

# CONSTRUCTS OF GENDER IDENTITY IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S THE HANDMAID'S TALE AND THE TESTAMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Understanding gender identity involves examining the roles assigned to individuals both socially and individually. Identity connects self-perception and societal roles, influenced by unique traits and social acceptance. Freud's theory links gender identity to psychosexual development, where a healthy ego mediates between individual and world. Erikson's identity theory, influenced by Sullivan and Fromm, suggests identity evolves with social settings and relationships. Gender identity formation, particularly in boys, is complex due to early identification shifts and societal expectations. Social and parental influences shape gender roles, affecting personal development and self-expression. Cultural norms often dictate behavior, but individuals may personalize their roles. Theoretical frameworks by Burke, Stets, Engels, Butler, and Connell, along with Atwood's novels, provide insights into the socio-psychological aspects of gender identity, highlighting the interplay of globalization, economics, religion, and hegemony in shaping identities.

**Keywords:** Gender Identity, Psychosexual Development, Social Roles, Ego Theory, Identity Control Theory, Parental Influence

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to understand Gender Identity, it becomes important to understand role, individual and social, assigned to humans. 'Identity' can be defined as the role one occupies in the society. Identity plays a crucial role in socio-structural frame. It connects the structure and self. The way they act in the society and how they see themselves. We all have unique identities. The traits we exhibit vary from one another. The gender one impersonates means masculine or feminine is defined as one's gender identity. One expression of self is influenced by the social acceptance and how one conceives one's self.

According to Freud, gender identity resulted from psychosexual development. Ego part of an individual's personality which mediates between the individual and the world constitutes the gender identity. Healthy psychosexual development of an individual is vital in creating ego. Healthy personality resulted for the growth of the five stages of psychosexual development. Healthy personality performs its role without any fixation or stunted growth. Libido balances id, ego and superego resulting in an ideal personality. Individual will be able to perform its identity without any trouble, if normal growth does not take place an individual could get stuck in any stage of psychosexual stage of development.

The concept of Identity developed by Erickson in 1959 was based on 'ego' defined by Sullivan and Fromm on the basis of their views on self-dynamism and self. The self-concept is based on the fact that an identity consists of varying identities linked together. According to social setting, environment and relations with different individuals influence an individual and resulting in the performance of these identities. Therefore, it could be understood identity is not concrete but modifying based on the conventions and experiences.

It is important to understand the factors which contribute to the framing of these identities. The reason behind a boy's maintaining a distance from his mother and a girl acting like her mother. This is influenced by the phallic stage of psychosexual development. The stage where child learns to identify with same sex and differentiate from the opposite sex plays a prominent role in creation of one's gender identity in general.

The shift from the early identification from mother to identification with father in boys and learning the gender identity makes it more complicated for the boys. He learns to maintain a distance from the affectionate mother and couldn't act like his mother and sisters. The girls don't face such complexities. These identities or sex-roles in boys and girls are result of the mental process of Identification and the tendency of Preference to choose the role for self. Freud described this as phallic stage of development in which child learns to differentiate between sexes. Understanding the power father holds and taking him as a competition the boy competes with him for the mother's affection. The process is complex and causes different emotions in the boy. He understands that he is different from mother.

The emphasis laid on the masculine and feminine behavior stunts the intellectual development in a person. Reference can be drawn from Mabel Blake Cohen's stress on the fact that male are encouraged to be aggressive and females are told to be passive. These external influences affect the development of a person, their creativity and expression of self. Culture produces the norms by which an individual is expected to abide. At times, an individual doesn't accept the performance of the role culturally designed for them and chooses to personalize or stylize their identity and role.

Along with the social factors, it is important to understand the role parents play in acquiring the gender identity. A person's perception of self gets affected by how the parents treat them. The acceptance and affection of one's gender by the parents play an important role. If a boy receives affection of mother, he will connect more with her and if a girl is rejected by her father for her femininity, she will try to act like a boy for the father's love and appreciation. Mother plays an important role in the embracing of the feminine identity by the girl. Mother stops, affectionately or harshly, the girl from exhibiting the traits considered masculine and prompts to continue with the girlish acts appropriate depending upon the girl's Psychoanalytic development. The roles assigned to each member in the family are important. They affect the understanding of the gender identity and role by the child. It normalizes the acts for the child and the child accepts it. The siblings' relation with each other and the parent also has an impact on their gender identity. At times, mother's closeness with the sisters prompts a boy to act like a girl to receive mother's attention and affection. Parent's personal interaction also set a standard in front of them and they assume their parental responses and behaviour towards each other is the correct performance of the gender. Bad sexual experience becomes cause of tribulation for them and results in difficulty in performance of their gender roles.

