

Discursive and Semiotic Approaches to Eradicate Gender Disparities with Special Reference to Sanskrit Textbooks

Kanta Galani^{a,1}, Pavan Vyas^{b,2}

^aAsst Prof Department of English, central Sanskrit University
^bAssociate professor, department of Darshan, central Sanskrit University
¹dr.kanta.galani@csu.co.in*
*Corresponding author

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।

क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥ (कठोपनिषद्, 1/3/14)

Through these words, he inspired the countrymen to come out of the darkness of ignorance, gain knowledge. Remove darkness of superstitions, perverted stereotypes, illiteracy, and indolence. He wanted his fellows to be aware of the various problems faced by society and find a way to solve them.

ABSTRACT

This research aims to come out of the ignorance with which the urban world is full of phenomena like greed, lust, hatred, discrimination, separation and so. Identity of gender and existence has totally changed; woman has become the victim of male domination and patriarchy in personal and private realms. She just needs to follow the voice of the head of the society (patriarchy) manifested in the head of the house- father, and the head of her marriage – husband and when her kids grow up, she even needs to follow the words of her own children. She is the one who never gets equality in her whole life and spends her most of life losing her existence day by day which means there is no Ardhanarishwara in the real world. How these- separations, divorces, discrimination, greed, and hatred impinged in our Indic social pulpit, is the question? It is the ignorance of taking oneself as superior and other being as inferior, caused gender gap. Gender inequality (in rights, power, work, every way) is a universal phenomenon. It is kind of hidden discrimination played against them. All nations have tried to bridge the gap, but it is not completely clogged, despite many laws and socialization, through education, textbooks conferences, lectures, seminars, Books, and many things. So, to explore the ramifications of gender disparity, this research aims at bridging the invisible gap for women and third gender onto scholarly platforms, also in reexamining our epics and Sanskrit textbooks from this point of outlook.

Keywords: discursive approaches, semiotic approaches, gender disparities

1. Introduction

The ontological perspective, social constructivism, the social order in which we perceive the world, what is right and/or wrong. Meaning is created through language. Language, then, is neither the property of the sender nor the receiver of meanings. It is the shared cultural space in which the production of meaning through language takes place (Hall 1997, p. 10). The semiotic approach which was influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure. It focused on Language- a system built on signs as images, sounds, written words. The signifier in this context is the word, image or photo of the object, and the signified is the object itself and the discursive approach influenced by Michel

Foucault (Hall 1997, p. 15), focused more on the production of knowledge and meaning. Word 'Napunsak'- third gender used for Ravana by Surpanakha signified the gender inequality and powerlessness:
राक्षसी तमुवाचेदं त्वं प्रमत्तो भविष्यसि ॥

पानासक्तः स्त्रीविजितः षण्डः सर्वत्र लक्ष्यसे ।
(अध्यात्मरामायणम्, 5/41-42)

The discursive approach shows the meaning of gender in correlation with power/knowledge in a historical perspective. So, it takes us into- what the statements about gender are, what the used rules are when speaking about gender, what we are allowed to think and say concerning the concept gender and how the

concept is dealt with in institutions, textbooks, and curriculums.

In Books, and movies women are presented as good mothers and wives. If they did not stay good mothers and housewives, they would be some way, or another punished. Happiness for a woman was described as finding a man, rearing his children and gives him pleasures and food. A common scenario often includes a story where the woman must choose between having a man and pursuing her career. But this gap is bridged through our Indic knowledge by presenting God with no gender:

न बाला न च त्वं वयस्का न वृद्धा

न च स्त्री न षण्डः पुमान्त्रैव च त्वम् ।

न च त्वं सुरो नासुरो नो नरो वा

त्वमेका परब्रह्मरूपेण सिद्धा ॥

(सुधाधारास्तोत्रम्, 07)

In Hindu mythology we have history of Gods and their relations towards humans and their lives. We have concept of Ardhanarishwara-combination of Shiva, Parvati, God, and Third Gender. So, aim to bring this symbol as an example to set our Indic knowledge as a dais to set equality between genders which are core entities (male and female) of society along with third prakriti (third gender). And how purusha and prakriti are important, interrelated and complement each other. Both have equal significance in the cosmos. Women in our rich Hindu culture have always been worshipped in the form of nine Goddesses as kali, Sati, Parvati. Moreover, Shiva is (Shav) without his (Shakti). Following shows the supreme power:

मातापितृभ्यां जगतो नमो वामार्धजानये ।

सद्यो दक्षिणदृक्पातसङ्कुचद्वामदृष्टये ॥

(कुमारसम्भवस्य सञ्जीवनीटीकायां मल्लिनाथस्य 1/1)

There are number of fiction writers as Devdutt Pattanaik, Kavita Kane, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Amish Tripathi who have been using mythological themes and issues in their writings. Devdutt Pattanaik's Myth = Mithya, a

novel illustrates the story of Shiva and Shankar, forms of gods, goddess, and the myth about their attributes. The short stories Shikhandi and other Tales dealt with the theories of LGBT, feminism, and mythology. And themes which shows equality in gender:

1. How and why did Shikhandini become Shikhandi (WTM)?

3. How and why Vishnu became a woman to enchant gods and demons?

4. How did Arjuna become a eunuch?

5. Shiva who included the female in his body. (Ardhnariashwara)

So, all the above shows all genders are one and equal which is very much presented in our Sanskrit textbooks.

