

CONCEPTIONS OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY IN DR. NANDINI SAHU'S SITA

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Abstract

Social construct of any community is always created by gender roles. Prominent stereotypes about women reside in male's psyche. Unfair expectations from women are always an obstacle in the progress of a woman and society as well. Sex norms of society are based on traditionally constructed masculine, feminine societal structures. Roles are assigned to male and female on the basis of Patriarchal Psychological phenomenon or in other words, we can say as per the convenience of male dominated society. Men are always characterized as superior to women and women on the other hand as subordinate of them. Literature is the mirror of society and it reflects the real world. So this research paper will present the emotional pain of a woman caused by the determined 'sex roles' of our 'orthodox society' through 'poetic words' of Dr. Nandini Sahu's Sita. Sita the ancient as well as modern women, transcends barriers of society and questions Patriarchal world's Rama, considering him only a man and husband, not Lord Rama. The present research paper will delve deeper into the comparative world of man- woman 'sex norms'. In modern world, females are performing remarkably in all spheres of life but this is the crucial reality, especially in India that even today opportunities are snatched away from women at home as well as in the outer world, their so called 'duties' are already decided by the male dominated society. The psychological reasons behind unequal gender roles will be taken forward by this research paper. The 'anti- female' mentality of our Indian society is the main cause of social evils like dowry, rape and women molestations. Dr. Nandini Sahu's woman of Ramayana is struggling and opposing all social norms. Sita is pursuing a new dimension of women empowerment through Dr. Nandini Sahu's words. Comparatively Lord Rama and Sita are excluded from mythological and religious characters to present as the symbol of man-woman relationship. This research paper will present the 'deprivation of female rights' by creating the psychological portrait of women agony under the pressure of male dominated world.

Keywords: Gender roles, psyche, patriarchal, orthodox, mentality, male dominated

Literature is the reflection of the society. What happens in any society, an author improvises it in his writings to the readers with the 'special effect' of words. Customs, norms and traditions which are prevailing in the current society, we can see through the 'mirror of literature' and if we want to know about the progress and decline of a particular generation, period or era then literature is the powerful tool to see everything. Notions of human psyche are always brought forward by the contemporary literature of that period and poetry is that special genre of literature which presents spontaneous flow of human emotions. Every right or wrong in all communities of human beings is the result of human feelings. Every masculine and feminine behavior is the consequence of emotional ups and downs so Dr.Nandini Sahu is presenting masculine-feminine behavior and feelings by comparing ancient women with modern and man-woman relationship as well. Psychoanalysis' is the study of mind behavior of human beings. Anxiety, trauma, depression and other mental imbalances are the elements of psychoanalysis. This paper will see man-woman traumatic experiences of life through 'psychoanalytical mirror' in the poetic work Sita of Dr.Nandini Sahu.

As females are generally considered fragile and dependent on male, projection of this 'masculine and feminine behavior' is the prime factor of Dr. Nandini Sahu's poetry. Masculine and feminine roles are always the matter of controversy in our country because these roles are generated just to facilitate the male community and are also created by patriarchal world only. Due to gender differences male-female perceptions are different and obviously a male can't understand physical and emotional needs of a female. This is the reason If a man is assigning 'tasks' to women then we can't think that justice would be done with women. Social violence is the consequence of aggressive and brutal attitude of men. This is really a privilege, born as a boy and on the other side a curse to be born as a girl. In Indian community masculinity is totally against the freedom of women. Girls, who violate honor of the community by getting married to their chosen partner, always seem to deserve punishments. Here I want to discuss case of 2021 of 'honor killing' in Dwarka. Mastermind of this killing was a woman's brother. The woman's name was Kiran and she was 19 years old, she got married to Vinay Dahiya, 24 years old boy, in August 2020. Investigations suggested that to take revenge from the couple, brother along with his cousin murdered the couple. Now this incident shows that a woman is still not free to live a life on her own terms and conditions.

