

THROWING LIGHT ON 'SEX' AND 'GENDER' WITH REFERENCE TO PREETHI SHENOY'S *THE RULE BREAKERS*

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ABSTRACT:

Sex is biological whereas Gender is socially constructed. This paper is an attempt to analyse the Queerness, Identity clash and Trans experiences. Queer theory emphasizes that social constructs shape the understanding of sexual behaviours and identities. It challenges the idea of fixed categories and explores how they create social meanings. Queer theory is one of the branches of Gender studies which has set the current trend in the field of study of English Literature. Only binary categorization is in practice and the other people are „Othered . Generally, the understanding of gender is influenced by the perspectives of social constructs.

Preethi Shenoy, in her novel, voices out the struggles faced by (others) people who identify themselves other than the assigned gender at the time of birth. The societal framework that restricts people from expressing the biological changes from within causes disturbances in the natural order and creates a total lack of systematic organization in many lives. Shenoy tries to bring these issues in light in order to seek solution for this never-ending crisis.

KEYWORDS: Gender, Queerness, Trans, social Construct

1. INTRODUCTION

Queer Theory analyses how certain rules have

been institutionalised and made legal for practice and how the expressions of sexuality and gender other than regulated forms are stigmatized. Queer theory was after Gay and Lesbian studies has been popularized in the academics which is now broadly called as LGBT or Queer theory. The theory examines and questions inflexible identity categories, gender and sexual norms and the treatment that these hegemonic standards legitimize.

Queer theory, which is often times referred to as the deconstruction of LGBT studies, undermines sexual and gender identities in order to let and promote many unrestricted explanations and analysis of cultural circumstances. It makes the assumption that gender expressions and sexual activities, as well as any notions that connect them to prescribed identities and classify them as normal and deviant sexualities or genders, are socially produced and provide the fundamental social meaning by rejecting the idea that gender and sexuality are prerequisite criteria defined by biology; therefore amenable to scientific evaluation. In accordance with predetermined ideas of morality and truth, Queer theory thus builds upon and follows feminist theory by rooting its analysis (Introduction to Queer theory).

The Rule Breakers, by Preethi Shenoy discusses the social standards that women in the 19th century had to adhere to, the challenges encountered by various characters pertaining to different spheres

of the society, child education, the operation of Non-Governmental Organizations, friendships, love and slightly but effectively touching upon Gay relationship addressing the difficulties faced by the character who is set to break the stereotype of societal norms and define sexuality and gender in accordance with Queer theory.

The protagonist Veda is given as an example of the „rule follower and her husband Bhuvan makes a sharp contrast as the rule breaker by breaking one of the most uncompromising rules marking his sexuality as Gay. Shenoy illustrates the struggles faced by Bhuvan because of his homosexual identity. He conceals his sexuality on purpose and he stays in sexual relationship with his friend Vikky even after getting married to Veda. Bhuvan's sexual identity is put to question by Veda when she finds out his secret affair.

The binary gender structure plays a major role in the lives of the female characters as well as those of the characters of the opposite sex in Shenoy's novel *The Rule Breakers*. In a similar vein, homosexuality's normative tendency or cultural framework limits the lives of gay and lesbian people and breeds dejection and despair. In this novel, Shenoy explores Veda's experiences of both freedom and subjugation, as well as the anguish of Veda's homosexual husband. It also looks into Veda's feminist viewpoint and her husband's struggles related to his sexual orientation. In addition to discussing the distinctions between heterosexuality and homosexuality, this particular work of literature also discusses the pre-existing norms by which the „deviant people are looked down and left to tolerate the sexual bigotry prevailing.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Many critics and writers like Simon de Beauvoir,

Judith Butler, Virginia Woolf and others have spoken out against the cultural paradigm concerning gender and sexuality. Discussing gender as an argument, there are pre-existing set of roles assigned and it is noted that not only people who choose their identity by sexual preferences are considered „deviant but also people who carries out activities or perform roles out of the rulebook as in deviating from the constituted gender roles are identifies as deviants as well.

The protagonist Veda undergoes mistreatment based on gender roles even with her parents. She is not allowed to study further intending a woman doesn't have to go to work its is only a man's responsibility to provide for the family. Veda comes out against this tyranny and declares that she would complete her education after getting married. Throughout the novel, Veda manages to continue studying despite the fact that things are becoming more and more difficult for her. She at one point of time questions herself doubting her self-worth, Is this all there is to a girl's existence, she wonders to herself? Get married and move out of the house you've lived in your whole life? What was she getting herself into? Why hadn't she paid attention to what Suraj had to say and spoken up? Why didn't she have the guts to speak up for herself and say what it was that she wanted? . (54). In an article it is mentioned as Women were expected to do just one thing and that was to stay at home and take care of their children. If a woman did choose to work outside of her home, there were few jobs to choose from. Most women worked as clerks, nurses, school teachers and other traditionally female activities. Women began to grow frustrated and they realized that something had to change (Seybold Report 30).

Kanika is such a woman that wants to bring

about a change in the lives of every woman that silently battles her life with domestic problems. Her forward thinking with modern views, she stands out from the crowd of Kailash Mandir Colony. Veda sees Kanika as an inspiration and tries to develop the attitude and confidence by imitating her. Veda was chosen as the bride in order to be duly serving the in laws, taking care of the households and importantly to be meek and obedient in listening to the orders paying the gender roles of a woman, especially a married woman. When she wanted to go to Sankalp along with Kanika to teach the children, she was considered the deviant or the rule breaker in Shenoy's words.

3. METHODOLOGY:

Gender identity and Sexual orientations are one of the Current Literary trends and books like Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* address contemporary gender issues related to it. Woolf stresses the terrain of the feminine world, paying special attention to a woman's demands and expectations whereas, de Beauvoir states society imposes manners, attitudes, activities and language that are congruent with the biological sexual identity of a baby. Answer in the form of the queen of the game, an an an a, in a moment, and in a moment (18). He and „She are mere words that encapsulate the mindset surrounding attributes that are seen feminine and masculine. The roles, attitudes, skills, and speech patterns that are acceptable in society are in fact influenced by a person's biological identity as man or woman. Homosexuality people's lives are hindered by conventional heterosexuality, much like gender discrimination. The binary notion of male and female is an offspring of the concept of man and woman sexual attraction and

connection. Bhuvan advances his relationship with his friend Vikky and it is later disclosed a homosexual relationship. His attraction and closeness to the same sex person will not be accepted and certainly will be termed unorthodox, knowing this very well, he kept his relationship concealed and to avoid his mother's nagging, he involuntarily marries Veda only to worsen the situation. If it had been otherwise if his mother had forward thought and broad frame of mind to accept homosexuality, Bhuvan and Veda would have been saved from all struggles and troubles.

CONCLUSION:

Sex and Gender are not pre-determined or at least it cannot be pre-determined.

Biological sex assigned at birth need not be gender that a person evolves into as they grow. There should be a room for the people of all sex as well. Preeti Shenoy marks her support to create a harmonious environment including every people despite all the differences and tries to bring about a change in the society she reflects the crisis in her novels by depicting the struggles faced by the other people as a mirror portrayal of the real life happening. Sexuality as mentioned earlier, is not entirely based on the binary structure of male and female and the sexual attraction between a male-female relationship. Shenoy throws light on this unaddressed issue asking the readers, critics and common people to come out of their misconceptions and to gladly receive people of other sex and to make them feel included.

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