

Topic: "One is not born a woman,
but becomes one" - Simone De Beauvoir

Outline

1- Introduction

Thesis Statement: Simone De Beauvoir throws light on the social construction of both sex and gender. The masculine view of the world makes woman a subordinate sex. Thus, woman remains on the losing edge ^{not} because of her genitals but because of her inferior position in the society.

2- The "nature versus nurture" debate
and the subordination of a
woman

3- Factors responsible for the
woman being a "Second Sex"

a) Cultural norms reinforces
patriarchy to ^{create} subordinated women

- b) Biological essentialism as a tool of women's inferior position
- c) Psychologically engraved patterns as a cause of women's oppressed identity
- d) Media romanticizes the patriarchal norms
- e) Wrong interpretation of religion creates conflict of interest between the sexes
- f) The notion of "gendered language" makes women the "second sex"

* Impact of "inorganic ^{womanhood} ~~womanhood~~" on female's life

- a) The social stereotypes creates unequal division of power between the sexes
- b) The reproductive labour used as a tool to challenge female autonomy
- c) Economic subjugation as a hurdle against women empowerment
- d) Normalization of structured violence by media causes commodification of women
- e) The systematic slavery gives

birth to crimes against women

*) Women are deprived of their
educational rights

8) The gender roles inculcates the sense of inferiority in women

6- Remedies for "de-sexualization" of women

- a) Addressing gender norms by breaking cultural stereotypes
- b) Promoting educational facilities for women
- c) Integration of women into economic sector
- d) Ensuring positive role of media to end gender discrimination

7- Conclusion

The communist philosopher **Karl Marx** postulates that the earlier societies were classless in nature. The common ownership of the means of production was not a threat to the cohesion of the society. But with the advent of the agrarian societies, the idea of private ownership of property and means of production emerged. It caused the establishment of the feudalist patriarchal societies. This patriarchal society did not only fragmented the society into "haves" and "have not" but it re-wrote the gender roles also. The economic tasks were assigned to "males" and the "caretaking" function was bestowed upon women. Initially, these gender roles were non-predatory in nature. But the mutual conflict of interests in a resource scarce society, results in the subjugation of the weaker gender i.e., the women. With the passage of time, a gender norm turned into a holy scripture. The gender roles accompanied the unreasonable

stereotypes regarding women and they started treating as a commodity possessed by a male. As Simone De Beauvoir states in her book "The Second Sex": "Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but in relation to himself. She is not considered an autonomous being. She is thus called the sex as male sees her essentially as a sexed being... He is the absolute... She is the other".

It means that the biological characteristics of a woman have been used against her, historically. The gender roles, behaviours, attitudes and conduct expected from the women is highly inorganic. This is why, one is not born a woman, but becomes one. Actually, Simone De Beauvoir throws light on the social construction of both gender and sex. The masculine view of the world makes woman a subordinate sex. Thus, woman remains on the losing edge not because of her genitals but because of her

inferior position in the society.

The limited perspective of the human beings about the nature and ^{nurture} ~~natural~~ role of woman resulted in the subordination of females. Both men and women differ from each other in terms of natural physiological features. But nature didn't confined women towards the limited roles. It was the society who perceived women as an inferior being. According to **Hoffman**, the biggest difference between the men and women, is their way of socialization. As women are socialized in an ~~code~~ expressive way, their main function is considered to give affection to their male counterparts. Thus, ~~yo~~ a female is nurtured to fulfil the expectations of a male through socialization.

There are many factors responsible for the woman being a "Second Sex". The First of all, the womanization of a human being is an outcome of the cultural norms. The cultural norms resonate with the unjust

patriarchal norms, which is resulted in the subordination of a woman. The ^{feminine} traits of fragility, incompetence, beauty, fear and obedience are inculcated in women from their childhoods. A female child with a blank mind, commonly known as **"Tabula Rasa"** is expected to conform to gendered behaviours. The masculine traits of aggressiveness, bravery, ^{and} authority engaged in conflict with ^{the} passive feminine traits. Thus ^{the} cultural differences between the traits of both sexes, results in the creation of subordinated women.

Secondly, a woman is seen as a biologically inferior being. The comparatively less height, weight, and sharp pitch of voice is perceived as a biological deficiency with respect to the women's physical features. As defined by **Sigmund Freud**, the **father of psychoanalysis**; "Phallus is a sign of omnipotence". The absence of penis makes women biologically inferior to men. The hormone's instability in the course of the

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biological functions result in the construction of the ^{biological} stereotypes. For instance, women are considered grumpy during their menstrual cycle. But the same grumpiness is considered justified for men ~~is~~ throughout their lives. Thus, the ~~biological~~ biological differences give birth to biological stereotypes and women pursue their inferior position.

