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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### SHAKESPEARE'S AS YOU LIKE IT: A POSTMODERN STUDY OF GENDER

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#### Abstract

William Shakespeare in *As You Like It* highlights the gender roles in the society. Gender is developed by society. It is not natural. The society assigns roles to distinct gender. This study investigated the gender roles present in *As You Like It* and deconstructs the specific gender roles through the postmodern study of gender. This study focuses on the distinctive roles associated with the dressing style and language of man and woman. This study also investigates the presence of homosexuality. Besides, this study explores the shifting nature of identity and androgyny. This is a qualitative study which is explorative in nature. Analytical and close-reading method have been used to conduct the research. Besides, critical discourse analysis has been applied. William Shakespeare reveals the difference in the roles performed by gender through the disguise of Rosalind. The dressing style of man gives Rosalind the power to act as a man. The discourse differs in case of man and woman. The acts like homosexuality which are not approved by the society cannot be performed freely. Besides, the disguise of Rosalind and her subsequent actions portray the presence of androgyny and the idea that gender is not fixed. Shakespeare subverts the stereotypical performances of gender through Rosalind.

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#### Introduction:-

From the beginning of time, people have been allotted specified roles. The assigned roles of men and women differ from each other. Thus, they are being categorized as man and woman through the roles they perform. This difference between the assigned roles persisted during the time of the Renaissance also. The worth, social desires, legitimate status, and privileges of citizenship contrasted incredibly between the genders just as among the classes. These sexual orientation jobs can be distinguished through cautious readings of the writings created all through the Renaissance.

For a lady, an open notoriety was disgraceful, a definite indication of indecency and outrage. Ladies were rejected from any situation of important expert in any domain of society. Men were even esteemed for their capacity to arrange an item or being as wonderful. Ladies, in this way, were frequently esteemed for their physical beauties. A clear distinction is made between man and woman. Since man is invested with mind, judgment, and a psyche practically divine, in the patriarchal society women were seen with satisfying expressions of love, not with any feeling of worth other than their physical highlights. Ladies were additionally esteemed for characteristics that characterize them as compliant and inactive.

*As You Like It* by William Shakespeare is a pastoral comedy based on Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590). It is mainly a love story between the two protagonists Rosalind and Orlando. It highlights the connection between affection, power and the development of gender. The disguise of Rosalind as a male demonstrates the shifting of identity. Again, her relation with Celia and Phebe, and with Orlando as a man raises question on the issue of homosexuality.

Rosalind is one of Shakespeare's generally captivating, clever, wise, and adorable female characters. She is the encapsulation of Elizabethan womanliness: lovely, virtuous, and altruistic; but then she can rise above conventional sexual orientation limits to turn into an incredible manly figure, permitting Shakespeare to raise doubt about the genuine idea of gender and personality.

Nayar (2010) demonstrates the postmodern view of gender in the writings of Judith Butler. He states, "postmodern theories of gender argue that gender is not a fixed and stable category across the world. Gender, like a text, is a performance, the playing out of roles, that has to be repeated." (2010) Clothing, mannerisms, speech and language are all signs that define and declare gender roles in the society and cultural context.

Butler (1990) argued that gender was a performance or act rather than being a set of fixed and stable values. This performance of gender is social because it is the society who enacts, validates and accepts the roles. One is punished, if one fails to perform according to the conventions of the society. Gender and its meaning is developed through the repeated performances.

Alyahya (2014) states that postmodern feminism is one of the ideas that were conceived because of rehashed female perceivability in postmodernism and postmodern show so far as that is concerned. It has been disclosed to be a methodology as opposed to an idea that shows the route for how one should approach the women's activist hypothesis (Phelps, 2006). Appignanesi and Garratt (1995) really clarified that in managing the women's activist hypothesis, postmodern feminism unites postmodern and post-structuralist speculations and subsequently makes another worldview that moves past polarities of liberal women's feminism and radical women's feminism. Generally, the embodiment of postmodern feminism is found by and by as essayists make a common intrigue that investigates the ramifications of social practices and different voices (Ermath, 1992). As far as social practice, postmodern feminism is viewed as a part of woman's rights that features the spot of sex or sexual orientation, recognizing it as an idea that is developed through language (Wall, 2008). Kennedy has anyway addressed the predispositions given postmodern feminism when it is utilized to delineate the development of sex, expressing that postmodern feminism has just indicated how female gender is built through language.

