Gender Mystique:
Reframing Gender as Biological, Social, Linguistic, Psychological or Cultural Imperative

Lakshmi R. Nair, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D. Research Scholar
Dr. R. Saravana Selvan, M.A., M.Phil., M. Ed., P.G.D.J., P.G.D.T.E., Ph.D. Research Supervisor

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Abstract

The researcher aims to concentrate on the *paradoxes of gender* as an imperative of culture. The researcher pin points strategical denotations and connotations of *gender as a mystique*. The researcher re-frames *gender as a cause and effect* of various imperatives. The researcher exposes different dimensions of *gender configuration*, theorized by literary theoreticians.

Keywords: Gender, Gender Mystique, Gender Imperative, Gender Trouble, Gender Terminology

The aim of the researcher is to identify the politics and politricks of the term 'gender' in different corrupted employment, mythical tradition, and hereditary constructed structure. As gender is conceptualized a structure (constraint) since it is embedded in the individual, interactional, institutional, and global action (choice), the vortex of *gender vertigo* paramounts. The researcher tries to search the *anatomy of gender* by dissecting the sexual difference in the body of knowledge. The study is an attempt to explore the inaccurate perceptions of the *gender mystique* that encompasses the biological, social, linguistic, psychological, and cultural imperative - the myths that exist *with and within gender.*

As literary critic Sarah Seltzer says, "writing across gender may be harder, require more research and humility. We may fail or get 'called out' for letting our biases show, or being ignorant. But the attempt at understanding, empathy, and inhabiting the soul of someone whose life experience is not ours, helps us grow as writers, and people too" (*The Mixed Results of Male Authors Writing Female Characters*, 2013). "Is there a gender which persons are said to *have*, or is it an essential attribute that a person is said *to be*, as implied in the question: What gender are you?... If gender is constructed, could it be constructed differently, … How and where does the construction of gender take place?" (*Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, 2010, 476). Habets anticipates about gender as divine or human ("Prologue- Gender: Divine or Human?": *In Reconsidering Gender: Evangelical Perspectives*, 2011, 5).

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Gender comprises the marginal discourse as man versus woman, domination versus subordination, possession versus humiliation, central versus peripheral, and elitism versus underdog, all in the realm of hereditary constructed structure. Its duelling dualisms are male/ female, sex/ gender, real/ constructed, and nature/ nurture with politicized and institutionalized shades of difference. "Why worry about using dualisms to parse the world?" (*Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, 2000, 21)

According to Val Plumwood, gender is placed in dichotomies: reason/ nature, male/ female, mind/ body, master/ slave, freedom/ necessity, human/ non-human, civilized/ primitive, production/ reproduction, and self/ other (*Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, 2000, 21). It has different dimensions: physical, symbolic, metaphoric, sentimental, and political. It is special in discourse and practice, as well as representation and imagination. It travels in the phenomenology of space. Gender concept explores the rhetorical phenomenon and embodies cultural constructions.

Gender space is an abstraction of idea with human experience, meaning, and identity. It informs the lifestyle, emotional conditions of individuals, and psychological social relations. Gender agenda is the wild anthropology between the dominant and sub-ordinant subject; the confusion between the subaltern studies and unexamined culturalism. Gender is a continuum and a multifaceted reality that is dependent on contexts. Judith Butler asserts, "There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990, 34).

As Paula Webster states, "… gender is a product of human thought and culture, a social construction that creates the 'true nature' of all individuals" ("The Dangers of Femininity": *Gender Differences: Sociology or Biology?* 1994, 41-43). Simon de Beauvoir formulates, gender is a "constructed" identity aspect: "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (*The Second Sex*, 1973, 301). Sayers questions, "Are women human?" ("Are Women Human?": *Are Women Human? Penetrating, Sensible, and Witty Essays on the Role of Women in Society*, 1938, 106). "When will women be human? When?" (*The Second Sex*, 1949, 43).

