



Gender is power, power is gender

Dishari Sarkar

On 10th October the whole world observed and celebrated a very special and crucial day in this contemporary scenario that is world mental health day. To begin with the words of Judith Lorber it can be said that illness is not only physical or psychological but also a sociological phenomenon. In third world countries like us, especially where the society is still not free from pre-conceived prejudices the understanding of illness and sensitization of it are shaped by moral-societal values, socio-cultural norms attached to one's sex and gender. For instance, even after the remarkable progress in medical science and socio-cultural studies, homosexuality is still being considered as mental illness or disorder and lesbians, gays are being sent to rehabs and psychological hospitals for treatment that is supposed to cure them by making them heterosexuals. Heteronormativity in patriarchy has been very dominant. Feminine mental health condition has been ignored from time immemorial. Menstruation related health has been ignored and continuously under denial as it is drenched in stigma, prejudice and shame in society. Medical sociologists have long stated that women were never taken in account for medical trial. The action speaks for itself. There is ample evidence for not being inclusive when it comes to another gender's health rather than men. This kind of unequal treatment definitely calls for a better understanding of gender relations and power dynamics in society through intersectional feminist lens.

In order to grow an analysis on gender related powers evitable in society the basic understanding of gender should be raised. Gender often gets confused with sex, even gender and sex often are used interchangeably. The distinction between gender and sex should be analyzed first in order to proceed further. In understanding what signifies sex and what signifies gender the gender and sex role should not go unexamined. Gender is the social construction, where sex is biological. The sexual organ you are assigned with at the time of one's birth doesn't always match their sexuality. According to Judith Lorber, gender constructs maleness and femaleness. And they are supposed to get attracted to each other in the hetero-normativity. Henceforth



subject to homophobia. However, after the brief introduction of the theory of Judith Butler changed the perception of sex after she called 'sex' also a part of socio-cultural construction by undertaking and implementing the Lacanian stance. The identity politics of gender in transcultural patriarchy has been rigorously repressive toward feminine identity.

Now the importance of Feminist and gender studies have been of great importance to understand the irregularities of gender dynamics and systemic misogyny and repression of women in cultural context. The oppression of women not only is limited or confined to systemic or cultural repression but also psycho-social, institutional and of course educational. Power comes from within it appropriating the systemic oppression in the name of culture, ritual, mythology etc. talking of the importance of feminist perspective should demand some socio- political problems causing India a grave need of this perspective to reach out the root of it.

The recent encounter of the country with rape of a dalit woman has shaken the country to the core. However according to the newspaper reporting the rape was followed by several other rapes in different places of the country. Now there are different narratives around rape and why do rapes happens under the patriarchal spectrum. One of them is the choice of dresses women choose to wear to be blamed. However, it is completely different than what women wear has nothing to do with rape. According to Susan Brownmiller rape is about power and to keep women in the state of fear. It is imperative to understand rape or rape culture to have a clear picture. Rape is all about the power, the superiority. It is not about lust but rather to punish. In the documentary named India's daughter, released after the Nirbhaya case, the interviews of the accused rapists showed the world that it is about the rape culture and to state power of masculinity over femininity. The rape culture and power reproduce themselves again and again to be pertinent in the society.

The social reproduction theory states clearly that the power reproduces itself through the everyday go to go sex roles assigned to specific genders. The demolish of these enablers can only break the chain of the systemic oppression. Gender is everywhere, creating a web of system of its own producing power politics. Gender is about power. Power has always been about the role play of gender.