A man can never feel the 'emotional trauma' of a woman. Male psyche of Indian structure always provokes a man to subjugate woman. Online news media The Economic Times reports that 3,582 cases were reported in India of domestic violence between April and June. It was the time period when Covid-19's second wave was extremely at its peak. Gender roles are the causes of differences in male-female relationships because these roles limit the freedom of women and make men superior as compare to women. Our Indian socialistic pattern expects a woman like a bird in a cage means after marriage, a woman should keep herself within the four walls of a house. If a bird is caged in a golden box and served with every dish even then he will try to set him free, same is the condition of man woman relationship in our country. A man especially husband tries to control each and every moment and move of his wife and in return he promises her to provide her everything. But if a woman wants her own space then she is tortured in many ways. Here is another news of online news source, The New Indian Express published a news in February 2020 that in Bangalore a newly married female committed suicide in the year 2020. She was tortured by her in-laws and husband, who were residing in Kodigehalli. It was a 'love marriage' and after five months, in-laws called her father and the father found his daughter hanging. Then in further investigations father alleged that in-laws and husband tortured the girl in such a way that she committed suicide. This is the real and dark side of masculine behavior in our country.

Above all are the examples of masculinity and femininity in our Indian culture. Now the important thing is that where the roots of all these evils of women molestations and tortures are lying. Rapes, domestic violence and every type of toxic behavior of men, is the product of orthodox customs and traditions of our society which are powerful tools in hands of men to crush women.

Every Dimension of implementation of gender roles in any sphere like domestic, economic or social is predetermined by our Indian society. Emotional intensity of words provides aesthetic touch and presents every feeling in such a manner that it touches reader's heart. Poetry is a very beautiful genre of literature. Through figurative language poet creates imagery. It's an art of a poet to portray different life scenes through his poetic diction and Dr. Nandini Sahu is very efficient in creating all these things. She creates picture of Sita's existence by addressing the universe:

My epic, the center stage concert vis-à-vis
The flora and fauna, steadily discloses itself before you,
Oh terrestrial and cosmic beings!
Oh men and women, oh trees, rocks, rivers, clouds, the sky
The sun, the moon, the stars and the comets!

I am ageless, timeless, beneficent and compassionate (Sahu lines 16-21)

The marginalization of genders is always a threat to any society as this is the hindrance in the progress of a woman in ancient and modern times as well. English literature especially poems of Dr. Nandini Sahu explore the sex norms constructions in vast detail. Lord Rama's Deprivation of female rights is the prime factor of Sahu's poetry. 'Women anguish' in this modern Patriarchal world is the consequence of supposed gender roles. Gender roles are often determined by our male orthodox society just to get advantage of all wanted rights as there is no rule book which provides all these rights to male dominated society. Discrimination against women is the consequence of our old pattern of society.

Vishwanath Bite posted his paper named as Sita by Dr. Nandini Sahu in international journal The Criterion (2015). He supported the concept of 'New woman' by Dr. Nandini Sahu as Nandini writes in her book Sita that Lava and Kusha are Sita's sons only because they were devoid of father's care and affection and were nourished by their mother only. When a woman is the single parent of her children then only she knows her emotional pain. Dr. Nandini's Sita is a confident and self dependent woman and a sufferer of male subjugation also. Vishwanath's paper appeals every woman to fight for her identity through the mouthpiece of Sahu's Sita.

Men and women both are the creation of God and play their significant role in the making of this world. Both sexes are equally important and complement each other. Unfortunately in our country, exploitation of women has become our life style now and women have accepted it as their destiny. Female is tortured, exploited and treated very badly. She is always at a subordinate position as compared to men. Our patriarchal system and social structure is purely responsible for this evil. Exploitation of women is always prevalent in Indian society in the minds of male persons. Right from the childhood boy and girl children are fostered with different concepts of life like a girl child is 'Parayaa Dhann' in parent's house. All the time she has to listen do's and don'ts in the house of her parents. Before marriage she is controlled by her father and brother, after marriage this is always expected by husband that now she has to obey and follow all orders of her husband. Especially in Indian society this is the common and expected psychology of In-laws for a daughter –In –law that she is meant for kitchen only and she has to serve her in-laws in any condition. Sustaining beliefs, traditions and so called rituals always give golden opportunity to men as well as society to crush a lady. Patterens of society which socializes every norm like male-female relationships are visualized by this theory of female oppression.