शुक्ररक्तसमायोगाद्योन्यां कुप्यति मारुतः ॥

दौर्बल्याच्चापि शुक्रस्य रसहीनतयाऽथवा ।

यदि प्रादुर्भवेद्गर्भस्तस्मिन्काले यदृच्छया ॥

षण्डः सञ्जायते तेन वातोपहतपौरुषः ।

षण्डा वापि महीपाल हस्तिनी नात्र संशयः ॥

(हस्त्यायुर्वेदः, 49-51)

The above quote from हस्त्यायुर्वेदः,49-51 presents the birth of third gender which is natural, and it is not their fault. It is natural, so how on the level of society we are doing injustice by creating gender gaps. The vast and harsh image of women and third gender in Indian society is prevailing in contemporary Indian society. The fact is that we have been celebrating Mother's Day, Women's Day, and Daughter's Day to make them realize their existence but on the other hand they are being controlled by the rigid customs laid down by the male hegemonic system. Villagers use the quote like "Beti and Roti chupa ke Rakhi jaati hai", this conventional thought gives us the sense that woman is a part of jewellery that need to be hidden in their houses, then how they can come forward in real life to achieve their targets and identity.

1. They were identified by their body parts and treated as an object of lust.

2. If she has a liberal mind, then she is believed to be available for anything.
3. Concept of Pativrata, Dharma and Sati are only followed by women.
4. Widow re-marriage considers her as a lustful lady.
5. The burden of all ills and sins referred to women.
6. A patriarchal social frame has been developed to analyse her, and with the notion of this they start dominating her.
7. Oppression of women is seen as natural.
8. Study of Ardhanarishwara as a Symbol of Gender Equality in the Contemporary World.
9. Third Gender: rejection of entry directly or indirectly at some public places like Hospitals, Hotels, Malls, Restaurants, Dance Floors, Theatres, Shopping Complexes.
10. Associating third gender with child nabbing and prostitution.
11. Worst condition of Muslim women and illiterate section of society.
12. Women have the lower status in the social hierarchy.

According to B.N. Raveesh, 'Ardhanarishwara Concept: Brain and Psychiatry', says, "This unity of two biological opposite sexes the universe completes with their energies." (Raveesh, 112) He by adding the images of Ardhanarishwara expressed the hermaphrodite in this context by saying how God is gender less or can be man or woman or neutral as per their needs and today it comes under queer theory. Amish Tripathi's *the Immortals of meluha*, deals with the trilogy of shiva. Chitra Banerjee has given the voices to characters like Draupadi and Sita, the novel *Palace of Illusions* is a beautiful description of Draupadi with a strong and positive outlook into the present world. She has also shown the journey of woman from identity to empowerment, and questions at men's actions that time and reactions of contemporary masculine readers. Kavita Kane, being a re-teller and narrator, has re-visited the great mythological epics to represent voices of minor characters of Ramayana and Mahabharata like Urmila, Menaka, Surpanakha, and Satyawati and voiced the issues of feminism, gender discrimination and insecurity based on looks and skin, color, honor

killing and taboo on sexuality. She remarked "I always believed that mythology can be a huge canvas for contemporary thought. It is not telling us some old tales, as so carelessly assumed, of gods and goddess, but of man his follies and fallacies." (Kane, 73) It signifies that retelling is not around the male of the mythologies narrated earlier rather it focuses on the female characters and their point of views towards their surroundings.

Outputs and outcomes of the research:

- Nep-2020 focuses on holistic development. So, the outcome would be more practical understanding, creating unbiased smooth milieu.
- Efforts would be to the present year and by re-shaping and contemporizing the prewritten classic texts.
- The retelling not only emphasizes on asserting the Study of Ardhanarishwara as a Symbol of Gender Equality in the Contemporary World but identity of woman rather it gives efforts to erase the thin line between mythology and past.
- The output of this research is to create the equal social status for all genders whether it's male, female or third gender. Not to take third gender in neutral category.
- Mythology, antique narrations, folk tales are the reflections of historical culture and traditional base of a society including the topic of re-telling. So, our focus would be to drill that into students.
- Design a certificate course for them which will help them to get basic knowledge.
- To create the environment in our homes, school which set the mind sets of equal opportunities?
- To give equal powers and rights to daughters.
- Let the Third Gender be free from this special category. I will try my best to help them get education in schools, colleges, university admission as now there is column of Third Gender also.
- The social stigma, poor treatment, and denial of medical amenities create reluctance in their attitudes to access

educational facilities and health care mechanisms.

- So, the outcome would be to help them to avail these all easily. Third genders have always been treated with great respect and had notable mention in Ancient Hindu Scriptures as well as the greatest epics of India like Mahabharata and Ramayana.
- Mindsets need to be changed and that will be with the help of proper guidance and counseling.
- Male view of looking at girls as material or objects need to be changed.
- The outcome would be to change the mindset as has existed since ages in our society. What are their rights and how they can avail themselves of those rights? I have a target to bring works on third gender and their writings into the mainstream society and literature.
- The rights guaranteed under the Bill are rights to equality, rights to life, rights to personal liberty, rights to freedom of speech, to live in a community, integrity, along with protection from torture or cruelty and abuse, violence, and exploitation.
- Some of the other rights are Education, employment and social security and health. But how these rights should be implemented and availed by them is the goal of this project.
- How signs and symbols used in our epics play an important role.
- Make scholars understand semiotic and discursive outlook of our Sanskrit texts and their usage in our day-to-day life.
- And my dictum is very well expressed through this verse:

गच्छन् पिपीलको याति योजनानां शतान्यपि
|
अगच्छन् वैनतेयस्तु पदमेकं न गच्छति ॥
(सुभाषित)

The moving ant covers hundreds of plans, but the non-moving Garuda can't move a step forward.

There are no less people in our society who have expertise in their respective fields. Their educational and professional qualifications cannot be doubted. But they devote all their energy and efficiency mostly to self-

interest. Dedication to social responsibilities is inadequate in them. If there is no dedication, then there is no step towards the interest of society. As a result, society is not able to make the desired progress.

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