Masculinity And The Impact Of Traditions On Gender Equality

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Background information

While male stereotypes concerning gender equality can be analysed, they must not be controlled in seclusion. Generally, the male stereotypes, or to be precisely called the masculinities, often function as large structures and these structures are later on described as Gender (West & Zimmerman, 2009, pg.112-122). Based on specified traits, gender is responsible for identifying and distinguishing between males and females in society. However, the differences and the specifications related to the identification traits of both sexes are the results of gendering in particular (Lauritzen & Pérez Liñán, 2014, pg. 215-216). This literature analysis will compare the two literary studies, Iron John and Sonny's Blues, addressing a similar problem related to masculinity and gender studies.

Prominent Effects of Masculinity on the Society

In societies, people usually differentiate the roles of men and women as they grow up. A gender role is particularly the equal responsibility of men and women in society. The system of patriarchy or male-dominant society, however, can bring in various challenges for both women and children. A few superior relations between the genders are Limiting the social lives of females, the Dependency of women on men, and not being supported for education.

Gender-equality within the Society

Establishing a gender-equal society requires a change in institutional values as well as a change in personal conduct and daily life. Above all, support in the social context alongside significant support from the males of the society is needed. Moreover, the gender inequalities in all the economic assets, cultural authorities and politics need to be reformed in gender-related issues. The reason why these reforms are required is that until now, men have been in charge of controlling most of the resources and assets that are linked to providing justice to women (Connell, 2005, pg.1801-1825).

The two chosen studies

In the past few decades, most of the developed countries have raised issues regarding gender equality practices. This has been done to deal with the issues about the masculine system in societies. For this review, one of the chosen studies is Iron John: the book was published in 1990 by Robert Bly. It became a best seller in the early years after its publication due to the idea behind it, and it waved off several limitations from society. The book became popular because it proposed simple solutions for the increasing problems across different cultures. After this, a movement developed in the United States that addressed different problems, including sexuality, gender identification, and domestic relationships (Wacquant & Schwalbe, 1997, pg. 1486).

Iron John, by Robert Bly, is a masterpiece. It has been written beyond the perspectives of myths and has described the legends. It is all about taking the men to the times back then and to the base of their masculinity, thus indicating away and finding out the differences between the old man and the sensitive new age man. For many years, it has been described differently. However, in a nutshell, it can be described as a story of the hunter taking a challenge from the King and going to the part of a forest where men usually don't come back from. The story believes that psychological disorders and addictions can mask the dark side of society.

According to Bly, the thinking of the modern Age regarding peace, unity, harmony, and higher concerns grabs a dangerous point of view about naive men. As usual, we consider ourselves slaves, slaves of others, and sometimes slaves of our thoughts. However, it is not the truth; it is the myths. Myths are the barriers that always hinder us from achieving true happiness and joy. The actual way that can help us find ourselves and achieve true happiness is by focusing on one precious thing (Tacey, 1991). This precious thing can be different for everyone, for someone it can be another person, for someone it can be a quest, an idea, or a question. Whatever it is, the decision to follow the search after getting to know the quest is the mature decision a real person can take in his life. It is when we make our choices clearly that the King inside us gets aroused, and the release of power in a final way takes place.

The reawakening of the warrior inside oneself

According to Bly, warrior energy is present in every young man. Everyone has a basic instinct to have this energy in them. However, this energy needs to be fed and honoured or challenged for the sake of getting expressed truly. It has to be used in the right way by the person possessing it. The writer believes that if the power is used righteously, it can become a source of enlightenment for the one possessing it. The image possessing the warrior energy in Bly's writing addresses the importance of civilised man in the modern age.

Hunger for the masculinity

The male ceremonial rituals are of deep interest, and they are indeed a forced discovery of the dark side of society. Women cannot make a change or initiate the males of society. In almost all civilised cultures, a boy has been taken from a woman who can manage to pursue her life afterwards. Modern society, however, has different ideas and points of view (Tacey, 1991). It can provide freedom to the teenage years and can give them a chance to manifest their wild behaviour alongside their rudeness towards their parents.

It has been discovered that thousands of men have been raised in an environment surrounding feminine energy, yet this cannot be assumed to be a problem. However, boys are required to get masculine energy as well. Men are emotionally weaker than women. They start to think more about their families as they get older. In particular, they start to think of the father's side since they are about to enter the Father's house themselves by leaving the light and comfort they have been given all their childhood and teenage years. Bly gave an example of Shakespeare's famous novel Hamlet to describe this thought; he says that the novel itself is a metaphor for the process of changing the sides, i.e. moving from the mother's side to the father's side.

Colours of the life

Iron John has described the colours of life beautifully. It is a story of a prince who was disguised as a knight. In the story, he rode a red horse, then a white horse, and then a black horse. All of the three colours symbolically represent the progression of man's life. The red colour symbolizes the peak of his emotions and uncontrolled sexuality in his teenage years, the whiteness symbolizes his struggles and the laws imposed on him and the black colour, at last, symbolizes the maturity he possesses for balancing out humanity and compassion.

An inheritance that sometimes remains uncollected results in the missing of the point of view from the previous civilisations. Iron John, by Robert Bly, suggested genuine masculinity and how it has been changed in the modern age. It also reflects upon the effects that men impose on women and the rest of the people in society as well. In conclusion, to the study provided by the writer, those men laughing at the ideas of the book probably are the ones who need to understand the idea behind it the most. The men who have the least developed self-examination powers are the ones who are on the verge of destruction. Women, on the contrary, should be able to welcome all the efforts that might be taken to revive the spirit of masculinity, which is more powerful rather than destructive (*Iron John | Robert Bly | Summary & Review | Tom Butler-Bowdon*, 2021).

