Name of Student

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Reappropriating gender stereotypes in Chaucer’s writing

By taking an in-depth look at the “Canterbury tales” and Wife of Bath's Tale, written by Chaucer, it could be seen that Wife of Bath was different from the rest of the women of the medieval age. She embraced only those traits that the patriarchal society imposed on her. She was seen only using these traits when the female identity helped her, otherwise it could be seen that wife of Bath, was the only character strong enough to challenge the male dominant society. Wife of the Bath was the only female character, who was unusual. Though there were two other females as well, even it could be observed that the rest of the two women were following the rules and commands that the patriarchal society imposed on them and were not raising their voice on any discrimination that used to be done with them. Wife of bath has been portrayed as a character who behaves in a way; women were not expected to.

It was seen that wife of Bath used to do all those things, for which she was not created and she used to do all those things that usually men of that time were allowed to do only. For instance, it could be seen that she married five times but women in Chaucer’s time were not allowed to marry again even if their husband died. Wife of Bath challenged the patriarchal society as she was planning her sixth marriage. Another major unusual thing that other women of that time were not willing to do was traveling. Only pilgrim was the only way through which the women could have some entertainment; otherwise, women were not allowed to travel. In the prologue, there has been seen a repetitive use of the phrase "wys women" for women in general sense, but in another perspective, it may have been used as a satire for the women as they are thought to be foolish creature by the men.

Women being emotionally weak are thought to be fool and soft-hearted as well (Warhol,et,al,2018). By taking a look at the work of Judith Butler, it could be said that it is the society that distinguishes between acts that people of one gender would perform. According to Judith Butler, gender is more than a noun in an actual sense; it is a verb that is assigned by the society, and it would be different than the verb assigned to the opposite gender. Gender is not something one is by nature instead it would be better to say that it is what one does. Judith says that it does not matter what is being done but what matter is who did it, so it could be said that if a man is going to do a thing that would be acceptable for society but when the same thing is going to be done by a woman it won't be accepted.

By taking a look at the character of wife of Bath, it could be seen that though she was doing all the things that generally women of that society were not allowed and she was doing all those things for which she was not born. It could also be seen that Wife of Bath has been represented as a character who is selfish enough to do only the things that would work best in her favor. It could be seen that though she was the only female of the prologue who challenged the patriarchal society if looked deeply. It could be seen that she used to accept only those social and moral duties being a female that ultimately benefits her. Another major thing that could be seen in wife of Bath is that she was very different than rest of the females of that time, but still it could be seen that though she had the opportunity, she did not question or raised a voice against the gender stereotypes.

It has been observed that gender stereotyping is one of the most important things that limit the development of talent and abilities of males and females. It is the only thing that influences their educational and professional growth. It also limits the number of opportunities that could be given to them. By taking a look at wife of Bath it could be seen that there are various things that she could have stand for but instead doing that she only raised voice against those discriminatory acts that were casting negative impacts on her freedom or it would not be wrong to say that she was only performing those activities as woman that were favoring her. She was courageous enough to challenges some of the rituals, but she did not put a question against the female stereotypes and discrimination that patriarchal society used to do.

One of the most important things that must be brought into light is that wife of Bath achieved autonomy by performing those society assigned task being a female that was not kind of hurdle for her and her freedom. It could be seen that she was a lady who was happy for having more than one husband. It has been seen that she wanted to get married for the sixth time and when she was not given the permission by the Church, she asked them that in Bible where it has been mentioned that women cannot marry for more than once, when men can. She was a kind of lady who was happy for doing things that were assigned to her being a woman that would only benefit her if an act that has been attached to her being the woman that does not benefit her she used to refuse to do that.

Wife of Bath took many advantages being women as well, and she used her gender just for her benefits and where she could get benefit for being women, she claimed the right of being women. She has been portrayed by Chaucer as a witty lady who behaved like a chameleon when the tag of woman used to favor her. She prefers to be a woman but when being a woman raise questions against the things that made her happy she quickly raise question against the society and the patriarchal society (Hajduk,et,al,2018). She used to own her gender only when she could get things that give her satisfaction, but she does not happily used to accept her gender role when she had to make any sacrifice or had to do anything that is against her will. Wife of Bath should be praised for her wit that she achieved sovereignty by playing only that role and performance that supported her action, vision, freedom and ideology.

Various attributes have been attached with women that are being pointed in this prologue clearly, in one of the line women are said as one who is weak, one who weeps and could not take a stand for her. The phrase “**wys women**” has been used many times in the text and this repetition could be used in various perspectives as it could be seen that during that time there was no female writer, so whatever a writer used to write about women, they could not oppose that idea. Women were unable to defend themselves if anything wrong used to be written about them. In one sense, “**wys women**” term is being used for praising the group of the women who used to accept the stereotypical role that has been assigned to them. The phrase “wys women” may be used for discouraging those women who don't embrace the traits that were employed on them. From another perspective, it could be seen that women are being called “**wys women**” as they cannot win any argument as men used to be reasonable always.

In another perspective, according to the stereotypical medieval society, men used to prefer and praise only those women, who never argue against men and let the man decide about their fate. The repetition of this phrase depicts that for men of that society the meaning of “wys women” depends on how a woman is going to act, if a women is anti-feminist and never argues with men then this phrase “wise women” literally means good women, but the same phrase could be looked upon in a negative sense when women are being called one who deceives men. Women are being called liar as well, and it was said that man could not be good liars like women.

It would not be wrong to say that this repetitive phrase shows that women were not considered wise if they put question for the patriarchal society. If women don’t embrace the role decided by the stereotypical society then women were not thought to be wise, but women of that time were unable to argue against whatever used to be write about them they used to accept everything as there was no female writer at that time who could defend them. Only those wives were considered to be wise, who used to embrace woman trait and used to agree and accept whatever was being said or ordered to them. Wives who used to counter question their husbands were not regarded as wise wives, in the view medieval people. It could be assumed that the phrase “wys wives” is being used as a satire for the wives who used to deceive their husbands. It was also a kind of restriction that men could be in relationship with other women even when they are married, but the women were considered bad and characterless if same thing used to be done by them.

Another important aspect of this prologue is that women are being pointed as one used to be in demand for satisfying the physical needs of men. Women who accept this fact, they are in demand and they have being given a task to satisfy the physical needs of men, were considered to be wise by men (Bjork,et,al,2018). It could be seen that men were allowed to buy woman by spending some money but this thing was not at all expected from women. So as a whole it could be said that women were being used as an item by men but wife of Bath was little different who was breaking the stereotypes of the medieval society by marrying many times and used to highlight that she was a woman when she thought the title of woman would favor here and used to oppose things which the rest of the women used to do without any complaint or argument. Women who used to embrace the traits being imposed by dominant male society took the terms “wys women” as a reward, but the women who used to negate and question ways, men want them to behave took this phrase as a satire on them.

The word “queer” was used for the gender minority who were not heterosexual as this word originally means strange. This word was used for those who were against same-sex desire. According to Judith Butler, all the homosexual movements that started emphasized that with more cultural acceptance of bisexuality, queer would be more accepted and in the past, the word Queer was used for discouraging a person, but today the same word is being used for encouraging a small community of gays and lesbians (Monette,et,al,2018). Homosexuality could be accepted by thinking that it exists in the world. Whether gay or lesbian, as homosexuality has become more popular, it became possible for people to expose that they are homosexuals. Cultural acceptance plays a significant role so that people could accept, they are homosexuals.

Work Cited

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