No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine" (*The Second Sex*, 1949, 281). Butler writes, "To understand gender as a historical category, however, is to accept that gender, understood as one way of culturally configuring a body, is open to a continual remaking, and that 'anatomy' and 'sex' are not without cultural framing" (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of Identity*, 1990, 10). She advocates that, "The critique of gender norms must be guided by the question of what maximizes the possibilities for a livable life" (*Gender Relations in Global Perspective: Essential Readings*, 87). She believes that gender is performative and not original.

Gender is a kind of 'doing,' an incessant activity performed without 'one's 'knowing' and 'one's willing,' and is a practice of 'improvisation within the scene of constraint.' One does not "do" one's gender alone; but is always "doing" with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary. "What I call my "own" gender appears perhaps at times as something that I author or, indeed, own. But the terms that make up one's own gender are, from the start, outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author (and that radically contests the notion of authorship itself)" (*Undoing Gender*, 2004, 1). "What does gender want?" ("Gender and Race: (What) are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?": *Nous*, 34: 31-55). "If I am a certain gender, will I still be regarded as part of the human?" ("Bodies that Matter": *On the Discourse Limits of "Sex"*, 1993, 2). "Is sex to gender as feminine is to masculine?" ("Bodies that Matter": *On the Discourse Limits of "Sex"*, 1993, 3).

The four characteristics that constitute gender identification are *gender self-labelling* (self-identification of specific sex/ gendered roles), *gender consciousness* (sensitivity to socio-political situations/ well-being), *gender salience* (political activism/ empowerment), and *gender motivation* (improvement in the status/ rights of women). Gender divisions perform in different perspectives which are biological, social, linguistic, psychological, or cultural. Gender refers to a "factor" or a "dimension" of an analysis, it applies to embodied persons as "a mark" of biological, linguistic, and cultural difference (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990, 12-13). Lewis defends gender essentialism, "Gender is a reality, and a more fundamental reality than sex" (*Perelandra*, 1946, 9). The "third-gender" or "trans-gender" challenges the non-gendered phenomena since they are gender-neutered. Sylvia Walby offers "gender mainstreaming" as an "inevitably and essentially a contested process" to promote "gender inequality" (*Conversing on Gender*, 2007, 92).

Gender as an imperative, is a biologically sexual diversity, socially derived concept, linguistically represented discourse, psychologically discursive approach, and culturally varied construct. It is an achieved status rather than an ascribed characteristic. Dichotomous gender role behaviours are over-layered on dichotomous gender and form with di-morphically distinct biological sexes. *Gender attribution* process (biological and social), *gender identification* resultant (linguistical and psychological), and 'gender differentiation' phenomena (cultural) enhance *gender construction* imperative.

Biological perspective of gender functions in the attribution of anatomical characteristics which constitutes the individual identity. Gender is indirectly related to genetic make-up. In the biological or organic context, gender is assumed in relation to sex: the traits and behaviour that are related to the physical perception of the self. It is not restricted to basic biology, but beyond anatomical variations there are the distinct notions about gender. Biologically, people are born with different genes and hormones that acknowledge the primary division. The 'female' body is the arbitrary locus of the gender 'woman,' and there is no reason to preclude the possibility of the body becoming the locus of other constructions of gender. As Freud says, "anatomy is destiny" (*Anatomy is Destiny*, 1924, 274). Beyond anatomy, there are multiple gender dimensions.

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Socialization of gender involves within the human birth with *social conditioning* and *gender discrimination* which constitutes the collective identity. It organizes the evolution of gendered identity and provides the stereotypical and contrastive roles with diversity. According to Sra Llama, man/woman, masculine/feminine are merely cultural constructions, and heterosexuality is the natural sexuality that is only another example of a *biological social construction*. Social constructionist thought creates the inequalities in educational experiences and occupational status of male/ female genders in society; since the individual belief is socially acceptable. The social construction of gender is a part of reality construction. Hence, the gender is a socially constructed accomplishment. The relational and contextual view of gender in socially constituted subjects denotes a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations. Gender is a social temporality, and it is socially monitored by society. Two social dimensions of gender are *difference theory* (two-culture theory) and 'dominance theory' (power- based theory). As Elizabeth Grosz states, "without human sociality, human sexuality cannot develop" (*Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, 2000, 24).