The second chosen study was the short story Sonny's Blue by James Baldwin. It was published initially in 1957. It spanned over a decade and addressed a couple of topics, including sexuality, racism, and male dominance. It has been considered an important accession to the literary work done by the writer (GradeSaver, n.d.). Sonny's Blues are not explained by Sonny himself but by his brother, who is

the unnamed narrator of the story. The story is not just about Sonny's musical journey but also how music leads to the reconciliation of the two brothers. With the idea of explaining brotherly love and not just solely focusing on describing the story of a person, Sonny's Blues is a magical narration.

Background of the story

The narrator (Sonny's brother), tries to connect pieces of time and informs about the imprisonment of Sonny alongside shared past. Later on, it jumps into the present for the climax of the story. The technique the writer uses to describe the story provides a detailed description of the chronological times given to the reader's senses, making all the events immediate and sensible. The accumulation of suffering throughout the lives of both brothers brings relief, as well as stress and tension between the brothers.

Music-the way of expression

The only way to express himself for Sonny was music. Throughout the story, he struggles to speak to his brother, who is not there to listen to him every time. Sonny's brother rejected his passion and his wish to leave Harlem. However, when he truly heard his Brother Sonny, he witnessed a sense of revival in his thoughts. Sonny's music allowed his brother to understand the struggles he had been facing, and as a result, he was able to understand his struggles, too. Dramatically, the illustrator's moment of discovery occurred while he was listening to Sonny's music.

Suffering and the darkness of the world

In Sonny's Blues, suffering is filled with music. The darkness of the world triggers one's suffering. The story narrates that the darkness is everywhere and is inescapable. Sonny's addiction, the death of Grace, and the murder of Sonny's uncle all supported the idea of suffering and darkness. It is suffering that allows a person to understand the suffering of other people and can help create compassionate feelings for each other. The narrator confessed in the story that until he lost his daughter and went through the same pain as his brother, he was unable to understand the suffering of his brother. Furthermore, suffering can be channelled in different ways and can carry tremendous potential in itself. For the production of art, suffering can be called an integral factor.

It has been taken as an idea from the story that if suffering is the representation of darkness rather than redemption, it could be a representation of light. The illustrator has explained the redemptive nature of the story Sonny's Blues by describing them as the only light present in the darkness. Women, on the contrary, play an important role in Sonny's blues. It is seen in the story that women can support the relationship between the two brothers.

Although it is mentioned rarely, racism is also present throughout the story. The community-based

darkness leading to suffering was mainly due to the presence of racism. Depicting racism, the death of the narrator's uncle is given in the story. The death, in a violent way, made both of his parents traumatized alongside the narrator. Salvation was also seen and accepted as a religious theme in Sonny's Blues. The moment of redemption was precipitated in the mind of the narrator after the death of his daughter, Grace. It was when his daughter's loss made him realize the suffering of his estranged brother and the ultimate understanding of the musical journey of his brother masking his suffering. The redemption of the narrator was religious as well as spiritual in nature.

Sonny's Blues provides an understanding of how black masculinity has remained on the verge of extinction by other races. Men can be called gatekeepers for ensuring gender equality in a region or society. However, the question here is whether they want to make changes or reforms and open the gates to implement these major changes or not. How are gender roles responsible for affecting society? To answer these questions and assess the current situations, it is important to study various recent discussions about the policies being settled worldwide regarding the upper-stated problem beyond different cultures. It is also necessary to understand the politics behind the movements of the masculine system, the interests of men in relations based on gender roles and the emerging shreds of evidence behind the research about the constructive social masculinity programmes (Connell, 2005, pg.1801-1825).

Conclusion of the story

The story provides its conclusion when the narrator realises his brother's stance. The music helps Sonny to stay free and avoid suffering. Moreover, the narrator recognizes that the blues can help people in following their decision and their judgement. Prejudice is wrong, yet elders' advice can be followed to avoid prejudice. The valuable experiences our elders learn and share with us are the most important things for us. They can make us live our lives in a better way. One can choose to listen and pursue the advice of the elders to make better choices and better decisions in his life.

Final word

Women and men behave and coordinate in particular ways. These particular ways are the result of their gender-based identities. It is important to understand that sex and gender are two different things (Edwards, 2015). Women initiated the foundation of gender equality. The reason for this initiation was obvious since women are the ones who face gender inequality by the main patterns of patriarchy in most of the societies around the globe. Men, on the contrary, are usually involved in the reformation of the gender-equality. Therefore, it can be considered that both genders work for opposite purposes. Gender inequalities are present in all aspects of modern society, operating at all levels of human experiences, from culture to economic arrangements and to the relationships or emotional values on individual levels (Gavriel Ansara, 2011, pg. 284-289).

The two chosen studies provide different perspectives on masculinity and gender. One told the importance of power, and the other revealed the importance of suffering. However, both suffering and power are important for building a better human being, or men, to be precise. However, there is no doubt that societies can be ruined if only women remain on the verge of losing themselves and taking up the sufferings provided by the men in their lives. Both stories narrated the importance of equality in cultures and societies to promote gender equality and gender roles.

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