



EXPLORING PENIS ENVY AND PHALLOCENTRISM CONCEPT THROUGH THE LENS OF SHIKHANDI IN THE MAHABHARATA

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Abstract: This study examines the penis envy concept, a psychoanalytic theory developed by Sigmund Freud and Phallocentrism concept by Lacan through one of the characters in The Mahabharata named Shikhandi. Shikhandi is one of the vital characters in Mahabharata who encompasses a complex interplay of gender, identity and power dynamics. By delving deep into the transformation of Shikhandi from woman to man and her role in the epic, this paper explores the reason behind the penis envy. By examining the character of Shikhandi, this study examines the way penis envy can be reconceptualized as a symbol of opposition against patriarchal norms, rather than an unsophisticated expression of female inferiority. This work only focuses on the part of Freudian's penis envy that says women feel inferior as they lack penis. This research explores how Shikhandi adheres to phallocentric norms to oppose it eventually.

Key Words: Shikhandi, Phallocentrism, Penis Envy, Gender, Mahabharata

Penis Envy

Penis Envy is a term coined by Freud and used by him to describe a basic attitude found in neurotic women. The term had more than symbolic meaning to him. He was convinced that this envy in women grew out of a feeling of biological lack beginning with the little girl's discovery in early childhood that she lacked something possessed by a little boy. Because of this according to Freud, she believed she had been castrated, and she dealt with this shock either by sublimating the wish for a penis in the wish for a child; that is, becoming a normal woman, or by the development of neurosis, or by a character which seeks to deny that any lack exists.

In brief, it has been shown that cultural factors can explain the tendency of women to feel inferior about their sex and their consequent tendency to envy men; that this state of affairs may well lead women to blame all their difficulties of the fact of their sex. Thus they may use the position of underprivilege as the rationalization of all feelings of inferiority. This study has used only the part of penis envy concept that says, women feel inferior due to lack of penis and they wish they had a penis too.

Phallocentrism

In psychoanalytic theory, the phallus serves as the supreme symbol of masculine power and, concurrently, of feminine lack. "Phallocentrism" is a term used primarily by feminist theorists to denote the pervasive privileging of the masculine within the current system of signification. The term was first coined by Ernest Jones, a British psychoanalyst, in reference to the primacy of the phallus in Sigmund Freud's theories. Freud (1965 [1933]) posits a phallic phase in childhood development, during which sexual difference is first encountered. In this phase, the distinction between the sexes is figured primarily through the genitalia, specifically the penis, which Freud conflates with the phallus as a symbol of power. Depicting the clitoris as a penis equivalent, Freud conceives the origins of female sexuality in terms

of the masculine phallus. It is during the phallic stage that a child realizes the mother does not, in fact, have a penis and appears to be castrated. In the boy child, this apparent castration incites the Oedipal crisis, while, in the girl, it generates castration anxiety, provoking a rejection of the mother and a turn toward the father as the source of phallic power. Renouncing her clitoral phallus as inferior, the girl child exhibits Freud's controversial concept of penis envy, wherein she recognizes her lack and seeks to gain access to the phallus by having a baby/substitute penis. Though a disciple of Freud, Jones critiqued his mentor's theorization of female sexuality within a resolutely male model of development. Along with fellow Freud followers Melanie Klein and Karl Abraham, he opposed, in particular, Freud's claim that a girl child is unaware of her vagina in infancy. Abandoning the primacy of the phallic phase in female development, Jones and Klein attempted to theorize a more egalitarian, though biologically based, construction of femininity

