

ONE IS NOT BORN A WOMAN,
BUT BELONGS ONE

OUTLINE:

(1) Introduction

Thesis Statement: Society play an important role in the construction of women personality by assigning them different social roles and expecting them to play these roles

(2) Role of Society in the Construction of Women Identity

(a) Gender is the name of performance according to Judith Butler

(b) Role of social learning in the construction of women identity

(c) Role of psyche, affected by social norms, in the creation of women identity.

(d) Assigning of gender roles fixes women identity.

(e) Variation in women centric roles in various societies asserts that women identity is created by society.

(3) Manifestations of Social Construction of Women Identity:

- (a) Restrictions on wearing dresses.
 - (b) Availability of selective jobs for women
 - (c) Responsible for household chores and nurturing the children
 - (d) Selective personality traits for women
 - (e) Patriarchal culture of the society.
 - (f) Emphasis on beauty standards and body shape.
 - (g) Inflicting violence on women and expecting them to remain silent
- (4) Conclusion.

Harris Dirie was born in African society. As per that society culture, all the new born girls have to undergo female genital mutilation. Harris also passed through the same condition. When she became adult, she made her way to Western society clandestinely. She came to know that female genital mutilation is not natural practice but fixed by society. She became successful Western model and told her story to entire world how society inflicted violence on the women of that culture and shaped their perception and identity. This is the story of not just African culture; there are number of other practices in the world ^{that} play a role in the social construction of females. Women are not born with characteristics of being submissive, modest and silent. It is the society that imposes these characteristics on them. Society has fixed certain roles for women and they are required to play them to prove that they are women. If they ignore these roles, they are subjected to criticism and

harsh treatment. This essay delves into the role of society in construction of women identity and manifestations of social construction of women identity.

Society plays a huge role in the social construction of women identity. Gender is considered to be the name of performance. If women play women centric role, they are considered to be performing the gender of women. There is no fixed inner self. It is the society that decides how women and men are required to perform. There is no interference of natural forces in this process. Society is solely responsible for it. This concept is given by Judith Butler in his book "Gender Trouble". Gender is considered to be the name of performance. Hence, it reinforces the idea that one is not born a woman but becomes one.

Beside, social learning also plays huge role in the construction

of women identity. Actions, habits and practices are learned from other. An individual notices behaviours, retains them and then reproduces them. In the same way, a girl learns from her mother what it means to be women and what characteristics define women. She then adopts those traits and plays those role. In this way, she fits herself into the definition of woman. This scenario is rightly explained by Nancy Chodrow in his book "The Reproduction of Mothering". Hence, social learning plays an important role in the construction of women identity.

In the same way, psyche of an individual also plays a paramount role in the creation of women identity. A girl is born in the patriarchal society where women roles are explicitly defined. She notices her surrounding and observes how women act and behave. Her psyche is developing under the impression of these practices. She emulates the same behaviour and acts in the same

way. Her psycho inhibit her from deviating from these fixed roles. This condition is rightly explained by Albert Bandura in his theory named as 'Gender Schema Theory'. Therefore, woman psyche that is nurtured in this world affects the development of woman's personality.

In addition to that, certain roles are fixed that are to be played by women. These roles are not natural but established by society to marginalize women. Women are required to do household chores. They are required to devote their life for their family. They are expected to play the role of child caregivers. These roles fix the definition of women. Everyone looks women through this lens. Circumventing these roles earn them the title of gender non-conformative. This situation is explained by many sociologists in their work. Thus, assigning of gender roles fixes women identity.

Moreover variation exist in women centric roles in various societies. Geert Hofstede says that there are 2 cultures in the world. One is feminine culture in which the roles of women and men overlap. There are no fixed roles for anyone. The other one masculine culture in which roles of both men and women are clearly defined. There is clear distinction between the roles of both genders. Differences in roles in various societies confirms that these roles are not naturally defined but socially constructed. Hence, society plays clear role in the construction of women identity.