Every good and bad resides in individual's unconscious mind. Unconscious mind is that part of human brain which consists of feelings, urges and desires which are always suppressed and not fulfilled by our 'conscious awareness'. Actually some wishes of women are those which are not acceptable by the society like total freedom with all 'decision powers'. The stubborn and orthodox traditions of society, regarding women never accept these desires of women because a man has always been provided different rights as per his convenience. This is

predetermined by the society that every important decision of household and in the outer world will be taken by the male person only. Sex roles are strong instrument in the hands of a male dominated society to subjugate a woman in any respect, if a woman tries to break all warriors of these orthodox norms then she is considered a vamp by the society, in our country India especially. This is the common scene of our Indian houses if the couple is working outside to earn money then it is supposed that a woman has to perform all chores of household also but a man is free from all these tasks because he is a 'man'.

Rajeev Bhargava's article was published in the news media The Hindu as, 'India's culture of toxic masculinity'. This article has thrown a light on the gender inequalities and social violence in India. Writer put a stress on this thing that due to social structure, men always use aggressive behavior to present themselves as 'real men'. In our country masculinity is against total freedom of woman. Actually nobody knows the true meanings of real men and liberty. Women molestation, torture everything is the consequence of wrong definition of 'manhood'. Condition of women is so weird that even many of them, accept the dominating position of men. All the time a woman is directed by others for dos and don'ts. For instance Manusmriti is known as legal and religious text among Hindu Dharmasastras. Sreyahi Ghosh writes in his article 'Manusmriti: The Ultimate Guide to Becoming a Good Woman' that to become a good woman, all women should always be dependent on men, even in Brahmin castes a man should not take food from a widow or divorcee as she is without husband and not a 'good woman' and a woman has no right to be self dependent if she does so then she is not a 'good woman'. Females are supposed to be in the custody of their fathers, brothers and husbands and even sons. In no circumstances they should be set free. By reviewing these type of articles, we can easily judge that Indian social and domestic system always subjugate women since ancient periods. In today's modern period only 'style of exploitation' has been changed but male psyche is still same.

From urban to rural society, traditional Patriarchal system is still in power and gender roles are decided like a constitutional laws and acts. Important decisions of household chores and financial matters are taken by men only and if a woman tries to overcome this, she is crushed under orthodox rituals and so called duties. Actually gender roles are made by those people who were always against the absolute freedom of a woman. Dr. Nandini Sahu is a renowned feminine voice in English poetry. Being Indian she is well equipped with societal norms of gender roles. Femininity and masculinity is defined in our country for the exploitation of women by various methods of traditions, rituals and duties and male ego always works like an obstacle for females as Dr Nandini Sahu writes:

Was/ it required to disrobe Draupadi in the Dice Hall of Hastinapura?
To make a society of successful men, who is the so called future
Supports// to aging parents/ is it needed to conceive a female fetus,
And kill her unborn? To boost someone's male-ego, violating a
Woman is a must?(Sahu lines16-21)

Sex roles are fixed by the birth of a child in the Indian society. Preferences of clothing, food and luxurious items are given to a male child and girls are always neglected. Radhika Kapur's research paper, Status of Girl Child in India (2019) presents the various factors of gender roles in India and reasons behind the exploitation of girls in our Indian society. Radhika Kapur states the poor condition observed throughout the country that girls are susceptible to exploitation and mistreatment to a major extent. Girls are controlled in such a manner that they tend to follow all the instructions, imparted to them within the house as well as outside. Indeed, 'social construct' of India is responsible for a woman's exploitation because we never stand strongly against wrong social practices. This is the common attitude of people to avoid everything until and unless it happens in our own house. Dr Nandini Sahu presents this discrimination in boys and girls like this:

Even today, parents beget daughters with the hope of a son;
Girls queue up paving way for a boy; and one day the girls are
Married off to prospective grooms, whose stipulation could be
a decent job, an affluent family? a teetotaler, may be, two horoscope
to be matched by a Pundit, and family's alliances. Marriage in the
Absence and isolation of love and desire happens!(Sahu lines5-10)