Linguistic construction of gender theorises bilingualism in language, philosophy, and metaphorical implications. Gender is primarily a grammatical term, which may be determined by a distinguishing characteristic, that is, sex, but gender is arbitrary as language. Man/ Woman differ in their linguistic behaviour, competence, and functions. "How is linguistic performativity connected to gender?... Gender identities are constructed and constituted by language, which means that there is no gender identity that precedes language. If you like, it is not that an identity "does" discourse or language, but the other way around—language and discourse "do" gender" (*On Judith Butler and Performativity*, 2002, 56).

Speech difference in gender is due to power, status, and dual-culture. Gender correlates with grammatical and perceptual category since language has gender distinctions. It is associated with contextual factors. Irigaray says that, the feminine sex is a linguistic absence and grammatical impossibility that expose the foundational illusion of masculinist discourse. "Gender is the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes" (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990, 20).

As stated by Grey, the comparison between female co-operativeness and male competitiveness in linguistic behaviour is noticed in 1970's ("Towards an overview on Gender and Language variation": *Retrieved November* 21, 2006). Mulac has concentrated on *gender as culture* and an empirical study on linguistic differences between men and women. The linguistic forms used by men and women contrast in all speech communities since it is *gender- bound language* ("Empirical support for the 'gender as culture' hypothesis: An Intercultural Analysis of Male/ Female Language Differences": *Human Communication Research*, 2001, 121-152). As Lyotard says, "There is no sign or thought of the sign which is not about power and for power" (*Libidinal Economy*, 1993, 86).

Psychological perspective contributes to the specification of patriarchal thought, female castration complex, penis envy, and dual nature. Gender stereotyping involves in psychological aspect. As a consequence, gender cannot be understood as a role which either expresses or disguises an interior *self*, whether that *self is conceived as sexed or not*. As performance which is performative, *gender is an act*, broadly construed, which construct the social fiction of its own psychological inferiority. George Devereux claims, "…much of mankind's high degree of sexual dimorphism is due to the *woman's* conspicuous femaleness than 'female'" (*The Anatomy of Prejudices*, 1988, 131). Gender reality is created through sustained social performances that the very notions of an essential sex, a true or abiding masculinity or femininity, are also constituted as part of the strategy by which the performative aspect of gender is concealed.

As Luce Irigaray argues, women constitute a paradox or contradiction within the discourse of identity itself (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 13). Gender "as a psychological transformation of the self- the internal conviction that one is either male or female (gender identity) and the behavioural expressions of that conviction" (*Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, 2000, 3). To adopt a gender perspective, is to distinguish between what is biological and social, as well as, what is linguistically, psychologically, and culturally constructed, it is possible to negotiate the inflexible and transformable boundaries.

Kate Bornestein states that, a man who underwent a sex change argues the way to liberate women is to deconstruct gender: "… doing away with gender is key to the doing away with patriarchy …. Gender fluidity is the ability to freely and knowingly become one or many of a limitless number of genders, for any length of time, at any rate of change. Gender fluidity recognizes no borders or rules of gender" (*Gender Outlaw, on Men, Women and the Rest of Us*, 1994, 115).

According to Wittig, "gender not only designates persons, 'qualifies' them, as it were, but constitutes a conceptual episteme by which binary gender is universalized" (*The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, 1992, 28). "Genders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory": *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, 1990, 114). Gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and is understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. This view of gender does not pose a comprehensive theory about what gender it is or the manner of its construction, and neither does it prescribe an explicit feminist political program. Regardless of the pervasive character of patriarchy and the prevalence of sexual difference as an operative cultural distinction, there is nothing about a binary gender system that is given.