Chandra (2015) highlights that Shakespeare's *As You Like It* precisely mirror the possibility that a person's personality can be picked effectively by them. In spite of the fact that each individual play various specific roles in the course of their life, identity is fluid and malleable. The topic of mixed up personality has been unequivocally obvious in some of Shakespeare's plays, especially the comedies, as has that of deterrents in the way of satisfaction of adoration. He utilizes mask or disguises as a departure from the fixed identity of the characters. This disguise often induced comic impact. It was the sixteenth century development of expanded feeling of reluctance and personality, prompting individuals making a picture for themselves, that affected Shakespeare's composition of this play.

Dadri and Kalan (2014) also question the gender roles in *As You Like It*. They focus the study on the gender roles prevalent in the Elizabethan society. In the Elizabethan society, men bear the responsibility of protecting women who are considered as the weaker vessels. Rosalind of *As You Like It* is an epitome of Elizabethan renaissance. She is intelligent, witty. Again, at the same time submissive to the patriarchal society. She does not go against the patriarchal order.

Liu (2013) demonstrated the prevalent sexual politics in *As You Like It*. She emphasizes the role of dressing style in the performance of social roles by men and women. She analyzes both the feminine and masculine roles played by Rosalind along with the activities of Orlando. She draws a line of distinction between sex and gender while conducting the study. Sex is biological. Whereas, gender is constituted by the society. She highlights on the issue of gender in the play.

It can be seen that there are a few researches on the concept of gender and identity in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Though a few studies have been conducted on the concept of gender in *As You Like It*, there is hardly any study on *As You Like It* from the postmodern perspective of gender. Therefore, in order to understand gender it is necessary to study gender from the postmodern view-point.

This paper aims to conduct a postmodern study of gender in *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare. Thus, the objectives of this paper are:

1. To study the different dressing style of men and women and the roles associated with it.
2. To study the discourse of man and woman.
3. To trace the issue of homosexuality and heterosexuality.
4. To identify androgyny and the shifting of identity

**Roles Associated with Dressed as Man and Woman:**

In *As You Like It*, Jacques states, "All the world's a stage, And every man and woman merely players" (Shakespeare, 1926, 2. 7. 140-141). This statement demonstrates that in this society everybody needs to perform different roles. Specific stereotyped roles are assigned to men and women. Identity and gender are commonly considered as fixed.

When Rosalind escapes into the forested areas of Arden for security, she camouflages herself as an appealing little youngster, Ganymede, to evade attackers and criminals. While dressed as a man, Rosalind is capable of applying power and role which she did not have as a lady.

Rosalind's disguise as man is considerably more critical than Celia's, for Celia stays female in her disguise as *Aliena* and is in this way to a great extent latent. Hence, Celia must play the role of a damsel in distress who needs to be rescued by a man. In the forest, when Celia starts to become anxious, Rosalind says, "I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat; therefore courage, good *Aliena*" (Shakespeare, 1926, 2. 4. 6-9). Through these lines Rosalind grasps her manly roles. Individuals in the sixteenth century were confined to their conventional gender roles. For instance, ladies were 'The Angel in the House' and men applied authority over 'the weaker vessel'. Rosalind's change of her social job accompanies her difference in dress. As she is currently dressed as a man, critic Payal Khanna in *These Disguised Women* states that she should "follow the male code of behaviour" (cited in Mondal, 2019).

She realizes that she is permitted to do things, for example, express feelings and cry when she's dressed as a female, however not when she's dressed as a male. At the end of the day, her activities and words were directed by what dress she wore, what name she was called, and the entirety of that depended on the character she took. Additionally, while Rosalind was under the personality of a male, she was permitted to offer guidelines to Orlando on the most proficient method to court a lady and be increasingly mindful.