Shikhandi

This study has used contextual analysis. Shikhandi is a pivotal character in the Hindu epic, The Mahabharata. She was born as a princess named Shikhandini, she was the daughter of King Drupada of Panchala. Shikhandini was transformed into a man, Shikhandi. Shikhandi plays a vital role in The Mahabharata, especially during the Kurukshetra War. Shikhandi's story examines themes such as gender, patriarchy, identity and sexuality. As a character who dies in the previous birth and wants to become a man in the next birth, Shikhandi's narrative creates critical questions about the social and cultural construction of gender. Shikhandi is neither a man nor woman, born as a woman, she was the eldest child of King Drupad, father of Draupadi, and elder sibling to Dhristadhyumna and Draupadi. When Bhishma, the prince of Hastinapur was a young boy, his father king Shantanu-a widower wanted to marry again. The woman he loved demanded that Bhishma should not rival her to-be offspring for the status of heir apparent. Bhishma made a tough vow to never marry and to remain celibate. Vichitravirya soon came of age. The future king of Hastinapur would now marry. The elder sibling Bhishma heard of a Swayamwar arranged by the king of Kashipura for the marriage of his three daughters - Amba, Ambika and Ambalika. Bhishma daringly rode up to Kashipur and carried away all the three princesses for his half-brother. Amba, however, kept on compelling him to let go as she and Salva, the king of Saubala, were secretly in love and Amba had promised to place the varmala in his neck at the swayamwara, the ceremony where the women choose their grooms from among those present. On reaching Hastinapur, when Amba refused to marry the Kaurava prince, Bhishma finally let her go. But Salva, humiliated by Bhishma during the abduction, refused to accept her. Heartbroken and offended, Amba then decided to do severe penance. Distressing inside, that the act of the senior Kuru prince Bhishma had destroyed her life, she urged vengeance. She was overwhelmed that Bhishma had carried her away though he was proclaimed celibate and must pay for it. God is happy with her penance and gave her a garland that when worn by anyone would enable him to kill Bhishma. But Bhishma was so revered and worried, in that era that no man agreed to wear that garland. Amba herself could not use it as a woman could not beckon Bhishma to a fight. Before dying heartbroken, she drooped the garland on a door of King Drupad's palace. The king was childless. Soon the king begot three children through a Yaga. The eldest was Amba reborn and was named Shikhandini. The physicians and the astrologers could not decide whether the baby was a boy or a girl. She was raised just like a son and she learned all the martial arts required for a fine prince. Eventually she got married to king Hiranyavarna of Dasarna. On the day of their marriage consummation, the bride realises that her husband was actually a woman and not a man. Then Shikhandini felt so desperate and went to the forest. There she happened to meet a Yaksha named Sthuna. He agrees to lend his manhood in exchange of her womanhood. Thus, Shikhandini returns to his palace as Shikhandi and his married life becomes normal. Shikhandi, the Amba of last birth, had two siblings - the twins Draupadi and Dhristadhyumna. Draupadi then married Arjuna, the son of Ambalika's son Pandu. Meanwhile, Shikhandi had abducted the garland she had left on the entrance in her last birth, thus enabling herself to become Bhishma's slayer. Now that she had the entity of man in her, she qualified to carry out the task. On the tenth day of the war between the Pandavas and Kauravas during the battle at Kurukshetra, the unbeatable Bhishma was proving to be too much of an enemy and Lord Krishna also charioteer to Arjuna, relinquished that Bhishma must die for Arjuna to make any headway in the war. But how can even Arjun try aiming Bhishma when he would not lower his weapons. Arjuna hid behind Shikhandi, seeing whom Bhishma lowered his weapons declaring, 'Born a woman you are always a woman.' Arjuna saw the chance as Bhishma lowered his bow and arrow; he sent forth a volley of arrows that ultimately killed Bhishma. Thus Shikhandi became the cause of Bhishma's death.

While previous studies have explored queer concept and other aspects of Shikhandi, this study focuses on penis envy and phallocentrism. Penis Envy can be applied here as Shikhandi wanted a penis and she exchanged her genitalia with a man which is similar to modern day surgery. Phallocentrism can be applied to this study because phallocentrism is the reason behind her penis desire. In simple words, phallocentrism is the ideology that the phallus, or male sexual organ, is the central element in the organization of the social world. She wanted a phallus just for the fulfilment of her revenge. Because only if she is a man, she can wear the garland which can help a person to kill Bhishma as the garland is only meant for men. This study shows how Shikhandi gets into phallocentrism to subvert phallocentrism.

Shikhandi's gender change challenges to the notion that masculinity is intrinsically tied to male genitalia. The concept of penis envy by Freud is reconceptualized in the study as this study reinforces the idea that women do not inherently desire for male genitalia, Shikhandi's story puts forward the idea that penis desire is socially constructed and rooted in the patriarchal values that govern society. Through the character of Shikhandi, we can explore gender, sexuality and power dynamics.

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