As a corporeal field of cultural play, gender is a basically an innovative affair. Gender is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or the

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overwhelming history of patriarchy. Gender is under constraint with anxiety and pleasure, thus power is relinquished to expand the cultural field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds. As Butler points, "... that gender is a choice, or that gender is a role, or that gender is a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning, hat there is a 'one' who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today" ("Bodies that Matter": *On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, 1993, 158). For Foucault, "… an institutional incitement to speak about [sex], and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail" (*The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, 1978, 18).

Henrietta A. Moore says, 'gender,' 'culture,' and 'experience' are "linguistic and cognitive elements" (*Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, 2000, 2-4). Gender concept is "a devil, a born devil, on whose nature nurture can never stick" (*Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, 2000, 20). Plumwood comments that, gender can be "mined, refined, and redeployed," and the "old oppressions stored as dualisms facilitate and break the path for new ones" (*Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, 2000, 23). Gender is nothing, but myriad of either biological, social, linguistic, psychological, or cultural imperative that creates the myths of gender. Gender myths are persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Biological determinism, sex-role socialization, linguistic speech, psychological perspective, and cultural hegemony are prevalent in gender phenomenon. Gender concept is clouded with inadequate discrepancies, misconceptions, and ill-informed perceptions. "Gender is something that we *do* rather than something that we *have*" (*On Judith Butler and Performativity*, 2002, 42). Gender is a combination of imperatives: "Equally imperative is a comprehensive approach …demilitarizing national security and bringing an end to patriarchy" (*The Gender Imperative: Human Security Vs State Security*, 2010, 33). "…equality and security, each of which we assert to be integral one to the other; and that the approach to that challenge so fundamental and essential to its success as to be imperative is gender" (*The Gender Imperative: Human Security Vs State Security*, 2010, 3). It is said in the theology of gender, "As Eve is the mother of sin, so the body, associated with woman, continues to be sin's cause" (*Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion*, 1998, 162).

Kassam's saying serves as a cutting edge for the maladies of gender concept. To be 'literate' is to become liberated from the constraints of dependence, gain voice and self-confidence, participate meaningfully and assertively in decisions that affect one's life, and be politically conscious, critically aware, and demystify social reality (*Gender, Literacy and Empowerment*, 2004, 25). To Lorber, "…the gender vanguard doesn't want freedom from gender, but freedom with gender, queering and multiplying genders are part of an evolutionary process toward dissolving the binary" (*Paradoxes of Gender*, 1994, 315).

As Butler says, "gender is rather an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted as an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The gendered reality is created through sustained

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social performances" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory": *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, 1990, 140-5).

Denise Riley in "Am I That Name?": *Feminism and the Category of Women in History*, explicates the impossibility of generalizing the term women (gender) as: "women is a very volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of 'women' isn't to be relied on, 'women' is both synchronically and diachronically erratic as a collectivity, while for the individual, 'being a woman' is also inconstant, and can't provide an ontological foundation" ("Am I That Name?": *Feminism and the Category of Women in History*, 1988, 126).

The womanhood is negatively constructed in patriarchy. Gender remains a miracle, a mystery, a mystique, a malady, - a construction, a representation, a discussion, an interpretation, non-definable, non-fair,). Michelet writes: "'Woman, the relative being ...' And Benda.... 'The body of man makes sense in itself quite apart from that of woman, whereas the latter seems wanting in significance by itself ... Man can think of himself without woman. She cannot think of herself without man'" (*A Critical and Cultural Reader*, 2004, 52). And she is simply what man decrees; thus, she is called 'the sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him, *she is sex – absolute sex*, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the absolute – she is the Other (*The Second Sex*, 1949, 3). 'The female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities,' said Aristotle; 'we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness' (*The Second Sex*, 1949, 15-16).

