

CALL FOR PAPERS

A TWO-DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

GENDER PERFORMATIVITY AND IDEOLOGY

DATE: 18th and 19th February, 2019



Organized by
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ABOUT THE THEME

Ideology is a set of beliefs or perspectives that usually represents the interest of the influential and powerful group. This particular definition of 'ideology' was earlier applied by the Marxists to study the disparity between the different social classes based on their economic status. But now it is applicable wherever there is unequal exercise of domination. The ideological gender structure that privileges men as a social group over female can be taken as an instance for contemplation. On ruminating over the social practices, one finds that they are hardly neutral in nature. All social practices are in fact gendered. One just has to turn to 'discourse' to see how it plays a significant role in sustaining the patriarchal social order. For instance, in English language the male noun 'man' and pronoun 'he' has been given generic status. But in the case of the woman, the pronoun 'she' refers only to one particular sex and that is the 'female' sex. This is indicative of the disparity of power shared between the two sexes which render man to be visible and woman invisible.

In the study of literature and social sciences, gender is studied as a human science which is inclusive for the study of sex. Perceptually, when 'sex' is a biological concept, 'gender' is a social concept. From the feminist perspective, gender is divided into two classes, male and female. And based on their physiological differences the society has imposed social dichotomy of labour and human traits on them. In this way sex is gendered and also structured. This explains why bodies become bearers of culture. The two bodies identified as 'male' and 'female' have meaning only because these meanings are required to establish the gender structure. The moment a baby is born, its sex determines the roles that the society assigns to it. From the colour of the clothes to the kind of toys that are chosen for the baby are indications of gendered identities being constituted in time, i.e. through stylized repetition of acts. It is interesting to note that gender ideology is hegemonic in nature because apparently it doesn't appear as domination and hence is largely accepted by the community. Ideology is perpetuated by general consent and the strategy is to re-enact the ideological assumptions that seem to be a routine, regular and normal exercise. This explains why the difference between the two sexes is seen as natural and desirable, though this power structure disempowers women. And this overt manifestation of power is dissipated through various institutions such as religion, law, education, culture, movies, discourse, clothes, gestures and other symbolic social signs.

But the hegemony of the gender ideology is also resisted and contested. The fact that there are masculine women and effeminate men, whose nature deviates from the normal and appropriate gendered traits; there occurs a rupture in the fixed gender ideology. Most societies are typically heterosexual. It is therefore natural to socially privilege heterosexual women over lesbian women or a homosexual. By discriminating the latter, they are further marginalised. Historically the silence of the feminists on the heterosexual normative assumptions of family created a space for the Queer Theory to emerge. It occupies a counter-hegemonic position that challenges the dominant cultural forms. Its major occupation is to redeem what is considered abhorrent and normalise queer which is a very difficult task. Despite the Hon'ble Supreme Court's verdict on section 377 on 6th Sept. 2018, the LGBT community of India still continues to fear of discrimination which is legitimized by the censorious moral and religious beliefs that are further justified by the lack of critical contestations.

However, the proposal for conducting the Seminar will explore new avenues in the changing prospective of gender identity and gender performativity. By arranging different plenary lectures, organizing different sessions for presentation of the papers by scholars; the students and scholars of Literature will be benefitted. The lectures and debates by resource persons will also enlarge the scope of knowledge on the focus area. The seminar will provide enough scope for the students, scholars, and faculty members of the departments.