Thirdly, psychologically engraved patterns are considered as an important cause of suppressed women's identity. The myth of women being psychologically weak was endorsed by the sexist philosophers e.g., **Sigmund Freud**. Freud postulates that women ~~or~~ have weak super-ego which makes them unfit to pursue the equal position as that of men. He seen women as a "mutilated version" of men, which deprived women of their courage. The weakness of women is defined by **Aristotle**: "Woman is more compassionate than man and has a greater propensity to tears. Male on the other

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hand, is more disposed to give assistance in danger and is more courageous than a female". Thus, the socio-psychic perception of female as a weak human being makes her a "second sex".

Furthermore, media romanticizes the patriarchal norms. The unfair treatment given to women is justified in the name of love. Especially, in the developing countries, where women are not considered autonomous beings; the normalization of female abuse reinforces male dominance. The "power and control" dynamics are reinforced through sexualization of women. The portrayal of "The Stockholm Syndrome" - a syndrome where a woman falls in love with her abuser; has become a common practice. The drama serials like "Kesi Teri Khud Gharzi" ~~also~~ reinforces toxic masculinity. Thus, depriving the youth to differentiate between the organic and inorganic construction of sexualization.

In addition to this, the wrong

interpretation of religion creates conflict of interest between the two genders. Men are considered the protectors of the women. This is actually a responsibility which is associated to women's dignity. It does not deprive a woman from her will and autonomy. However, this clause of a Holy book is considered as a license to control a woman. Therefore, according to the report of the World Justice Project (2025), Pakistan ranks 148 out of 148 countries in terms of gender parity. Thus, ^{the} authoritarianism of the men is a major factor behind inorganic construction of womenization.

Apart from this, the use of "gendered language" makes woman a 'second sex'. Human beings derive meaning from their daily interactions. These interactions involve both verbal and non-verbal communication. The association of emotional communication to women makes them the "second sex". On the other hand, men are

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considered rational and the same perception is reinforced through daily communication. The use of fragile nicknames for women such as Lily, Dolly, and Pinky, etc., reaffirms the traits of femininity associated with women. So, inarguably, womanhood is enforced through several factors.

Although womanhood is fluid and non-static in nature but it has a very strong impact on the lives of women. The first and foremost impact of this enforced womanhood; is the creation of unequal division of power between the sexes. In a patriarchal society, a male and female does not act as partners but as rivals. The overconsumption of power by males turn them into the predators of women. **"The cult of domesticity"**

perceives women as a creature limited to the domestic sphere. According to this notion, women are considered pious and epitome of honor when confined inside the four

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walls of the house. The unequal division of power strengthened the inorganic "honor culture". According to the report of Human rights Commission of Pakistan about 1000 women are killed every year in the name of honor. Thus, forced womanhood accompanies with the unreasonable social burdens, a threat to woman's life.

Secondly, the reproductive labour is used as a tool to challenge female's autonomy over her body. In a patriarchal society, men find it very unattractive when females want to express their will over their body. In 2018, when first **Aurat March** was organized in Pakistan, the slogan; "**My Body - My Choice**" got very negative response. The sexual interpretations to connote the hidden of a simple slogan spoke volume about the social detestation regarding female's choice to control their body. As Pakistan is a country with one of the highest population growth rate of **2.55%**. So, it is evident that reproductive labour is a tool

to suppress women.

Thirdly, women are ~~economic~~ subjected to economic subjugation. The inorganic "womanhood" makes women financially dependent on the males of their families. It results in the economic torture on women. Many women are deprived of maintenance and sustenance charges which is a form of abuse. According to the report of **The International Labour Organization (2025)**, women accounts for only **13.5%** of total employees in Pakistan. They are paid **30%** less monthly as compared to men. This gender pay gap is a manifestation of women's being the "second sex". At first place, women are denied of employment opportunities and even if they employed, they are deprived of equal wages. Therefore, womanhood is not only a tool of sexual oppression but a way towards economic injustice as well.

Additionally, the normalization of structured violence by media causes

commodification of women. The structured violence is different from the direct form of violence as it is deeply ensrooted in the structural foundation of a society. The media normalized structured violence through "soft launching" of misogynist ideas. For instance, the drama serial "**Betiyan**" perpetuated structural violence through the concepts of dowry, divorce, and self-constructed thoughts of honor. Such contents portray women as "burden". Men can be seen in the objectification of women in dramas like "**Mere Pass Tum Ho**". Thus, media perpetuates the structured violence which makes womanhood difficult.

