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Relationship between Freedom of Movement, Gender, and the City

Women today are raising their children and taking care of their home along with participating with men in the workforce. Women did so much struggles to reach the stage where they are in contemporary time. They fought for their rights, movement of freedom, and resources for a better life. People follow various norms, rituals, and stereotypes that shape the pattern of society. Women had almost no rights and limited opportunities in past. Stereotypes of society made difficult for women to live. Women were playing the role of mother, sister, and daughter. Besides they were not allowed to leave home for work. The main purpose of the paper is to analyze the relationship between freedom of movement, gender, and the city. It is important to understand the role of gender in society in the past.

“Women have routinely been punished and intimidated for attempting that most simple of freedoms, taking a walk,” (*Top 100 Quotes & Sayings About Sexuality*) is the quote from the book wanderlust, written by Rebecca Solnit that depicts the condition of the women in past. Women were considered as a sexual object that was supposed to provide sexual pleasure to men. Men were the leader of the family while women were totally dependent on them. History reveals that men were handling the workforce and financial issues of the society. Men were getting higher education and better jobs while women were restricted to their homes. Women had the role of supervision of men's children and parents. They were considered as the pride of the family who cannot go out without a male family member. They were forced to kill their wishes and desires for their families. Opportunities like education and jobs were prohibited for them. However, with time things changed and women start getting an education and joined the workforce. However, she faced issues of harassment, gender bias, and humiliation at the workplace.

Women were bound to their houses while men managed the financial issues of the family. Women had to face health issues and other family issues due to a lack of knowledge and basic education. In the book, the poor cow life of a married woman was highlighted who felt broken and empty while living with her husband. She was a prostitute but still faced psychological issues and negative emotions due to the uncaring behavior of her husband. She involved in prostitution with the belief that “I need different men to satisfy my different moods,” (Dunn, 62) but the story reveals that how she needed the support and love of her husband. The uncaring behavior of husband made her insecure and she started believing that she was used by husband. Though, she was actually used by the men to whom she gave sexual pleasure. The story explains the status of women in the past where the husband did not pay attention to the wishes and desires of the wife. On the other hand, women from outside families were taken as a sexual object and they were unable to gain respect from men of society. Women were not allowed to drive or work in the night shift. Even in the morning shift, major positions were given to men only who increased the inequality since women start working.

Women had no life. They were not allowed to do a job or even they get there were lots of restrictions on them. In addition, if women joined the workforce their workload increased as they were forced to fulfill housework along with jobs. It increased their work but women had to follow the stereotypes of society. For instance, in the book "poor cow" the female character stated that “I clean all me stairs down then I put a bit of Harpic down the lavatory and it’s done, then I go down the laundrette and get me shopping. If yer heart’s in yer home it’s all right, otherwise it’s useless” (Dunn, 120). The evidence explains how women were supposed to do the cooking, laundry, glossary, and other works. In addition, they had to look after men's children and make them able to grow healthy and strong. Society in the past ignored the desires of the women; they were not asked whether they want to live within houses all the time or they want to live free. The concept of freedom of movement was missing. They were not allowed to leave home without their male member and if they tried to go, then society used to consider them as bad or prostitute. Various researches indicate that even today if one of the partners had to quit the job for home then it would be women because men are considered as financial supporters of the family and women can do the job unless their home environment does not affect it. This means a job or professional life is the second option for women while home responsibility is considered as the priority task for them.

Thinking of men in the past was so negative towards women. Freedom of movement became the terror for women. For instance, in the book Virginia Woolf written by Mrs. Dallowey lines, “She had the perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very, dangerous to live even one day,” (Zwerdling) indicate the situation of the girl for being alone outside. There are places even today where women are not allowed to go out without a male member. In Saudia Arabia, there is a law that women have to cover their faces and should go out only if they are accompanied by their male members of the family. Similarly in the past, sexual harassment and rape were common in society. Men considered women as their personal property when they were alone. Through the storyline, the feeling of woman, her emotion, fear, and terror can be understood. Women were so helpless and terrified that they did not even think about their rights. They did not ask for basic necessities due to the social pressure and influence of stereotypes developed by society. Even when women started to go out and started their jobs, men were terrified and insecure as they were worried about dominancy. Not only this, the group of women was against the freedom of other women. History indicates that when women asked for their basic rights and needs, they faced bashing from the group of women. These women believed that it is better to remain under men and the movement of freedom or demand of rights would result in vulgarity in society.

The city or society changed the thinking pattern of women and they became unable to even think about freedom. “She thought there were no Gods; no one was to blame; and so she evolved this atheist's religion of doing good for the sake of goodness,” (Zwerdling) is the line from Virginia Woolf which indicates the feeling of helplessness of women. They believed that they cannot change their life and there is no god who can help them. This thinking made the reason for men's dominancy and health issues of women. The condition and burden of responsibilities made women helpless and clueless to resolve their issues. Stereotypes and social figures of women resulted in psychological disorders. For instance, in the book "the yellow wallpaper" the author explained the condition of the women and their health issue (Gilman). A young woman with a newborn baby was forced to live in the house the whole day while her husband and brother were busy in a job. Her husband was a physician still he remained unaware of wife's mental health due to the influence of stereotypes. The typical thinking that women should remain in the house and rest is the best cures for their health issue resulted in severe psychological issues of the woman. The young woman started to see women in the wallpaper and tried to free her from the trap. In reality, a woman in the wallpaper was the symbol of women's condition in that time that were trapped in houses to kill their wishes and dreams for the sake of men's happiness. When they started to work they were restricted to specific fields like teaching, nursing, and writing while major fields like doctors and engineers were made for men. Harassment was the major issue as men were using women as sexual object so it a too long time for men to accept the presence of women as colleagues or partners at the workplace.

Through the analysis of books, it can understand the life of women in the past was difficult. The dominancy of male members and stereotypes of society were the main factors that resulted in hurdles and restrictions for women. Women were restricted to stay at home and were not allowed to get an education or to do a job. Movement of freedom was missing from the life of them. They were not allowed to leave home without male members. These limitations resulted in psychological disorders in women. In addition, women acquired a feeling of fear and helplessness.

**Work Cited**

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