Gender Discourse: Without Society and Scripture

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ABSTRACT

The human being is categorized as male and female by sex. This is only a biological category. This category provides different kinds of biological responsibility for male and female. The socio-cultural responsibility of male and female are being created differently through the biological difference which is known as the gender. All of the socio-cultural creations are the factors of gender construction. The aim of this paper is to explore the discourses of gender in terms of scriptures and social context. Majorly, secondary data are used in this article. The information is collected and analyzed by the historical content analysis method under the qualitative research approach. The discussion of social contexts is lacking in the eastern discourse of gender and similarly lacking scriptural knowledge in the western discourse of gender. But it is not possible to analyze the gender in complete form without interlinking the discourse of social context and scripture.

KEYWORDS: *Discourse, gender, scripture, sex, social context*

INTRODUCTION:

Sex denotes the particular organ of the physical structure of human beings which provides the specific biological responsibility also. Stanley and Maxine (n.d) state that gender has been separated from the time of conception as male and female. It differs in physiological composition due to chromosomes and hormones in the embryo. Henslin (1997) mentioned that the vagina and the penis are recognized as the primary sex which is directly involved in the reproduction system of females and male respectively. Similarly, the organ that indicates the physical differences but does not influence directly in the reproductive system is called secondary sex. According to Palgrave (1997), sex refers to the physiological differences between males and females, which includes chromosomes and genitalia. Sex is considered by nature to be an indication of the difference between women and men.

On the basis of mentioned facts, we concluded that human being is categorized as male and female by the sex. This is only a biological category. This category provides different kinds of biological responsibility for male and female. With the development of the society and social structure, socio-cultural responsibility of male and female are being created differently through the biological difference. This kind of sex-based different socio-cultural responsibility is known as gender.

Lorber (1994) defined gender as a social institution, and it says that it regulates the social processes of a person's daily life. Institutions, economy, philosophy, family, and politics are built under the social structure as part of society. Similarly, gender is also socially constructed as the part of the social structure. According to Ortner(1983) it is given more importance to culture than nature in every society to describe the gender. Human being used culture as the means to control and regulate nature. All of the human creation including ideologies, technologies are known as culture. The culture is going to be superior to nature due to the domination of culture to natural phenomena. Globally valuing a culture higher than nature is one of the fundamental reasons for the devaluation of women because women are closer to nature than men. The body and physical functions of women are closely related to nature, such as menstruation, fertilizing, childbirth, etc. Ortner believes that all of the socio-cultural roles and responsibilities of the female are closer to nature. Due to this notion, it is believed that female is inferior to the male. Palgrave (1997) mentions that gender is the creation of a society which signifies masculinity and femininity of human beings. Matson (2005) explains that gender is one of the basic characteristics of social life. Everyone is playing gender roles through socialization, and his dominance is also influenced by the element of gender. Gender has a strong combination and access to home, finance, culture, education, law, politics, medicine, married couples, etc., for males and females do not have equal opportunities in the human social structure. Because of the game of power, the male is becoming superior to the female. Due to the patriarchal social system, the male is benefited than females. Male has a dominant role in the decision-making process of family and society. Matson (2005) added and concluded that all of the socio-cultural creations are the factors of gender construction. Stanley and Maxine (n.d) mentioned that gender is not only focused to women issues. Most of the men feel that they are genderless

but that is an illusion, all of the men are surrounded by gender issues with latent experience. Gender is not only concerned with the experience of males and females. It is also constructed by social norms, values, class, behavior, gender sensitivity, etc. Henslin(1997) states that gender reflects the socio-cultural characteristics of human beings. It always differs in different stages of socio-cultural structures. Gender is a kind of mechanism of social control with femininity and masculinity in the social structure.

Gender is constructed by social norms and values which are influenced and guided by specific scriptures. Similarly, gender is always a concern to the socio-cultural context which is different in different stages of society. In this context, this article is going to discuss the discourse of gender in terms of scripture and social context.

Method
This article is completely based on secondary information. Facts are collected from the scriptures and previous researches by the historical content analysis method. Similarly, information is analyzed on the basis of the qualitative research approach. This article is focused to explore the discourses of gender in terms of scriptures and social context.

Findings and Discussion
Discourse without Scriptures
Bhasin (1993) quoted to Umachkrawarti and mentioned that India was organized by the Brahmin patriarchal social system and the stratified behavior of males and females. This system has always been a long-standing and changing phenomenon, not the only contemporary practice. Class is emerged in India due to the capturing process of land and original inhabitants (whom they regarded as inferior to them on the basis of descent) by the Aryan. Gradually, patriarchal ideas replaced the worship of maternal power. Bhasin has said that Rig-Veda reflects the effort of men's dominance to Aryan women and the tense situation of that process.

Citing Uma Chakravarty, Bhasin (1993) has said that the method of gender control in Indian society has been implemented at three different levels. The first, ideologies that settled into women's minds as the thoughts of (Pativrata) loyalty to the husband. Due to this kind of ideology, women maintained the sexual purity on the preserving process of ideal femininity. In this way, women continuously applied themselves to the disparate social order based on the status quo.