For Beauvoir, "The terms *masculine* and *feminine* are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal paper. In actuality the relation of the sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of *man* to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity" (*The Second Sex*, 1961, xv). Lévi-Strauss says, 'Passage from the state of Nature to the state of Culture is marked by man's ability to view biological relations as a series of contrasts; duality, alternation, opposition, and symmetry, whether under definite or vague forms, constitute not so much phenomena to be explained as fundamental and immediately given data of social reality' (*A Critical and Cultural Reader*, 2004, 52).

Gender is pervasive that gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life. Gender is like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly "doing gender" ("Doing Gender": *Gender and Society*, 1987, 125-151). As everyone "does gender," it takes a deliberate disruption of our expectations of how women and men are supposed to act to pay attention to how it is produced. Gender signs and signals are so ubiquitous. Genders are not attached to a biological substratum. Gender boundaries are

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breachable, and individual and socially organized shifts from one gender to another call attention to "cultural, social, or aesthetic dissonances" (*Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, 1992, 16). The building blocks of gender are so*cially constructed statuses.* Gender is both ascribed and achieved ("Doing Gender": *Gender and Society*, 1987, 125-151). "If we do gender appropriately, we simultaneously sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate the institutional arrangements, … If we fail to do gender appropriately, we as individuals-not the institutional arrangements-may be called to account (for our character, motives, and predispositions)" ("Doing Gender": *Gender and Society*, 1987, 146).

"'Man' and 'woman' are at once empty and overflowing categories. Empty because *they* have no ultimate, transcendental meaning. Overflowing because even when they appear to be fixed, they still contain within them alternative, denied, or suppressed definitions" (*Gender and the Politics of History*, 1988, 49). Gender inequality represents the devaluation of "women" and the social domination of "men" - has social functions and a social history. It is not the result of sex, procreation, physiology, anatomy, hormones, or genetic predispositions. It is produced and maintained by identifiable social processes; and built into the general social structure and individual identities deliberately and purposefully.

The continuing purpose of gender as a modern social institution is to construct women as a group to be the subordinates of men as a group. According to Clement and Cixous, the life of everyone placed in the status "woman" is "night to his day-that has forever been the fantasy, Black to his white. Shut out of his system's space, she is the repressed that ensures the system's functioning" (*The Newly Born Woman*, 1986, 67).

Gender refers to the ways of seeing and representing individuals and situations based on sex difference. Gender is *positioned* with preconceptions. Gender becomes a buzzword in development frameworks and mechanisms; and in technocratic representations and policy makings. Gender orthodoxies become embedded in gender advocacy that frames gender. Gender is diluted, denatured, and depoliticized without *gender justice*. Gender is on the agenda with gender gestalt or changing perceptions. Gender is proved to be a double-edged sword. For Scott, gender is "a social category imposed on a sexed body" (*Gender and the Politics of History*, 1999, 32).

For Millett, "sex is biological, gender psychological, and *therefore cultural*" (*Sexual Politics*, 1970, 29-31). As Butler says, "...gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory": *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, 1990, 140). Mary Wollstonecraft argues that women are made, not born: "Everything that they see or hear serves to fix impressions, call forth

emotions, and associate ideas, that give a sexual character to the mind" (*A Vindication of the Rights of Women and A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, 124).

Mealey defines gender-identity as "one's personal sense of one's own gender, which may or may not correspond to one's sex or to the perceptions of others" (*Sex Differences: Developmental and Evolutionary Strategies*, 2000, 466). In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that, there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender (*Gender Trouble: Feminisms and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990, 25). The birth of the 'gender' is at the cost of the death of the 'culture.' The supremacy of male gender as a culturally constructed ethnic identity, that is positioned and privileged in contra-distinction to subaltern female gender who are silenced and victimized. The study examines the threatening perspective of gender equations within the patriarchal framework and explores the burden and affectation regarding the community that happens to be born in wrong gender. Michell sees patriarchy as a dominant feature with cultural rooting and ideologies, organized power structure with key positions and supporting mechanisms.