The self-meaning is crucial in the role an individual chooses to play. The behaviour towards others and interactions they have with others. In the Identity Control Theory, Burke and Stets talked about the conceptualization of the mechanism which results in the influence of action by identities. Therefore, the identity creates guidelines which help in the performance according to the situation. In the light of this theory, it can be understood a person attaches meaning to the situations and according to choose to perform their gender role according to the standard. For example, a boy chooses to sit among the men in gathering as a result of what he has been told or seen being done by the other boys. The boy follows the guidelines and act accordingly. On the other hand, a girl knows she is supposed to be helping her mother in the kitchen and serving or stay inside the house. These contrasts show how the fundamental part of their personhood, confidence in boys and humility in girls, impacted their actions in the situation.

Gender identities running through normative expectations are difficult to change. These identities are formed, generalized and standardized as the result of the interaction that took place in the society. Though they cannot be changed completely but with time are modified. The symbolic meaning changes with time and expectations. However, the hegemonic forces define the acceptable behavior and signs. They make sure their dominant position with a little moderation for the other identities.

The novels *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Testament* presented a society where hegemony influenced the status of women in the society. Their roles were remodeled and redefined. Religious fanatics took strict measures to ensure obedience from women of all classes and men of lower in social rank. The novels by Margaret Atwood is important are important in understanding how the social conventions impact the identity of an individual.

The novels present the influence of globalization, economic activities, religious beliefs and tyranny upon the gender. The study of these novels in the light of theories proposed by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Judith Butler in *The Theory of Performative Acts* and Connell's *Masculinities* intends to understand the psychological and social factors which contribute to its framing and performance. The study wants to understand the factors behind the changes in the social norms which affect the identities.

## **2. ENGELS' VIEW ON FEMINISM**

Engels in his work talked about the history of the human life, creation of the society, the state, the family and the private property. He talked about the changes in the status of women that took place along with the changes in the society. He started with defining the earliest human relations as promiscuous. Producing evidences from several researches and accounts he pointed out the non-existence of marriage and patrilineal society before the eighteenth century. He presented the facts supporting the lack of gender defined roles and both men and women were free to choose and leave their partners. Mothers were the nurturer. Men were supposed to live with women, in her house and to leave when he was asked to. The children belonged to mother which is different from present society. He added as initially humans dependent on the nature and there were no economic activities taking place so women were not dependent on men for food and money. Both were free and lived among communities following the rules set for the pairing.

Engels described how with time changes in the lifestyle and development of agriculture and moving of humans from forests to houses started to influence women's participation and position in the family and consequently in the society.

He described the progress into the stages of savagery, barbarism and civilization. The men used to live in jungle and depended on nature for food and shelter. As they started to cultivate lands and build home, the society and economy started to change. This work needed manual strength which women lacked resulted in her cut off from the contribution to the economy. As she didn't produce anything and men started to control other men, slaves, and women, he held a superior position in the society. He defended the role men played in the development of family, which resulted in the creation of settlement of the society, and the economic activities he undertook which resulted in the creation of the state and private property. He explained monogamy was created by men to ensure the inheritance of his private property to a rightful heir.

In his work, Engels referred to Lewis Morgan and his findings to present the contrast in the position of women in the family and the society, the change in her status and morality. Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* is not only an anthropological work which talks about the development that changed human life but gives a base for the study of authenticity of gender roles and identities, the normative practices and their validity. He produced the historical evidences and stated stories which question the dominant ideology of hegemonic masculinity. He pointed out how with time women's states and power was taken away from them as development in human civilization took away her contribution to the economy which led to her loss of ownership and independence. She used to be in charge of house. She did gardening and was in charge of the house. But when men started to plough land and cultivate crops he became the producer and owner, she was dependent on him and her role was confined to household chores and looking after offspring because of the absence of physical strength.