Due to their participation in this kind of crime itself, there has been no one to raise the voice of women falling down. In this way, patriarchy was organized so strongly that it seemed natural. The second, the custom, law which was created by the Brahmin community to control the women under patriarchal control. Third, the Pauranic regime, which was associated with patriarchal rules and regulations to control women by men. Finally, with the help of the early regimes, patriarchy did not become only at the level of ideology, It became strong practices of human life.

Chakravarty adds that women believed in India, due to the socialization, power could be created through their purity and sincerity. They began to believe that power and honesty could be achieved through sacrifice and hardship. Close proximity to Chakravarty's logic, Benet (1983) has said that the socialization of Hindu religious culture has made women religious. Bennett said that women became inferior than men due to religious acts such as women to fast, worship at *Rishi Panchami, Swasthani Vrata*, etc.

Benet (1983) said that women are dominated by patriarchal Hindu rituals such as *Namakaran*, *Gotra* transfer, *Upnayan,* death ritual, etc. She argued that men have a compulsion to participate in the ritual processes but not authority for women. These kinds of functions are major factors of gender discrimination in Hindu society and culture.

Discourse without social context
Padiya(2007a) said that it is unfortunate, Indian contemporary feminist are following the western ideology with neglecting the indigenous and specific nature of Indian traditions, cultures, and ideal feminist discourses. The ancient Indian sociological texts are analyzed only by the western view continuously. Efforts are being made to analyze the Indian social institutions and beliefs based on the facts of western social concepts and views. This effort is utterly futile. The Indian view of life and the world is completely different from the western view. Indian social philosophical tradition believes that human beings do not be only individual things; the human being is connected to his\her family, community, and society. There would not be the existence of an individual without those surroundings. The individuals' roles and responsibilities are assigned by his \her capacities and abilities. It is a continuous process, to be the different - different responsibility as lower or higher but both are supplementary between each other. Therefore, the division of labor directed at theological disciplines is functional rather than exploitative. There is no place for personal importance in this duty oriented thinking. Its main goal is to develop the internal quality of the person and make good use of the society. Therefore, the theological, social philosophy empowers mutual cooperation between individuals, mutual understanding, and mutual encouragement.

In classical social philosophy, religion provides the strength of collectiveness through it harmonizes with the autonomy of the individual and the collective interest of the entire community.

Individuals and society are not two opposing poles, but rather an integral complementary component. In the social structure, there can never be superiority and subjection to the relationship between men and women. In fact, in the eastern scriptures, the position of a woman is not only equal to that of a man but is considered superior and dignified. The roles and responsibilities have been constructed for women's identity

Tripathi, (2007a) quoted to Vivekananda and mentions that the beginning and end of the ideal life of females be related to maternity. Vivekananda has expressed that motherhood will be remembered by the pronunciation of the word feminine in the Hindu mind. In India, every mother is considered as a god but in the west, the woman is considered as a wife. Vivekananda said that the position of the mother is highest in India.

The position of the wife and unmarried woman is in the second and third rank respectively. She added that femininity has been a source of motherhood. Motherhood has a feeling of greatness, selfish emptiness, suffering, tolerance, and forgiveness. In the present sentiment of western countries, it can be said that human beings are subjective in western society but human beings are considered very socio-cultural in Hindu society.

Similarly, Madan Mohan Malviya has said that the empowerment of women is not meant to show a woman as a man but as a co-existence. Malawi has said that the concept of women empowerment is a community based rather than individualistic (Padiya, 2007b).

Education and gender discourse
According to Ahearn (2004), Maslak (2003), Swaminathan (2001), Pathak (2007) Singh (2007ab), education has the great role in the process of gender construction. Arranged marriage was practiced in Magar community till 1980. But since 1980, due to the education system, love marriage has been practiced in the Magar community which was facilitated to write a love letter and to reduce superstitious traditional norms. Cross cousin marriage is also lost in practice due to the literacy. Maslak (2003) has shown that the women of the Tharu community have less access to education than the other communities. That is why the Tharu women have been working in the houses of other communities. Because of this situation, they seem to be lagging behind in political and social participation. Ahern mentioned that the women of the Magar community have changed in the role and traditional thinking due to the current educational environment.

Similarly, Maslak said that the status of women in the Tharu community is still weak due to a lack of education. On the other hand, Pathak (2007), Shukla (2007a) and Singh (2007a, b) have argued that the level of women was higher because of the opportunity of education in ancient times. Pathak (2007) also said that in the Vedic age, there was a proper education system for females. Girls would be divided into 'Sadhovadhu' and 'Brahmavadini' classes during Vedic times due to education. Girls had been received education without discrimination during the Vedic period. *Upnyan* ritual was also practiced in Vedic time. Women would get an education as *Brahmacharani.* They had full authority to perform the sacrifice(Yagya) and study the Vedas. In the Rig Veda, women used to participate in sacrifice (Yagya) with husbands.