In the book *Desire and Anxiety: The Circulation of Sexuality in Shakespearian Drama*, Valerie Traub calls the characters, "the crossed-dressed heroine who elicits and enjoys multiple erotic investments" (Traub, 1992). The dressing or disguise of man gives the liberty to perform the roles associated with man in the society. However, when Rosalind changes back to her woman's clothing, she needs to act in passive and nonsexual ways.

On the first date with Orlando, he arrives late. Seeing the late arrival of Orlando, Rosalind becomes anxious and says, "Never talk to me. I will weep" (Shakespeare, 1926, 3. 4. 1). Then Celia reminds her that she is now playing the role of a man stating "but yet have the grace to consider that tears do not become a man" (Shakespeare, 1926, 3. 4. 2-3). Hence, she should maintain the grace of man.

When Oliver brings the bloody napkin of Orlando along with the news of his being hurt, Rosalind starts to cry. She faints. At that time, Oliver says, "Be of good cheer, youth. You a man? You lack a man's heart" (Shakespeare, 1926, 4. 3. 162-163). This shows how a man should act. In the superior male-society, it is forbidden for man to be emotional. They cannot express their feeling of sadness through weeping. Weeping is being considered as a girly thing. Hence, from the childhood men are being taught not to cry like woman. No matter what they have to perform the role of being bold and strong.

Again, Rosalind dresses as a man because she is taller than Celia. Rosalind says, "Were it not better, because that I am more than common tall, That I did suit me all points like a man?" (Shakespeare, 1926, 1. 3. 112-113) This again shows the common expectation of the society. Generally, man should be taller and stronger than woman. It is hardly seen that a man is shorter than his wife. On the other hand, woman should be beautiful, soft, delicate in order to get accepted in the society.

**Discourse:**

As per postmodern feminism, sexual orientation is to a great extent created from the accustomed discourse. Sexual orientation is in this manner neither characteristic nor intrinsic. Rather, sexual orientation or gender is established by the manner in which one speak, make pictures and present oneself to other people.

When disguised as a man, Rosalind speaks actively. After Rosalind, while masked as Ganymede, hated Phoebe, Phoebe sent Rosalind a searing letter, plainly affronted that her affection was so easily excused. Subsequent to perusing the letter, Rosalind tells Silvius, who conveyed the letter to Rosalind, that she cannot accept a lady composed such a cruelly worded letter. According to the rules of the patriarchal, women should be submissive towards men. The language of women should not offend men. Whereas, the language of man can be commanding and aggressive.

In the epilogue of the play, Rosalind quits utilizing her mask to convey one final arrangement of lines to the crowd. She says, "It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue, but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue" (Shakespeare, 1926, 5. 4. 194) Rosalind calls attention to that normally a male, not female, character gives the last epilogue.

Rosalind's strength and trust in Arden are contradictory to her previous meekness and vulnerability. In Elizabethan theater and culture, the specific gender roles and identity played a significant role. However, through Rosalind Shakespeare subverted the traditional gender roles.

**Homosexuality and Heterosexuality:**

In the society, generally homosexual love and attachment is forbidden. There are rules of punishment in some societies for committing homosexual love. The homosexual lovers are being criticized by the society. Hence, they fear to openly express their real feelings. In *As You Like It*, the forbidden homosexual love can be seen between Rosalind and Celia, Rosalind and Phebe, and Ganymede (concealed male identity of Rosalind) and Orlando.

Celia is deeply affectionate towards her cousin Rosalind. When Duke Frederick accuses Rosalind as a traitor in Act 1 Scene 3, Celia defends her saying,

"If she be a traitor, Why, so am I. We still have slept together, Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat together, And wheresoever we went, like Junos swans Still we went coupled and inseparable." (Shakespeare, 1926, 1. 3. 68-72)

In the above lines, Celia expresses her deep bond with Rosalind. They did many things together like sleeping, learning, eating. Wherever they went, they went together. She compared themselves with the swan couples of Junos. Junos, according to Roman mythology, is the goddess of love. Her chariot is being drawn by swans. The swans symbolize love. Hence, the lines stated by Celia reveals her homosexual love towards Rosalind. Celia even flees to the forest with Rosalind leaving behind the comforts of palace life.

