

THE IDEALISATION OF WOMANHOOD AND ITS DECONSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

The paper throws light on the idealization of womanhood through different patriarchal symbols . The subjugation done by men helps patriarchy to construct the 'ideal' woman, which not only deprives her from her rights but also displaces her identity. The paper also offers a solution to deconstruct this hegemonic ideology that upholds patriarchal violence and demeans feminist individuality.

KEYWORDS: Deconstruction, Feminism, Hegemony, Patriarchy

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INTRODUCTION

‘One is not born but rather becomes a woman’

-Simone de Beauvoir

A woman's life has been always been a baffling quest for her identity. Patriarchy, which operates as a social institution, makes her adopt a virtual identity, which in itself is constructed. The perpetual stereotyping perpetrated by the society constructs an image of a woman with subordinate roles holding traditional values. 'She' represents the community and is seen as repository of community values. This feminine construction starts with the assignment to a sex on the basis what the genitalia looks like at birth. Sex category becomes gender status through name, dress, and use of other gender markers. From the tender days of infancy to the wary nights of juvenility, her body becomes a carrier of cultural signs and praxis. Symbols like 'bangales', 'anklets', 'earings' become a breeding ground for the construction of that 'ideal state'. The image if 'ideal womanhood' which gets so well entrenched in her psyche that she starts believing in this self-portrait without even questioning at once.

Silence becomes a dominant virtue of her being which becomes a paraphernalia for patriarchy to keep her at margins. This voicelessness of her character is exploited at its pinnacle and her existence is shown in relation to man as their mothers, wives and especially lovers. This sub alternation of a woman's

character is well manifested by *Shashi Despande*:

“When I wrote ‘That Long Silence’, almost entirely a woman's novel, nevertheless a book almost silencing of one half of humanity”

The identity which a woman espouses make her shackle the established social norms and behavior which annihilates her own self:

“Women are trapped in cultural values that offer no scope for individualizing the self”

--Laxami Kannar

Through barricading her endeavor and movements society re-affirms the hegemonic ideology on the ‘weaker sex’ and differentiate her from the world. This dominance like previously mentioned before is exerted through incessant signs, which creates a binary in the society. The binaries as poststructuralist feminists allege favors only one counterpart and in the binary of ‘man/woman’, it is man who is lionized. Apart from this eminent binary, patriarchal symbols like ‘manga sutra’, ‘sindoor’ contribute in the construction of other vicarious binaries like Normal/Deviant, Good/Bad where again the higher cultural value and the protection of the society is only attributed to those who befall on the left side. In the bling exertion towards this constructed ideals, she learns to replicate the wants and desires of the society and ceases to be in the world of her own interests. In this oblivion of her existence, her identity becomes a reflection of her male counterpart. In her every existence she is stowed on the margins both of the society and destiny, placed in the stereotyped slots with very little left to her own choice.

This silent resignation of her rights speaks volume about the woeful; picture of the marginalized women, which becomes a signifier of patriarchy’s triumph over women’s identity. This unrelenting construction of feminine gender, which is consistently ‘phallogocentric’ in nature, makes a female body inadmissible in language. This spiritual and intellectual depravity, which a female has endured from times immemorial could only be obliterated when the notion of dichotomies are deconstructed.

The center which is all-pervasive and ‘transcendental signified’ that Derrida talk about is Patriarchy between the binary of masculine/feminine. The deconstruction of this center will crumble the structure which will give birth to more ambiguity of meanings when both the binary opposites will not stay neatly on the proper side of the slash. They will refuse its position in absolute opposition to its partner. The female counterpart will spurn the notion of subservience in opposition to the binary of dominance of male counterpart. The

deconstruction that *Derrida* postulates as a ‘new construction’ will be a fountainhead of a new dawn where women will demand as men did in renaissance—a right to explain, a right to define. This new word will be free of dominance, hierarchy and a world that is truly humane

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