

Sculpting the nuances of Gender Hierarchy in Guy de Maupassant's *Useless Beauty*

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Abstract: Gender hierarchy is the most imperative issues in the 21st century. Even in the advancements in various fields the differences in gender is prevalent prominently. In the patriarchal society men are treated in a higher degree whereas women are instructed to serve for their purpose. Men show their supremacy and make women to act as their puppets in their hands. In general, Women's nature is preconceived as docile and meek and therefore termed as "the weak sex". Women are concierges and breeding machine in the disposition of men's nature. Gender Hierarchy is well exposed in the marital life where the husband has upper hand and being the head of the family. This order begins at home and leads to society as well. Women are treated as next or second in place after men and not as the first in preferences. It is a long way ideology existent as shadows in the modern society. Guy de Maupassant excellently portrays the issue of Gender Hierarchy in the short story *Useless Beauty*. This paper culls out the fundamental gender issues and partiality in focusing its presence in the contemporary society.

IndexTerms: gender hierarchy, differences, subservient, authoritative, culture, and relationship.

Gender hierarchy focuses on the differences in the chances and opportunities provided for men and women in the society. Men and women face difficulties of having one in higher order than the other not only in work place but also at home. These are basic problems and often hidden under the social norms and culture. The culture and the society are given prime importance where these gender indifferences are neglected. The significance of equality in gender is even more lost in the home. Men and women have their own abilities and women aping men is not equality. They lose their identity and it does not lead to become equal in the society. Women are not even treated as complement in their marital life and to be subservient to their partners. This has been dated since ancient time and ancient epics and scriptures teach people as ethics to people. It has the stereotypical approach of women being loyal to their husbands. The chastity of women is to be true, pure and to save their partners' life. But, it also instigates to comprehend the gender dominance of man is given higher position rather than women. Being loyal and chaste is applicable for both men and women. It throws light upon women's chastity and it shows the stereotypical gender politics dated back in various cultures.

Guy de Maupassant's *Useless Beauty* expresses the authoritative power of the count over the countess. He declares himself as master and the countess as slave. Maupassant brings out the problems in the marital issues and the dominance of the count and making his wife dull, insignificant and not able to socialize. In this story, beauty is attributed to the countess. In general, this is the case where women are looked as the symbol of beauty. The countess wants to lead a happy and want to devour from her responsibilities. The count has his mastery of tactfully penalize his wife in the name of "motherhood". They have been married for about eleven years and they have eleven children. The count has used motherhood as an instrument to dominate and wants to terminate her beauty. The story ensue the readers about the gender hierarchy that prevails in the royal family in the French society. Even in the royal family the feelings of the woman are same. In spite of the luxurious life and higher rank in the society, she is a woman of her own dreams. She is confined in the name of motherhood serving for her husband and taking care of her children. She is being physically and mentally tormented.

The count has "furious jealousy" on the beauty of the countess. She does not his want his wife to be admired and appreciated for her beauty. He is so wicked that he imprisons her in the name of love and familial bonding. He looks her not as his better half rather than a commodity to show up his status in the society. His knave nature is revealed while he thinks his wife remains to be beautiful even after begetting seven children. The character of countess is a woman of modern thoughts in her contemporary society. This story relates the nineteenth century life style and bold woman who wants to escape from the trap of her husband's dictatorship. She does not want to live a fake life without any socializing. She chooses her own path and she turns the table. She uses the same instrument to back fire the count which he puts doubt on her chastity. The count is as always authoritative even he does not allow her wife alone in the carriage. "In spite of his usual authoritative and despotic character, and he said: "Gabrielle!"