The word 'famulus' means domestic slave and 'familia' means the count of slaves belonging to an individual. Engels tried to emphasize on the fact that the word family which has its root in famulus and familia doesn't have sentimentality but the sense of ownership of the man. Family was a basic unit in society in Roman society which was headed by the father and owned it. It is important to understand that was the purpose of creating family emotional or to stabilize economic ownership. This was to ensure the control of the private property by an individual and transfer of property from man of generation to the man of the next generation who would succeed as the head of the family and control the family.

Engels described the forms of marriage which changed with different stages of human development. In the beginning during the period of savagery families used to be consanguine. The children were looked after as common children. This was possible because the group marriages used to take place. Women were respected and had freedom to choose their partners. When the society shifted in the period of barbarism pairing marriage took place. The punaluan family consisted of pairing marriage. In this arrangement, a man and a woman are supposed to be live together. Polygamy and infidelity was accepted on his part but woman's infidelity was punishable offense. They both had equal right to dissolve their marriage. The children were supposed to be given to the mother. Monogamy was the result of the civilization of human society. Men and women are supposed to be married and women are expected of fidelity. Infidelity is still a punishable offense for her. But now she had no right over children. She could not dissolve marriage. Woman and children belonged to man. He took the decisions related to the family. His property was inherited by the male heir unless he put in will otherwise. Women were confined to the house but men were free. Adultery existed and was acceptable if men committed it. There was no punishment for him. Existence of Prostitution showed that men after so much progress didn't give up on 'heterism'. However, women chose to be in monogamous relation for honor as the human society developed from savagery to Civilization. Monogamy ensured that wealth of the family remained within the bloodline.

He described Monogamy became a must on the part of feminine gender and she had no contribution to the economy and was now dependent on men. On the other hand, if masculine gender committed adultery it was criticized, but was accepted and they were not punished. Masculine gender performed heterism. As he chose the offspring of his wife to inherit his private property, his promiscuous relations didn't bother him much.

Engels in his essay has prompted the topics like hegemony and its impact on the individual level. How masculine gender became superior and dominant; on the other hand the freedom and ownership was taken from the feminine gender and a passive position was assigned to them.

These altered roles make us realize a couple of things. First, economy plays an important role in the assigning gender identities. The economically weaker gender is defined weaker and inferior in status. In the places where matriarchy still exists, feminine gender enjoys a superior status and is respected. Second, the gender roles and identities can be altered by redefining it for the society. The subjugation of women resulted because of this redefining of the signs, gesture and female body. The actions, behavior and place acceptable in the society were influenced by the dominant culture and norms. Third, the marital rules and lineage could be altered as has been done before. This took place as men became economically sound and wanted to ensure the inheritance of private property by bloodline. This study

showed the economic value of the family for a man more than emotional value. The State supported this social arrangement to benefit from them. Final, monogamy is for women. For decades, marriage gave ownership over women to men. Adultery and aggression at the part of men is leading to the women's unwillingness to be married. As the women have equal contribution in the present century and own private property, she couldn't be compelled to subjugate. It is her bond with the husband that makes her act in the favor of the marriage and family.

### 3. BUTLER'S THEORY OF PERFORMATIVE ACTS DEFINING FEMININITY

Gender Identity can be understood in a better way in the light of Judith Butler's Theory of Performative Acts. The theory studies the influence of social agents like language, symbols and social norms in the creation of the gender. Butler defined Gender as an identity which isn't fixed and grows and changes with time. It is stylized through the repetition of acts. She has explained the production of gendered self through the stylization of body, performance of bodily gestures, and movements, several enactments. Therefore she defined gender as an identity which has no fixed definition. Butler defined gender roles as performance which is acceptable in social time-space trajectory. These roles can be altered with the stylized repetition. Here she talked about the Social temporality of the gender acts. That with time this stylization changes.

Butler in her essay used the theory of Merleau-Ponty as both assume body resulted from the active process of embodying of cultural and historical possibilities. Gender Identity resulted from the embodiment. Butler advocated the body is set of possibilities which means there are no predetermined roles for body. The role is influenced by the historical conventions. The body continuously materializes the possibilities. Butler and Merleau-Ponty believed on the basis of the roles performed before set an outline for the body and the body personalizes it and performs the role taking the hints from the historical convention and sets new norms for the next generation.

Judith Butler defined body as a result of performance. She added that body is defined by the actions performed by the individual and these performances are unique and different from other individuals. Therefore, the body is understood to be an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical conventions as per the conditions. Each performance is different from the historical as well as the contemporary. It means no two bodies perform the gender similarly and revise it according to their own psychology, assumption of self and experiences.

