highlights feminine behaviours. On the flip side, gender stereotypes incorporate masculine behaviours. In a society such as, breadwinners of home, 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 ceiling for women and redefine gender roles. In different societies, different glass ceilings exist that hinder women progress and development. Societies assign roles for women such as nursing, doctor, 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,

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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.

Unity of idea is ur strength

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 discriminatory reinforce the idea that womanhood is socially

constituted, rather than biologically.

After expounding the factors of society that determine women behaviours, it is crucial to discuss the changing natures 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. Moving 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 spread 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 continuation. 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 controversial

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 violence against women and forces countries to comply this law. Such laws have significantly empowered women to challenge traditional norms, trying to eliminate gender stereotypes.

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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 duty. 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 a 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.