This indicates the gender hierarchy in the familial bonding where the male is granted power of nobility and control over his wife. This is the typical portrayal of men in a patriarchal society. This starts its way from the house to the outer world where women are not given importance in work place. The differences commences right from their and being instilled in the minds of the younger generation. Gender hierarchy is not only because of men but also because of women as well. They think themselves as subordinates to their partners. It is not better half any more but a loyal wife and caring for their children and their relatives. It is been infused in their minds as norms in the society. Morality and virtue plays a dominative role that a man should have a control

over his wife. None realizes her as a being filled up with emotions and she herself hides her own dreams and term it as a 'sacrifice' for their family. Gender differences is aroused because when women ignores the life given to her. The inferiority and dependence of women make them men to treat as mere puppets and servile to them. The countess breaks all the myths of the marital relationship of husband taking their upper hand. The title *Useless Beauty* adds to the characteristics feature of the countess, Gabriel.

The countess expels out her internal agony as, "Everything that has weighed on my heart since I have been the victim of your terrible selfishness?" The Count is the representative of men who feels jealous of the external beauty and finds way to destroy it. He uses motherhood and they do not love each other. Here the external beauty of the Countess is not lost rather the beauty in their life is completely gone. They have a master and slave relationship and the Count realizes the bitter truth of his strategies and voices out as, "No, but I will no longer be the victim of the hateful penalty of maternity, which you have inflicted on me for eleven years! I wish to take my place in society as I have the right to do as all women have the right to do." She courageously strives for her rights. This story on hand shows the conventional notions of commanding husband and struggles of women entangled in the marital life. She is forcefully married to the Count also highlights the gender hierarchy of man having his right to choose his wife but it is not the same for the Countess.

In analyzing the gender hierarchy the story centers on the carnal subjugation of the woman for years together. She shrieks as "penal servitude of childbearing" and she bellows that ". . . You loved your children as victories, and not because they were of your own blood. They were victories over me, over my youth, over my beauty, over my charms. . . ." The inner anguish for eleven years is outburst in her words and it epitomizes the pain of women' in the society. This evidently renders to clarify the burdens imposed on women in the pretext of family and relationship. The heightened enforcement of gender hierarchy is the utmost reverberations of the words of the Count. He says, ". . . But you belong to me; I am master --your master – I can exact from you what I like and when I like—and I have the law –on my side." This is the thrusting point and he confidently asserts, "You see that I am the master and the stronger".

The realistic surge of the suffering of the Countess and her hatred towards her husband is more relatable amidst differences in the culture. The Countess lie to him that, "Do you think that I am religious woman?" She lies that one of her children is not his own. This turns out to be great disaster in the life of the Count and he loses his trust and hold over her. This lie creates turbulence and annoys his life for six years. He takes her to opera and wears a mask of having a cordial relationship. Here the minute detail of honour and gender hierarchy is expressed in portrayal of the character of the Count. Even though he is unwilling to go with her, he wants to retain his pride in the society. The order of false demeanor in the community is ultimately to show his predominance and leadership in his family. The suffering represented through the Countess is more relatable to Indian context and it expressed through works of art of great artists. Similar physical and mental torment is voiced through Shiv K Kumar's *Indian Women*, ". . . They guard their tattooed thighs / Waiting for their men's to return / till even the shadows . . .". The universality of gender inequality is expressed in bringing out the notions of women depicted in reality as least important things or products owned by their husbands. This is the value given for women and they have to dedicate their hardship for the welfare of their families. It is the same in consideration even in other cultures – African Culture especially colonized countries where their writings dwell upon 'double oppression' of women. The gender order is invariably seen in different cultures.

Gender hierarchy is gaining its moment in the recent times in the society. The gender differences are changing to gives constructive ideologies in social order. The social construct is the union of men and women. The changes should rightly begin from homes and to the society. The premonitions of underestimating women is that they as physically weak, docile and to thrive to the social norms. According to Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, ". . . A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. . . ." (ch.1) and following these men should not curb the talents and should come out from the conventional thoughts. Gradually there should reformation in the giving the chances for women and respect in the society. As well women should also come out from their conservative idea. They should compete themselves to find their stand in the society not imitating the attire and behavior of men. This not the success of attaining gender equality but women should showcase their inner ability and not to be termed as "weaker sex" any more in the modern and awakening society.

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