Judith Butler further referring to theatrical acts explained the way performative acts of an actor give it meaning according to the circumstances, in the same manner gender is also performative and draws its meaning from the conventions and circumstances. She defined gender as corporeal acts. These acts define the possibilities of cultural transformation of the gender.

Talking about the way Merleau-Ponty defined body she concluded that there are possibilities for the body which means a body draws its meaning through its presentation in the world and how it is perceived. There is no concrete definition of gender given beforehand. It is determined on the conditioned ideologies and culture that justify the course of actions performed by the humans.

Dramatization of gender therefore describes gender as insubstantial. It's different from sex. Sex is biologically accurate and incorporates functions which are predetermined. On the other hand, gender is not accurate and its function depends on the culture interpretation and repetitive performance. A person could perform the gender differently but is tied to its biological destiny.

She interpreted what it meant to be a female and a woman. She defined to be a female, facticity, it has no significance but a body becomes woman by dramatizing, becoming a cultural sign and materialize their identity according to historically delimited possibility. This is achieved through repetition of corporeal projection of historical situation.

Gender according to Judith Butler is embodiment. Embodiment means to do, to dramatize and to reproduce. This embodiment is not designed on its own, as it is influenced by history because of which this embodiment could be under certain conditions and performed in a limit way. As the gender is a performance and is conditioned the consequences could be punitive. The failure to perform the gender properly often led to punishment and rejection.

Butler defined gender as a social construction resulted from implicit social agreement to perform, to produce and conserve the genders. The society followed these rules without realizing that these identities are not self-styled but defined by the performance culturally expected and accepted. However, Butler made a suggestion regarding the body becoming its gender through the acts which are given new definition, according to the need of the time changed and together they constitute the gender. She hinted the personal touch every individual gives to its performance.

Butler believed woman to be a 'historical situation'. She believed in two ways body is trained to be a woman. First, Cultural construction which are taught since the childhood and an individual is explained how to perform their body. Second, implicit understanding that models the way the body is assumed by culture. A woman after observes other women around her performing the gender roles and starts to imitate those signs and perform gendered acts.



She talked about the distinction between sex and gender. She emphasized on the fact that when a female pursues a profession or get involved in legal or political discourse then her gender is highlighted and accordingly she get the opportunity. The corporeal style in which body is supposed to act is a result of the sedimentation which configures body into sex. These sex roles are then interpreted as gender and are expected to match the definition set according to the social norms. Over the time, the deposition of this definition becomes part of one's identity.

Butler further compared the political censorship and severe criticism received by the theatrical performances with the punitive and controlling regulations that society has framed for the gender performances. She also mentioned how a dramatic act could be separated from reality and could be declared performance. Then she talked about the transvestite's stage performance. The performance receives a different reaction on-stage and condemned in reality. Butler emphasized on the fact that if performance of gender gives it meaning and make it real then transvestite's gender is real and adhere to the social expectations.

Gender is based on the performance therefore the extent to which it is performed determines its reality. Gender is expressed by certain acts which are assumed to conform to the presupposition of that gender. It is based on the assumptions regarding one's sex.

Gender is performative not expressive which means that derives its meaning from the performance and creates cultural significance. Gender had no meaning attached to it or in any way defined beforehand. It would make no gender identity or performance correct and incorrect. According to Butler, gender identities are regulatory fiction and don't exist in reality. They are just performances which give it meaning. The society believed in these fictions for regulating an order in the society. Therefore, through gender a person doesn't express but performs the expected bodily actions and signs.

She talked about punitive nature of the gender performances. She talked about the hermaphrodites and transsexual. How they are criticized and punished for not adhering to the social expectations of gender performance of masculinity and femininity. Her essay on the performative acts is crucial in the study of gender identity. It draws attention towards the changing nature of the gender acts and modification in the expectations of the society from a body regarding the performance of their gender. The theory is important in understanding how human psychology and implicit social agreement to these performances could contradict resulting in deviation from the cultural conventions and social expectations. However, as these roles are performative, according to the changes in the society the accepted acts are redefined and remodeled.

Her essay is helpful in understanding the difference in the performance of gender roles in different cultures across the world. As the culture and religion dominant define the gender roles in different way, consequently the performance differ. This difference in the definitions of the roles makes the feminine gender different in western and Indian society.