The social construction of gender is manifested in various form in the society. Starting with the first one, women face restrictions in clothing themselves. This is mostly found in developing or undeveloped countries. There is fixed dress code for women that they need to follow. There is established clothing style for them. For example, in Islamic countries, women are

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discouraged to adopt bold dressing. They are appreciated to cover their heads and wear hijab. Similarly, in African tribes, there is fixed dresscode for women that they need to follow. Hence, society constructs the identity of women by imposing restriction on their clothing.

Furthermore, women are allowed to do only selective jobs. They face different obstacles while choosing job carrier for them. Firstly, they are forced to do the jobs that do not affect their family life. Secondly, timing of job is also an issue. Women are not allowed to do night jobs in many societies. Thirdly, the place of jobs also matters. Allocating to other city for job and living alone is discouraged. Fourthly, the nature of job also matters. Women are mostly find in teaching and nursing jobs. According to UNDP, 70% of women are found in teaching and nursing profession. Hence, constricting the sphere of job for women is manifestation of patriarchy.

of social construction of women identity.

Furthermore, women are considered to be sole responsible for doing household chores and raising the children. They are expected to prioritize this role above every other duty. These jobs are considered to be the sole domain of women. They are expected to clean house, wash clothes, utensils and cook food. Taking care of baby till he becomes ^{an adult} is considered to be their duty. These jobs sometimes have significant impact on academic and professional careers of women. Thus, society defines women by making them sole responsible for nurturing and household duties.

Besides, there are certain personality traits selective for women. They are expected to speak softly. Dominant nature of women is discouraged. They are encouraged to remain submissive and obedient. They are expected to endure pains and difficulties but do not utter a word. They are required to remain modest and follow.

the cultural norms. Creative nature of women is also not appreciated. These personality traits are not natural but society nurture them. Hence, imposing certain personality traits on women is a manifestation of social construction of women identity.

Besides, patriarchal culture the society also plays a role in creating women identity. It is the culture where men dominates and women are marginalized. Society value men more than women. Firstly, boys education is prioritized over girls. A perception is found in the patriarchal society that spending on ^{girls} education is waste of money as she would eventually be married and moves to his husband's home. Girls are often sidelined in many important decisions like family planning and etc. Boys' health is prioritized over their health. These factors are defining features in the perception of women in these societies. Hence, women become women not by birth but by living in patriarchal culture.

Moreover, huge emphasis is made on beauty standards and body shape of the women. Women who have fair skin tone, tall height and slim figure are given more importance. Those who are devoid of these features are looked down upon. Their beauty standards are prioritized over their rational abilities. New York.

based feminist group Red Stocking had said "Women are treated like cattles in the beauty contests where their beauty is prioritized over rational abilities". Thus, society nurtures perception regarding women by emphasizing 'beauty standards'.

Furthermore, Society inflicts violence on women and expects them to remain silent. Different kinds of violence are inflicted on women. In their homes, they face domestic violence from either their partner or from immediate family members. They also face economic, sexual and psychological violence. Forced marriage is also common form of violence. If they

then
 many aften a heart, they are
 killed on the basis of honour.
 In all these forms of violence,
 they are expected to remain
 silent and bear all the pains
 and sufferings. According to
 UN Women, 83% of women endure
 violence silently. This perpetuates
 the notion that violence can be
 inflicted on women and women
 needs to bear it silently. Hence
 women become women due to
 the violent norms of society.

In a nutshell, women are
 born with no predefined characters
 and personality traits. It is the
 discussion of society that sets
 these traits that are now deeply
 embedded in the foundation of
 society as said by Elaine
 Stonkey in her book "Created vs
 Construction: The Great Gender
 Debate". Society creates roles
 for women and expect them
 to fit into these roles. A girl
 become socially defined woman
 by learning the confirmative
 behaviour from his mother. Women
 face for restrictions under the

guise of these roles that reinforces the idea the society constructs women identity. Women are delicate creature of God. The beauty and decorations of the nature is because of creation of women. As Iqbal said,

و نور زن سے ہے ظہور مائتات میں رنگ
اسی کی سزا سے ہے مائتات میں سوز و زن

(The colour of nature lies in the creation of women and the balance of nature depends on the survival of women).

Society needs to redefine these roles and eradicate women oppressive practices that will lead to further development of society.