Gender equations attain threatening dimensions within framework of patriarchal dominance. Heidi Hartmann defines patriarchy as: ... set of societal relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchal relations between men and solidarity among them which enable them in turn to dominate women ... patriarchy is not simply hierarchical but hierarchy in which particular people fill particular places (*Social Class and Stratification: Classic Statements ad Theoretical Debates*, 2006, 188).

The hierarchical positions, the authoritative domination and subjugation, perpetuate the superiority of masculine gender and inferiority of feminine gender. Though femininity and womanhood are not similar, patriarchy has rendered them identical, and women marginalized from the supremacy of phallocentric order have occupied a position allied to unreason, madness, and chaos. Helene Cixous focuses attention on the patriarchal value system which deals with sexual difference that validates the hierarchical construction of binary oppositions. The biological opposition of male/ female is used to construct a series of negative female values which are imposed as definitions of the female. Where the male is equated with activity and power, female is equated with passivity and powerlessness. For meaning to be acquired by one term, it must destroy the other; as signifying supremacy is attached to the male, the battle is one in which the female must always lose. The metaphorical structures place women in the realm of negative, evil and dangerous, in need of control. The binary oppositions have been extended to the realms of gender and sexuality to circumscribe female identity and to restrict female sexuality.

Gayle Rubin's concept *sex/gender system* describes "a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention" ("The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex": *Toward on Anthropology of Women*, 1975, 165), articulates that "part of social life which is the locus of the oppression of women" ("The

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Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex": *Toward on Anthropology of Women*, 1975, 159), and defines gender as the "socially imposed division of the sexes" ("The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex": *Toward on Anthropology of Women*, 1975, 179). He recounts that gender differences are oppressive results of social interventions that dictates gender behaviours. Women are oppressed *as women* and "by having to *be* women" ("The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex": *Toward on Anthropology of Women*, 1975, 204). Feminism should aim to create a "genderless (though not sexless) society, in which one's sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does, and with whom one makes love" ("The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex": *Toward on Anthropology of Women*, 1975, 204). 'Gender is the social interpretation of sex' ("Interpreting Gender": *Signs*, 20, 1994, 81).

Nicholson calls the 'the coat-rack view' of gender: our sexed bodies are like coat racks and "provide the site upon which gender [is] constructed" ("Interpreting Gender": *Signs*, 20, 1994, 81). Gender conceives of as masculinity and femininity is superimposed upon the 'coat-rack' of sex as each society imposes on sexed bodies their cultural conceptions of how males and females should behave. This socially constructs gender differences – or the amount of femininity/masculinity of a person – upon our sexed bodies. That is, according to this interpretation, all humans are either male or female; their sex is fixed. But cultures interpret sexed bodies differently and project different norms on those bodies thereby creating feminine and masculine persons. According to Haslanger, in distinguishing sex and gender, they are separable in that one can be sexed male and yet be gendered a woman, or vice versa ("Gender and Race": (What) are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?", Nous, 34, 2000, 31-55). This means that genders (women and men) and gendered traits (like being nurturing or ambitious) are the "intended or unintended product[s] of a social practice" ("Ontology and Social Construction": *Philosophical Topics*, 23, 1995, 97).

Gender is not something one is, it is something one does; it is a sequence of acts, a doing rather than a being. And repeatedly engaging in 'feminising' and 'masculinising' acts congeals gender thereby making people falsely think of gender as something they naturally *are*. Gender only comes into being through these gendering acts: a female who has sex with men does not *express* her gender as a woman. This activity (amongst others) *makes* her gendered a woman. The constitutive acts that gender individuals create genders as "compelling illusion[s]" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory": *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, 1990, 271). Our gendered classification scheme is a *strong pragmatic construction*: social factors wholly determine our use of the scheme and the scheme fails to represent accurately any *facts of the matter* ("Ontology and Social Construction": *Philosophical Topics*, 23, 1995, 100). Butler says, woman as open-ended and "a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or end … it is open to intervention and resignification" (*Gender Trouble*, 1999, 43). Cultural conceptions about gender figure in "the very apparatus of production whereby sexes themselves are established" (*Gender Trouble*, 1999, 11).