#### **4. CONNELL'S THEORY OF MASCULINITY**

In the Masculinities, Connell has talked about the realization of masculinity. He mentioned that social factors, recent trends, embodiment, education and health contribute in the practice of masculinity. Connell emphasized on the fact that the environment provided at a young age influence the development of one's identity and behavior. Therefore school plays an important role as the school discipline, harassment and learning issues affect the conception of masculinity. The other factor is health. Men's play important in reproductive and sexual health issues as the way they had been treated they reflect. The way men are acquainted with their masculinity is also critical. The cases of domestic or institutional violence, sexual assault and war all depend upon how men are introduced to violence and trained to control it by mitigating aggression.

Father plays an important role in forming of masculinity. The father's traditional role had different impact on the boy, the bond used to be serious and men got less chance to be expressive. However, new models of fathering and family relations are bringing changes and opening possibilities for men to be expressive. In the Essay, he also talked about the individual and group counseling and psychotherapy of men so that paying attention to men the attention could be given to the gender relations and to the gender specificity.

Connell referred to 'hegemonic masculinity' and the discursive construction of masculinity. Then he mentioned the finding of Discursive studies that suggested masculinity is not rigid and consist one pattern but is affected from the choices made under circumstances which are based on the cultural account of behavior suggested about masculinity. Though discursive approaches don't bring change in economic inequality which is significant to bring change in masculinity.

The effect of globalization, migration and the conflict based on the ethnicity and culture are important for the comprehending the issues related to gender. The allocation of power to a gender the reason and causes needed to be understood.

Masculinity talks about the socially constructed gender relations. Connell emphasized on the fact that the study of global relations which would include state and corporation market and politics would help in understanding the world gender order. According to Connell, it comes under the gender politics and the global trends, international relations and trade should be studied to understand the power held by one gender over the other.

Connell pointed out an exaggerated image of global market produced by media which portrays the new technology, world news and music with equal participation of all. He denied this notion and reiterated that the difference exists and genders are treated differently. He proposed the study of gender order of local societies and world scale will help us in understanding the world gender order.

Gender order is the creation of new arenas for gender relations beyond individual countries and regions. Connell talked about the segregation of labour on the basis of gender and prioritizing male gender. He advocated important international organization like the UN agencies are controlled by men. International media's role in commodification of women and how they define gender and promote the acceptance of its meaning is also pointed. Connell talked about transnational economic relation and effect on the labor market due to the regulations of these international corporations. Connell talked about migration neo-liberal market in relation with the gender. He talked about the regulations of these markets which has implicit gender politics. The managers and the entrepreneurs control and have power here. Connell defined it as transnational business masculinity where these groups of men held hegemonic form of masculinity. Connell discussed the transnational business masculinity. He wanted to emphasize on the fact that the managers in these business still see their position as power. Connell wanted to explain how the people with power and position assume themselves differently from other men they believe to have power and position.

Masculinities discusses about the impact of childhood experience which toughens up a boy in the process of becoming an adult. The way family and society gives him a sense of entitlement and superiority, makes him to believe that he has the right to whatever he wanted. Whether domestic or professional environment, he kept claiming the power.

Connell referred to Freud's hypothesis about the existence of bisexuality in every individual where femininity is considered weakness and is suppressed by men and discouraged by society. In order to understand masculinity, he believed clinical knowledge needed to be gathered by the therapists. The social psychology and sex roles are needed to be understood. The advancement in the fields of anthropology, history and sociology also contribute to the science of masculinity so said masculinity could be understood in a better way. Masculinity is defined as a complex structure consisting of multiple layers. Each layer a different and contradicting personality, though they coexist. Therefore masculinity isn't a pure state. Connell discussed about gender which he defined as internalized sex roles. This gives a scope for the social change as the societal norms are influenced by social processes. Therefore the societal norms are modified by the social agencies and the changes in the expectation.

In his work Masculinities, Connell described different masculinities at work and different from each other. He talked about the control of hegemonic masculinity over other masculinities and femininity. Hegemonic masculinity is associated with the authority and rationality. Both play a crucial role in cultural confirmation of patriarchy. The economic relations and technologies could be a tool in changing this. Though the middle class men and labour class don't have capital and power to control others, however with the changes like globalization and transnational economic activities could result in the changes in the pattern of the masculinity.

