

"One is not Born Women, But Becomes One" - Simon de Beauvoir

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Soon after the birth of a child, the very first question people ask is, "Is it a boy or a girl?" This simple question has profound significance for the life of the newborn. If the child is a boy, he is welcomed into a 'blue world' associated with audacity, openness, self-determination and freedom of choice. Conversely, if the child is girl, she is welcomed into a 'pink world' characterized by conservatism, restriction, shyness, and limited freedom. Thus, from the very beginning of life, womanhood is socially constructed as submissive, weak, powerless, and obedient. This process of behavioral ~~chan~~ shaping continues throughout life and affects all spheres of society, resulting in the marginalization of women within patriarchal structures. Socially constructed gender roles, learned patterns of masculinity and femininity, patriarchal institutions, exclusion from education and politics, gender bias in language and literature, and religious and ~~literature~~ traditional constraints collectively manufacture femininity in ways that sustain male dominance. However, when women resist these imposed norms and assert themselves as strong, independent and empowered individuals, they validate Simone de Beauvoir's statement that one is not born a woman, but becomes one. Hence, this essay seeks to vindicate the statement

by examining how gender is socially produced rather than biologically ordained.

The foremost argument which supports the statement of Simon de Beauvoir's is that social conditioning begins soon after the birth of child. There are different types of reaction to the birth of a child. Boys are welcomed in 'blue world' while girls are welcomed in 'pink world'. Choice of color for the genders is different. Pink colored clothes are preferred for girls while blue clothes are for boys. Similarly, choice of toys is also gendered. Girls are expected to play with dolls and boys are expected to play with cars and gun toys. This social conditioning in the beginning of life of a newcomer shapes their characteristics. Girls are especially trained to be women in future with adoption of feminine characteristics of submission, weakness and politeness. Hence, social conditioning of newborn girl inculcates feministic tendencies within a girl.

Another line of thought which proves the point in discussion is that gender is a socially constructed phenomenon rather than a biological.

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The idea of masculinity and femininity are socially learned behaviours. Social expectations demands feministic behaviour from women which includes polite, weak, submissive and obedient characteristics. Robert J. Staller in his book Sex and gender: The development of masculinity and feminity explains how feminine traits develop within women due to social construction phenomenon.

Therefore, it is not biology, but society that creates the roles, behaviors, and expectation associated with being male or female. For instant, families assign domestic duties to girls, media promotes women as emotional and dependant. Hence, it is proved that women associated traits are not biologically borned but socially constructed.

Moreover, patriarchal structure of society produces femininity to benefit male dominance in society. Women are rewarded for obedience and submission, and morals and social values are set to limit women in certain drawn boundries of society. Subjugation to male authority is promoted through patriarchal structure of society. In many areas women are not allowed to gain education and they are politically and economically marginalised to sustain male dominance. Tehmeena

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Durrani in her Couplet 'My Feudal lord' explains how male authority subjugate and control women all aspects of women life. Therefore, it can be drawn out from the discussion that one is not born, but becomes women due to patriarchal social structure.

Furthermore, changing womanhood across the world can be taken as a case in point to prove that expected traits in women are not inherent but inculcated through social norms. Changing womanhood dismantles the perception of femininity. For instance women who are think unfit for education in multiple societies are serving as Judges, soldiers and Scientists in other societies. Similarly, women are politically marginalized across the world but at the same time women holds the position of head of states. As of 2025, data from UN women shows there are 29 countries where women serve as heads of state. If women were inherently weak and submissive in nature, they would never be able to hold such authoritative offices. Hence, it is proved that women are not naturally weak but society makes them one.

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Along with patriarchal society, economic dependence also creates femininity. Women are economically kept dependent on male counterpart to sustain the male authority in a society. For same kind of jobs men are given more pay than women. Huge wages disparity prevails across the globe. According to UN report, 77 cents for women in comparison to 1 dollar for men shows huge wages disparity. In all economic sectors the differences in wages prevails which makes women feel less than males. Similarly, women are given minimum incentives as compare to male and this perception of male's earning responsibility is of male and women are subjugated to be house-wives keeps women economically dependent. Hence, despite having potential to earn, women are supposed to be economically dependent due to prevailing social structure.