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Young writes that, without doing so "it is not possible to conceptualize oppression as a systematic, structured, institutional process" ("Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective": *Intersecting Voices*, 1997, 17). Some take the articulation of an inclusive category of women to be the pre-requisite for an effective feminist politics that aims to conceptualise women as a group or a collective. Recent articulations of this category can be divided into those that are in *gender nominalist positions* who denies there is something women *qua* women share and that seek to unify women's social kind by appealing to something external to women; and gender realist positions that take there to be something women *qua* women share. Young identifies two broad groups of such practico-inert objects and realities: the phenomena associated with female bodies (physical facts), biological processes that take place in female bodies (menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth) and; the social rules associated with these biological processes (social rules of menstruation, for instance). Gender-coded objects and practices are pronouns, verbal and visual representations of gender, gender-coded artefacts and social spaces, clothes, cosmetics, tools and furniture. Women make up a series since their lives and actions are organised around female bodies and certain gender-coded objects. Their series is bound together passively, and the unity is "not one that arises from the individuals called women" ("Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective": *Intersecting Voices*, 1997, 32).

By contrast, Stoljar says, *woman* is a cluster concept and our attributions of womanhood pick out "different arrangements of features in different individuals" ("The Politics of Identity and the Metaphysics of Diversity": *Proceedings of the 20th World Congress of Philosophy*, 2000, 27). For Stone, any woman who challenges her subordinate status must by definition be challenging her status as a woman, even if she does not intend to … positive change to our gender norms would involve getting rid of the (necessarily subordinate) feminine gender (*An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy*, 2007, 160). Stone says, one should be able to challenge subordination without having to challenge one's status as a woman. It is also false: "because norms of femininity can be and constantly are being revised, women can be women without thereby being subordinate" (*An Introduction to Feminist Philosophy*, 2007, 162).

Gender (being a woman/a man) functions in a similar fashion and provides "the principle of normative unity" that organizes, unifies and determines the roles of social individuals (*The Metaphysics of Gender*, 2011, 73). Gender is a social position that "cluster[s] around the engendering function … women conceive and bear … men beget" (*The Metaphysics of Gender*, 2011, 40). These are women and men's socially mediated reproductive functions (*The Metaphysics of Gender*, 2011, 29) and they differ from the biological function of reproduction, which roughly corresponds to sex on the standard sex/gender distinction. Witt writes: "to be a woman is to be recognized to have a particular function in engendering, to be a man is to be recognized to have a different function in engendering" (*The Metaphysics of Gender*, 2011, 39). For Witt, the unifying role is undertaken by gender (being a woman or a man): it is a pervasive and fundamental social position that unifies and determines all other

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social positions both synchronically and diachronically. It unifies them not physically, but by providing a principle of normative unity (*The Metaphysics of Gender*, 2011, 19–20).

By 'normative unity', Witt means the following: given our social roles and social position occupancies, we are responsive to various sets of social norms. These norms are "complex patterns of behaviour and practices that constitute what one ought to do in a situation given one's social position(s) and one's social context" (*The Metaphysics of Gender*, 2011, 82). The sets of norms can conflict: the norms of motherhood can (and do) conflict with the norms of being an academic philosopher. In order for this conflict to exist, the norms are binding on a *single* social individual. Witt asks: what explains the existence and unity of the social individual who is subject to conflicting social norms? The answer is gender.