The name Rosalind receives when masked as a man is likewise huge in this setting as it conveys solid gay undertones. Ganymede was customarily the name of a delightful young boy. He was the lover of Jove (Jupiter) who is the Roman ruler of divine beings. He supplanted the spouse of Jove. In Shakespeare's time it alluded to male prostitute or youthful male admirer of an elderly person.

Phebe feels attracted to Rosalind. She falls in love with Rosalind because of her beautiful lips and physical appearance which expresses the feminine features of Rosalind. However, the homosexual feelings of Phebe are being rejected by Rosalind. Rosalind says, "I will marry you if ever I marry woman, and I'll be married tomorrow" (Shakespeare, 1926, 5. 2. 105). In England, female sexuality was unsuitable due to the male centric structure.

Though the play demonstrates homosexual feelings, at the end of the love it advocates heterosexual love and marriage. The marriage of Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver, Silvius and Phebe portray the dominance and victory of heterosexual love over homosexual love which is being restricted in the society.

### **Androgyny and the Shifting of Gender:**

In the city, everybody is who they ought to and are required to be. Everything changes with their arrival at the forest of Arden. Men long for consideration and warmth from the ladies they love. Whereas, the ladies are solid and control circumstances. The changing of Rosalind into solid and fearless Ganymede, controlling the circumstances around her reveals the existence of androgyny in the play. According to androgyny, in each individual both male and female traits exist. If there was no androgyny in this play, Rosalind would have stayed a lady with no power over the unfolding occasions. Hence, As You Like It in the words of critic Gay is “a vital exploration of gender, the male and the female within us all” (cited in Liu, 2013). The critic Gay highlighted Arden “a realm where you can dress up and change your gender, change your way of life” (cited in Liu, 2013). However, one cannot act according to one’s wish in the society.

The woodland encourages these progressions and pundit Vinita Chandra composes that maybe the most significant quality of the timberland is that it permits individuals to act naturally, to settle on decisions that decide their jobs, capacities and relations with one another as opposed to have these constrained on them. This indicates the artificial social norms compared to the free nature.

The significance of the title comes up corresponding to this topic. The title As You Like It additionally suggests the characters’ capacity in the play to go about as they like-embracing the personality (or sexual orientation even) they wish to. To cite Raquel Cepeda’s well known words that resound firmly with this play, in their impression of how flimsy and unfixed character truly is, “Our identities are as fluid as our personal experiences are diverse.” (cited in Chandra, 2015)

In the expressions of Hugh Grady, “A number of critics have suggested that the subversiveness of Rosalind’s gender-play lies not in an attempt to usurp male power or identity, but in the denaturalizing of gender identity itself. Her mockery of Orlando’s by-the-book pseudo Petrarchan verses and sentiments, of Silvius’s literary-pastoral rhetoric of praise and prostration and Phoebe’s corresponding coldness, and of her own invocation of misogynist stereotypes of women as fickle, jealous and unfaithful are read as revealing the artificiality of conventional gender roles.” (Grady, 2000) Hence, Shakespeare demonstrated the postmodern attitude towards gender where neither gender nor the roles associated with it are fixed.

### **Conclusion:-**

Gender, according to postmodern feminism, is not something fixed. The society and patriarchy constitute gender and create stereotypes. The society sets the way how one should behave and what one should do. In a man-centric society, the cultural structure vigorously relies upon each sex keeping and performing their given roles. In As You Like It, Shakespeare clarifies that the specific roles associated with each gender can be imitated and acted in theater just as, they are being acted and performed in the real life. In As You Like It by William Shakespeare the identity of man and woman, and the distinctive roles associated with them depends on dressing style and discourse. In the patriarchal society, the dressing style and discourse of man and woman are different. They should perform differently as per the rules of the male-centric society. Besides, in the patriarchal society heterosexuality reigns over homosexuality. The shifting of identity by Rosalind portrays that identity is not fixed and stable, rather identity is ever changing. Rosalind subverts the traditional gender stereotypes.

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