Connell talked about the importance de-gendering the gender roles for the equality. He believed the society need to change the conventions and social expectations so that the gender roles could be recomposed. He said that internationally female are fighting for their freedom and redefine the identity of masculinity and femininity. However, hegemonic masculinity is resisting and fighting to hold onto the power and control they have in international politics and economy. The urge to have privilege and control over other gender hinders the path of the reframing of the gender identities. Masculinity and Femininity gender identities of opposite nature are consequences of the social expectations from the sexes and are tool in the subjugation of one by the other. Men in power control and suppress other men. Therefore, it could be also understood as a quest for power, authority and control to satisfy one's ego. To express one's hidden desires without being hindered by anyone's opinion. However, masculinity is associated with strength, aggression and violence and only these are only considered acceptable traits of masculinity by social norms. Homosexuals and Transsexual are not accepted and there identity is denied and it is considered a psychological deformity. Connell in his essay also emphasized on the creation of gender for gaining power and control. The entitlement and privilege at local level and Politics and Economy at international allure men to maintain hegemony.

## **5. REVIEW OF THE HANDMAID'S TALE AND THE TESTAMENT**

The novels The Handmaid's Tale and The Testament of Margaret Atwood presented a society in The Republic of Gilead where Hegemonic Masculinity redefined gender identities and altered the embodiment of the self. The novel presented the plight of the women who were deprived of their human rights. They were compelled to embody the

identity and perform acts pre-decided by the Hegemonic Masculinity. The novel presented how masculinity is divided and defined on the basis of the class. Men of the middle-class and working-class had no say in the constitution of new gender identities and defined roles. For better understanding it is crucial to know the social order prevalent in Gilead. The novel is set in a futuristic dystopian society of a fictional state of The Republic of Gilead. A group of revolutionary men called Sons of Jacob established the Republic of Gilead. It was formed after the political unrest and mutiny within the country. Sons of Jacobs led this revolt and ended the existing the political system and established totalitarian government. The Sons of Jacobs then governed the country and declared the state follows the philosophy based on the fables mentioned in the Bible. This philosophy was used by them for the classification of the society of Gilead and the suppression of the women. Using this philosophy they redefined the acceptable gender identities and roles. They defined the bodily functions and new performative acts and symbolic meaning. In order to make the women obey, they were deprived of education and money. The women, in the contemporary time, were scared because of the state methods and preaching, while the young girls who grew up after the establishment of the Gilead had no information about the old pattern of education and happily accepted the new system. The women were herded as cattle for childbirth. In order to subjugate them the new government started with disabling them financially. They were not allowed to use their bank accounts. Afterwards these women were denied access to education and they were removed from their designations at the workplace.

The Handmaid's Tale showed how the women in the society were put into serving position and to ensure they happily accepted this, they were brainwashed into believing they are assigned a holy task. This new order in society confused women about their identity. They couldn't understand what sort of behavior was acceptable. The government used violence as a method to suppress women and classified them as The Wives, The Daughters, The Handmaids, The Aunts, The Econowives, The Marthas, and The Jezebels.

The Testament told the tale of young girls being brainwashed into believing that becoming an ideal daughter and a wife is the goal of their life. The interactions with grandmother, mother and other female relatives altered the identity of girls who were trained to subjugate to men and serve them. They had no contribution to the economy and had no qualification. These young girls were trained in such a manner that they were religious and obedient. They never realized their potential and abilities for contributing to the economy of the state. This redefining of the feminine gender taught them servitude and obedience.

When the society faced a decline in the birth rate because of deteriorating environmental health and sexual fertility among the citizens, The Sons of Jacob took advantage of the situation in convincing the society in accepting the new order. Therefore the women leading unconventional life before the formation of the Gilead were held captive and forced to be Handmaids. New classification restricted the availability of previous education for women and changed education provided to women. They were compelled to be Handmaids to the Commanders, who were of Elite families. The Handmaids were supposed to produce their heir. The government justified this cruelty as the Handmaid's repentance for their old deeds and a sacrifice and contribution to the society. They redefined marriage and the legitimate child which was earlier supposed to be the child produced by the wife.