Gender is not just a social role that unifies social individuals. Witt takes it to be *the* social role as she puts it, it is *the mega social role* that unifies social agents. Gender is a mega social role if it satisfies two conditions: if it provides the principle of synchronic and diachronic unity of social individuals, and if it inflects and defines a broad range of other social roles. Gender satisfies the first in usually being a life-long social position: a social individual persists just as long as their gendered social position persists. Gender satisfies the second condition too. It inflects other social roles, like being a parent or a professional. The expectations attached to these social roles differ depending on the agent's gender, since gender imposes different social norms to govern the execution of the further social roles. Gender as opposed to some other social category, like race is not just a mega social role; it is the unifying mega social role. Witt claims that patriarchy is a social universal (*The Metaphysics of Gender*, 2011, 98). By contrast, racial categorisation varies historically and cross-culturally, and racial oppression is not a universal feature of human cultures. This account of gender essentialism not only explains social agents' connectedness to their gender, but it also provides a helpful way to conceive of women's agency — something that is central to feminist politics.

As Alcoff points out, "The very subjectivity (subjective experience of being a woman) and the very identity of women are constituted by women's position" (*Visible Identities*, 2006, 148). Alcoff holds that, there is an objective basis for distinguishing individuals on the grounds of (actual or expected) reproductive roles: *Women and men are differentiated by virtue of their different relationship of possibility to biological reproduction, with biological reproduction referring to conceiving, giving birth, and breast-feeding, involving one's body* (*Visible Identities*, 2006, 172). Since women are socially positioned in various different contexts, "there is no gender essence all women share" (*Visible Identities*, 2006, 147–8). Alcoff acknowledges that, sex/gender distinction insofar as sex difference (understood in terms of the objective division of reproductive labour) provides the foundation for certain cultural arrangements (the development of a gendered social identity). But, with the benefit of hindsight we can see that maintaining a distinction between the objective category of sexed identity and the varied and culturally contingent practices of gender does not presume an absolute distinction of the old-fashioned sort between culture and a reified nature (*Visible Identities*,

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2006, 175). That is, her view avoids the implausible claim that sex is exclusively to do with nature and gender with culture. Thus, gender mystique is a cultural imperative.

Gendered subalternity is a drawback of cultural imperatives since female identity is dipped in cultural norms. Thus, gendered subaltern-ism is a cultural symptom. Culture designs women through hegemonic discourse. What should be reformulated and rejected among culture: as Connell comments, "hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity", a single pattern of power, the "global dominance" of men over women (*Gender and Power*, 1987, 183).
Gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity. Gender is a way in which the cultural practices are designed and structured. Gender power depicts pulsating and heart-throbbing infra-human experiences within malevolent and maleficent system. Gender promotes an unconstitutional in-stigma with monolithic social structure and without an action and staunch opposition for the atrocity. The question about gender ponders to "feminine" -Stewart Clegg notes that gender power is "contingent, provisional, achieved, not given" (*Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at Work*, 2001, 23).

Gender grassroots democracy is a neologism that proposes the inseparability of the meanings and implications associated with two key concepts: *gender democracy* and *grassroots democracy*. According to Nussbaum's theory, gender is an accidental relative to essential nature of human being. She mentions gender as a dimension of women's oppressive cultural predicament that can be rectified by policy-making on the basis of normative essentialism. She does not trivialize the repressive gendering of women, but claims that policy-making is the universal solution to culturally specific repressive gender relations. She shows the ontological nature of repressive gendering in *Third world* society (*Feminists Contest Politics and Philosophy*, 2005, 216).

If the study rethinks the *gender* and interrogates the *gender mystique*, it will remain as a riddle that never resolves the conclusion, since the *re-thinking* itself is the problem that paradoxically signifies the conclusion. So, the research challenges the disputes about gender since it serves a boomerang mystique in the world.
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Lakshmi R. Nair, Research Scholar, Department of English and Foreign Languages

Research and Development Centre, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

lakshmiradakrishnan@gmail.com

D. D. Diamond Valley, Flat No: 114 G, Tower: 1,

Edachira, Kakkanad, Cochin, Kerala, Pin Code: 682030

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