In addition, women are limited to secure top positions in industry due to structural barriers of society. Glass ceiling is a phenomenon which is faced by women across the globe. This phenomenon means limiting women to certain professions. For instance, women in Pakistan are supposed to be doctor and men are supposed to go for any profession. Furthermore, for

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men are prioritized for top positions in companies. According to USA labour department, only 5 pc women across world are the CEO of companies. Limited opportunities are given to women to sustain the status quo of society where women are subjugated to male authority. Therefore, it can be clearly concluded that women are not born with feminine characteristics but society inculcates these traits.

Furthermore, womanhood construction can also be prove through the fact that different societies create different women. Women roles and traits vary in different societies. It is basically the society which shapes what it means to be a women. Western women are different and South Asian women are differently constructed. For instance, a women in Scandinavia is encouraged to be independent. On the other hand, a women in South Asia is rewarded for submission and obedience. Even, within the same country, some women are strong, independent, and top position holders and some are so submissive, weak and dependent. This difference is based on in which society and family they are born. Therefore, it can be said that womanhood is a socially constructed phenomenon, not a biological one.

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Similarly, language and literature also promotes the idea of femininity. Literature is full of gender biased content which shows women as a weak and submissive creature. Moreover, common language in a society also hold gender biased phrases. For instance, "good women do not speak loudly", and "boys will be boy", such phrases which are very common among masses silently inculcates gender discrimination and biases within society. Aristotle and Thomas Jefferson's views about women presents women as a marginalized group in society. Therefore, it can be concluded that ~~language~~ gender biased language and literature inculcates sense of inferiority within females and promotes socially structured women traits.

Furthermore, psychological studies supports the claim that gender is a socially constructed phenomenon. In psychology, behavioural theory explains that behaviour is shaped by environment. Similarly, social learning theory also proves that social roles and behaviours are learned from surrounding environment. Gender identity is influenced by upbringing. There is no gene for modesty or obedience but these traits are socially

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formed and certain expectations are associated with being a woman which ultimately defines the character of women in a society. Therefore, psychological studies prove the fact that women are not born with feminine traits but these are learned from society.

In addition, religious restrictions and traditions shape gender identity. Religion and traditions present women with particular norms and values which define their morality. These norms and values vary from religion to religion. For instance, specific dress codes for women, mobility limitation and sexual morality are the norms which religion and culture specify for women. These norms construct a specific type of woman and shape their identity. Hence, religious restrictions and traditional limitations also promote submissive woman character in a society.

Above all, resistance to women's discrimination in a society proves that roles and traits associated with women are socially constructed, not inherited. If womanhood were natural and fixed, it could not be challenged. Waves of feminism throughout history and the MeToo movement of present time show clear resistance to

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patriarchal social structure. Feminist movements have redefined motherhood, reclaimed bodies, and rewrite roles. This resistance and change itself is proof of social construction. Therefore, resistance to women's discrimination clearly vindicates that one is not born women, but becomes one.

However, some critics argue that women are born with feminine traits. According to them, womanhood is primarily determined by biology. Biological characteristics shape women's psychology and social roles. But critics forget the fact that biology determines sex; it does not indicate social roles or status. Biology does not prescribe submission, domesticity, or exclusion from public life. Women across cultures experience the same biology yet live vastly different lives, proving that womanhood is socially constructed, not biologically ordained.

Another argument given by critics ~~is that~~ ^{and} some religious interpretations claim that gender roles are divinely ordained, asserting that women are naturally nurturing, obedient, and domestic. However, historical and progressive reinterpretations of religion show that religion promotes dignity and justice, not

Subordination. Changing religious practices across time and cultures demonstrate that gender roles are contextual, not divinely immutable.

Finally, some cultural relativists argue that what is labeled as 'oppression' is merely cultural difference. Femininity, modesty, and domestic roles are valued cultural traits, not imposed constructions. However, cultural practices cannot be justified when they deny choice and equality. Culture is dynamic, not static. Women's resistance and reform movements within cultures prove that femininity is not naturally accepted but socially enforced and therefore changeable.

In a nutshell, it is an undeniable fact that women roles are socially constructed, not biologically inherent. Patriarchal social structure, social construction of gender, changing womanhood, biased language and literature, religious restrictions and traditional limitations proves the fact that one is not born woman, but becomes one. However, some critics argue that oppose the statement based on biological determination and religious interpretations which can be refuted through the fact that biology determines sex not

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gender and progressive interpretations promote justice and dignity. Therefore, dismantling patriarchal structures and promoting education, inclusivity, and gender equality are essential to redefining womanhood as a space of agency, autonomy, and dignity rather than subordination.