Women always tolerate all these discriminations on the basis of gender. This creates depression among them and they always hide their feelings and emotions. Due to prevailing social structure, females take it as their destiny as there is always social pressure on them. Hiding of feelings, suppression of desires creates anxiety among women. Male dominated society is the gift to our modern world since ancient times. That's why Sita speaks through Dr. Nandini Sahu's words. Our society always blames woman for abuse and sexual exploitation of rape etc. This is also due to typical societal norms that everything wrong done by a man is justified by patriarchal world. After woman molestation, it is common advice of the society that girls should wear sober clothes and their gestures should be gentle means again girls are responsible for every kind of wrong behavior of men. A woman is always pointed out if she is frank in clothing or talking. Our surroundings especially Indian environment never supports women liberation in complete manner. Rape victim always bears a heavy psychological pressure of emotional and physical pain but nobody tries to understand it and it is assumed that the woman must have provoked the man to do this. Our Indian society is so judgmental about women that before 'court procedures'

decisions are given.. All these things are a clear and strong support to abusers. Dr Nandini strongly condemns this:

Me Vaidehi, the new woman, would ask you/ O lord!
Can the grace of a woman redeem only/ with the touch of a man?
And can the// grace of a woman wane only with the fraudulent touch of a man?

The human/ psyche is designed to move ahead and reach superior pinnacles with Time/. What would you explain of rocked-Ahalya who lost her purity / and then her human form and invocation?(Sahu lines10-21)
Dr Nandini Sahu presents woman Sita as a symbol of 'woman anguish' and witness of all female oppression. If we analyze the historical piece Ramayana then it is evident that this is purely related with man-woman relationship and it presents orthodox and typical psyche of a male and husband's mind. It's not a religious or mythical story only. Rama is presenting entire patriarchal community and he should be considered as leader of Masculine world regardless of caste, religion and time period. Epics, Religious and famous personalities are role models of any society and ordinary people take them as their 'representatives'. Maryadapurushottam Rama took Sita's Agnipariksha for the testing of her chastity. Now a common man would also try to follow him so this is the reason that Dr.Nandini opposes Rama through Sita's words. Even today after marriage a man tries to check virginity of a woman by various means. Females who do not pass this test, they are humiliated and tortured and declared characterless and even divorced. Dr.Nandini Sahu compares predecided gender roles with our modern world's gender inequality like this:

Sita-Sati Sita-She is not just the hypothetical or the/ historical
Substance of academics. She is truly animated to this /living,
Present living; she is pertinent.
She is past and present; she is the comprehensive/ social, political
Or religious attitude /of the progressive Indian woman.(Sahu lines7-12)

CONCLUSION

Environment plays its significant role in any situation, If boys and girls are reared up in a good and healthy surroundings then sweet childhood memories are created in the unconscious brain of children and true meanings of 'equality' are taught to them. True feminism lies within equal rights of women as well as of men. Between men and women, no one is superior or inferior to each other. Every good and genuine thing is in our conscious mind and these belong to 'ego' because 'ego' is that element of psychoanalysis which works on reality principle. Ego knows the difference between right and wrong. It is always connected with reality. Everything lies in human mind, if the mindset of society has been changed only then it is understood that we are educated because education uplifts us in many ways including social, moral and psychological aspects. Male psyche should be changed with time because true modernity lies within thoughts; It is not connected with clothes or life style only. When a daughter-in-law enters in her new home after marriage then there are dreams of new life in her eyes. She should be loved and all due rights should be given to her. She shouldn't be treated as a maid just to serve others. The woman who tries to fight for herself, no character certificate should be awarded to her rather society and parents should stand by her side. Moral and sex education should be given to boys to respect women. Awareness should be created regarding gender equality in all areas of our country. Human rights are directly connected to gender differences as no one has the right to violate any right of other person whether man or woman. Spreading awareness for equality is not a few days process rather it should be our lifestyle and we should think genuinely for it and act. School curriculum should be framed by keeping in view the strong psychological progress of children and these things should be demonstrated to parents also. It should be applied very carefully at homes too. Both sexes means boy and girl children should be reared up with true meaning of equality. Modernity should be in our actions and thoughts not in copying negative things of western countries only. NGOs and women cells should spread awareness for gender equality and special seminars should be arranged.

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