We can found perfect and wise women In the Vedic period sufficiently. The Vedic women were proficient in practical education and lifetime knowledge. During the Rig Veda, women were perfect in battle also(Padia,2007a).

Shukla (2007) mentioned that duty and knowledge-oriented education had been provided to women in ancient Indian society which facilitated the achievement of the goals of life. It was considered, women have a great responsibility for bearing and caring for offspring at that time. Women also had the liberty of living single-mindedly to promote self-promotion. Shukla says Upanayana rites were considered to be the major academic rites in ancient times. Singh (2007) mentioned that the girls had the freedom to get an education in the north vedic period like the male. The bride has

performed a ritual ceremony. The female students were divided into 'Sadhovadhu' and 'Brahmavadini' classes on the basis of their learning. The girls who received the knowledge of vedic mantras and yangna before the marriage were called 'Sadhvadhu' and 'Brahmavadini' (Singh, 2007b).

Masculine curriculum and male domination
Swaminathan (2001) challenged Ahearn (2004), Maslak (2003) Pathak (2007), Singh (2007a), and Singh and Singh(2007) argued that education cannot be raised to the level of women through masculine courses. Because of the masculine centric curriculum controlled the women which only facilitated to the extent of male-centric notion. Due to feminine ideals, maternal culture-centric education, women were restricted to educational and academic achievement. Women were being excluded from the field of profession.

Dialogue between Western and Indian Perspective
Padiya (2007a) disagreed with the views of Uma Chakravarty, Bennet, Singh, Jaidev. And She mentions that there are so many differences between western and Indian perspectives in terms of the relationship between male and female. She added that Indian feminist thought is more concerned with indigenous and traditional heritage. The Indian ideal of gender relationships needs to be remembered and restored in the real context of the *'Ardhanarishwar* couple' and the co-religionist. The western view paves the way for a split between the private and the public which is inconsistent. There is a complete lacking in the concepts of superiority and inferiority in terms of the public and private concepts In Indian philosophy.

In this way, Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, Malviya, Punjab Singh, and Padia said that the aim of feminism is to establish an equal coexistence between the male and female. It is possible to develop balanced feminist thinking with a rethinking of the Indian knowledge traditions. They have concluded that it should be constructive and functional rather than reactive.

The Indian social history, the history of society, and the status of women, which the western scholars have exposed to the Indian and the whole world, is intended to prove the colonial tendency.

(Singh, 2007) agreed with the mentioned view and argued that the assessment of society can only take place in the specific social, cultural environment of that society. Each social structure is determined by the cultural environment and moral values. She also said that the study of Indian feminism is not untouched by the dominance of western intellectual imperialism.

Conclusion
Similarly, the Pathak (2007), Maslak, Singh(2007), Swaminathan(2001), Arhen(2004), who have said that education has a major role in the construction of gender; they have forgotten that the education system is the product of the social system. Similarly, they have been silent, what was the social structure of the ancient vedic period? What was the social order of the Tharu community?

Padiyia(2007a) Chaturvedi(2007), Padiyia(2007b) Singh, and Singh(2007), Upadhyay, Avidi, Shukla(2007), mentioned the arguments of gender discourse which are discussed on

the basis of words, sentences, quotes, stories, references in various scriptures. The question arises, what kinds of socio-cultural structures are represented by the mentioned scriptures? While generalizing gender facts on the basis of a classical belief and sociological perspective. Similarly, what kind of time period and social context are reflected by the scripture? But, researchers always forgot about these kinds of issues. They are unable to link historical social context and scriptures.

The scholars Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda, Shukla, Upadhyay, Singh, Avidi, and others have explained the vedic scriptures, different *Grihasutras* and *Dharmasutras* and memes are in classical perspective. And they argued women and men were co-existed each other. But they have not even discussed which society is represented in that scripture? What period does it reflect? What was the social nature of that time? In what social and cultural environment was there a reciprocal relationship between men and women? Similarly Chaturvedi argued so many instances in the Vedas which show the equality of men and women and the voice of gender civilization. It is okay to have a gender issue, but if you are saying that the Veda scripture reflects what social order? What is the period they represent? What were some of the things that men and women used to do or do? It will be correct that the issues of gender civilizations are included in scriptures such as Vedas and others. But still, issues are unanswered, what kind of time period and socio-cultural context is reflected by that scriptures? What were the roles and responsibilities assigned to males and females at that time?

Literature and scriptures are the mirrors of society. Therefore, to explaining Scriptural beliefs, it is necessary to inquire about the time period of scriptures, the man's life, the needs of the people, the political, the religious leadership, and historicity of that time. Then it can be thought that why these kinds of laws, rules, references, explanations are included in that scriptures? According to the sociological perspective, every knowledge, social event, and the cultural environment is constructed and refined through the historical social context. All sorts of chains of knowledge, scriptural records, law, rules, and regulations are the products of the social and cultural structure.

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