Moreover, the concept of housewife in modern times resonates with the systematic slavery. Being a ~~house~~ home maker is a nice thing but one must not compromise its dignity and individuality in the process of nurturing the fellow house members. Women are expected to compromise their comfort

in the process of caregiving. Those, who remained unable to meet the giving expectations, are subjected to violence. The crimes against women including domestic violence, honor killings, acid attacks, burning and beating are part of ~~it~~ this systematic slavery. Thus making the Pakistan, the most dangerous country for women.

Most importantly, women are deprived of their educational rights due to socially constructed identity. As, women are not supposed to earn; many people snatched their right to acquire education. **According to the report of Global Gender Gap (2025), Pakistan ranks 137 out of 148 countries in terms of educational attainment.** The social stereotypes refrain the women from getting qualified in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) as they are considered less intelligent for these fields. So, the under-educated women alongwith uneducated women fuels the engine

of Patriarchy ~~also~~ at a cost of
their status of being "Primary Sex".
Last but not the least,
the gender roles inculcate the sense
of inferiority in the women. The
women are considered caregivers, home
makers, house keepers and attendants.
While men act as leaders, managers,
executives, and administrators. As women
are perceived as sexed beings, their
career passions are questioned. The
ambitious women are projected to
guilt and shame. As women are
deprived of decision making processes,
they emerged as the "second sex".
in the society. Thus, ^{the} ingrained sexism
and misogynist attitudes are fueled
from the binary division of labor
in society with women assuming
the role of proletariats.

Although sexualization of
women is a centuries-old phenomenon,
but ~~there~~ several remedies can be
employed for the process of
de-sexualization. First of all, gender
norms must be addressed to break

cultural stereotypes. The subordination of women is an engraved psycho-social phenomenon. A strong check must be kept at the misogynist tendencies.

Usually, children learn misogynist attitudes in their growing ages.

Special observation units must be established to detect gender-bias.

For instance, in the **United**

Kingdom, school teachers will be given training to detect and counsel misogynist tendencies. Thus, putting an end to the unbreakable chain of gendered prejudice.

Secondly, promoting women education will not only help in improving ^{female} literacy rates but it will also empower the girls to detect the forced womanhood. The

institution of patriarchy ~~so~~ would not had been sustained without

women's participation. An educated

female can recognize the suppressing forces and ^{can} act accordingly to break

the chain. According to "UNESCO Education 2030 Framework for Action"

countries should allocate 4% to 6% of their Gross Domestic Product to the Education department.

Pakistan is not spending even half of the prescribed budget on the education. So, inorganic womanhood is damaging the social fabric acutely.

Thirdly, more and more women should be integrated into economic sector. The financial independence ensures self empowerment. Pakistan

ranked 147 out of 148 countries globally, in terms of "economic participation and opportunity" as mentioned in the Global Gender Gap Report of 2025. A financially empowered woman

is very less likely to conform with the subjugated definition of womanhood. The notion of the **Femina**

Economica - the analysis of the gender, power, and social structure; also favours the integration of women into economic spheres to improve macro-economic gains. Thus, supported by the Marxist perspective of

gender.

Lastly, media should be held accountable for the depiction of the women's role in society. The **Magic Bullet Theory** of the mass communication, given by **Harold Laswell**, proves that the messages of the media act like a bullet in their thought process. This influence is involuntary and rapid that consumers do not realize. The **Pakistan Electronic Media and Regulatory Authority (PEMRA)** should take notice of the misogynist content. The Authority must compel the media houses to follow the advisories related to women's rights. So, the role of the media should be positive in decreasing gender discrimination.

To sum up, it can be argued that Simone De Beauvoir is justified in her view of inorganic construction of womanhood. In a patriarchal society, womanhood is not related to the physiological ^{one's}

characteristics rather it is a product of society. As defined by **West and Zimmerman**, we are doing gender rather than being gender. It argues that gender is a performance rather than an organic entity. The masculine perception of the world translates woman not as a human being but a sexed object, ready to be please. The ^{psycho-}social construction of the womanhood makes her a "second sex" in the comparison of man being a "primary sex". The relationship between the two sexes is not complementary but an outcome of the conflict of the mutual interests. The radical feminist **Shulamith Firestone** in her publication "**The dialectic of Sex**" called for the de-sexualization of genders. She perceives it as an only way to introduce gender parity, as genders are unnatural and socially constructed. Thus, Simone De Beauvoir possess psycho-social clarity when she declares womanhood; a social construct