On the other hand, the daughters were taught new acts. They were trained to be a good wife and look after their family. They were sent to Rubies Premarital preparatory school where they were trained in embroidery and other household chores. Reading was prohibited for women except for the Aunts. It was a punishable offense for women. The signboards were replaced with images from words. This was a strategy to ensure women don't ever need to learn reading. Genders, Masculine and Feminine, are not only different but the superiority of masculine gender was fed into the minds of young girls. They were defined as an object which belonged first to their father and then to their husbands. Obedience must be performed as it was defined as a gender act by the authorities. They without being allowed to read and gain knowledge would be easily manipulated and could be made to act as the men wished. Without access to books and knowledge, the women would never question the male authority. The wives were instructed to look after home, daughters were supposed to help their mothers, Marthas were supposed to do the household chores and the Handmaids gave birth to the children.

Out of all these categories, only the Aunts were allowed to read and had access to the books kept hidden at Ardua Hall. The men in power made sure that only the Aunts who were trusted by the commanders had the access to these books and the supplicants as were impressionable were denied to read such books so that they would not know and understand the truth. Aunt Lydia read and used the knowledge into surviving in the patriarchal society of the Gilead. Aunt Lydia mentioned how the reading and access to information kept reminding her of what she used to be in Pre-Gileadean era and making the downfall of the Gilead possible. The way Aunt Lydia's access to reading material helped her in keeping her mind and she succeeded in ending the totalitarian government in the Gilead showed the importance of education. Knowledge is a powerful tool that she used for the decline of the Sons of Jacob.

Since the establishment of Governance, in order to gain power for domination, men created an Other making a group of inferior people. The women were powerless and inferior. They were limited to doing household chores and procreation. They were brainwashed into believing this role to be their identity. It was possible as women were denied any contribution to the economy of the state and the family and were fearful of financial instability. The women were denied employment. In The Testament and The Handmaid's Tale, the women were compelled to serve. They were killed or brutally punished for breaking any law made by the Sons of Jacob. They were not allowed Reading, Writing, Working Professionally and Enrolling in the School and Universities.

The women who used to work before the establishment of Gilead felt suffocated and were often doubtful which of their identities is correct and acceptable. The protagonist June also addressed as Offred expressed the views of the Handmaids. They were confused and found the dressing of a foreigner inappropriate as she had become accustomed to covering her whole body. Discontinuation of the preexisting social order and change in the feminine gender identity puzzled the women and they submitted to the male authorities. The young girls in the schools were taught new symbolic language and performance of bodily acts by the Aunts and trained to be a good wife to the commanders.

Social Interaction and Influence of the contact with people of gender, same and opposite, played an important role in acceptance of role and identity of self. The Aunts' job was to brainwash the Handmaids using their knowledge into believing that they are doing a noble job for the society. As the Aunts with confidence quoted the texts from the Bible many helpless Handmaids were convinced by them. The Handmaids were threatened and had no other choice but to perform the bodily acts and repeat the symbolic signs verbal and practical. The story also showed how the state and family made the daughters believe marriage and being a good wife to be their ultimate goal of their life. However, when some of the daughters decided to be Aunts and read the book they revolted and found the society oppressing. They wanted to live alone on their own terms. But in the society of the Gilead it was impossible for a girl to have a room of her own. She wasn't allowed to work, learn and earn. She was supposed to be an obedient wife otherwise she would be made a handmaid or sent to the colonies. In both the novels, the protagonists recalled how the women lead an independent life in the Pre-Gilead Era. They were free to make their own choices and expressed their opinions about social and political issues as education was available for all. The women, before Gilead was established, had professional degree which helped them in acquiring power position. They led independent life. They made decisions of their life. Financial freedom and Respectable position in the society were achieved. They were competent and fairly got the opportunities. However, the Sons of Jacob and their followers who considered it's important to take away the liberty and rights women were enjoying so that they could be made Housewives, Marthas to serve them and the Handmaids for rearing the children as the society faced the challenge of infertility. The society, in order to, overcome the challenge and for survival decided to sacrifice the women. Sons of Jacob found the liberty of women intimidating.

They wanted to leave no space for gender politics. Therefore using religion they manipulated the society. The man of the class and race lower in rank of social order had no power and contribution in the decision-making. They could do nothing to protect the women of their class and family. As Sons of Jacob controlled power and economy, therefore they had the power to control the social order and gender identity. Before the Gilead, the women were self-aware and financially independent. Women were leading a life of their own choice and on their own terms. Women were independent. They had freedom to choose to be married, to be in a live-in relation or singlehood. They were not treated like an object and were free. Aunt Lydia who used to be a Lady Judge, her colleagues Katie who chose to be pregnant via sperm bank and Anita Tessa were captivated for leading an unconventional life choosing to live a life of singlehood. Education gave women a sense of understanding of their own body and they made choices related to their own body and pregnancy. They understood they are not owned by anyone and could lead an independent life. The Republic of Gilead presented such women as sinners and held them captive to make them Handmaids or killed them to terrify other women in case they could not bear child. Bisexuals or people with any deviation from the sexual orientation, they should have according to the Bible, were killed or sent to the colonies to work as a punishment. Privileges were only for the male of high ranks. Women of all the sections and categories were prohibited and were punished if caught doing anything prohibited by the State. The Handmaids were treated like an object and were brutally punished if they tried to escape the role. The way men changed the roles and identity of women in the society of Gilead showed how these performative roles are based on the thinking, common narrative and opinions of the gender which physically stronger and use the power and violence to gain control.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Gender Identity has maintained an order in the society, redefining them will be difficult and might not to be accepted easily. However, for equality and end the separation it is important to understand how much crucial it is to reassign the gender roles. As one's biological being and gendered self are two separate things and how the society define and assign gender needs to be considered and altered.



The Handmaids' Tale and The Testament presented Hegemony masculinity controlling the society. The gender roles define strictly and create biases regarding the contrasting gender identities. They control the society and the roles played by the people. The normative signs and symbols of gender were changed by compelling the society to accept them. As they control economy, state, religion and consequently society they take gender politics as a threat and control the performance of the gender. Engels' The Creation of Family, State and Private Property, helps in understanding the economic reasons which play crucial role in the regulation of gender identities and roles in the society. In the dystopian society of The Republic of Gilead, pollution and infertility caused threat to the inheritance of the private property. In order to control the state, Sons of Jacob used this problem and controlled people. They justified their atrocities and redefined the female identity to ensure. The way Engel described the changes in the role from group marriages to pairing marriage and then establishment of monogamy to control women. The women were deprived of their freedom. In the same way, the Gilead which was a staunch religious state with totalitarian regime defined the new gender roles and people were terrified of breaking any rule because of the capital punishment. The only difference in the real society is that women are confined to monogamy but the state has made laws for the safety and progress of women. The condition of women in the state of Gilead showed how importance economic independence is for an individual. Before the establishment of Gilead, women were working and living the way they wanted to but to ensure their subordination Sons of Jacob with their supporter seized the accounts of women. Working women, women who were in live-in or interracial relations or were pregnant out of wedlock were caught and punished. They were trained to be Handmaids and changed into a useful commodity. They were known by the name of their master for example June was renamed 'Offred'. This showed she is no more a human but an object belonging to other human. Using religion they were brainwashed into believing they were doing a good deed. Butler's Performative Acts Theory explained the changes in the bodily actions and symbolic meanings with the changes in the social conventions. The deviations brought in the performance of the feminine gender because of punitive consequences. The historical outlines were discarded and with violence and punishment a new social order was normalized. The meaning associated with the gender was redefined. The sex and gender roles were separated as in the society of Gilead all the women were not able to procreate as the consequence of climatic issues. Connells' interpretation of Hegemonic masculinity and the impact it has on the other masculinities and femininity is helpful in understanding how Sons of Jacob controlled the society of Gilead through controlling economy and politics. They eliminated the feminine gender from gender politics and economic competition to establish their hegemony. Also the young boys were trained from the young age to believe they are superior and girls are supposed to submit to them. They entitled to education, job, money, power and authority and women are supposed to serve them.

The Handmaid's Tale and The Testament presents a dark picture of the masculinity. The controlling of women and eviction of their fundamental right to freedom presented the important factors which influence these performative roles. The effect of violence on the society and the inability of women to counter it because of their lack of physical strength is a major factor. The economic restriction that state imposed on women had disabled them from denying the subjugation. The novels presented the two significant factors which has been hindering the path of women liberation and progress from the centuries. The analysis of these novels also helps in understanding the contribution of masculine gender in the liberation of women and ensuring they also get opportunities. These opportunities are not equal yet crucial as it brought change in the social status of women. The modification of social norms has defined their identity according to the contemporary culture.

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