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MALE CONSTRUCTED IMAGE OF WOMEN IN LITERATURE

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Abstract

When women are mentioned, what emerge into our mind can be their beautiful appearance, engagement in heavy housework and too much talk. As these stereotyped images of women prevail for centuries, we cannot blame anyone who believes of these traditional virtues of women. Literature has witnessed the roles of women evolving through ages, but until recent times, most of the published writers were men and the portrayal of women in literature was without doubt biased. A lot of it has to be blamed on the fact that in the ancient world, literacy was strictly limited, and the majority of those who could write were male. However, the contribution of women to oral folklore cannot be taken for granted – in folk songs, stories, poetry and literature in general.

“Man with the head and woman with the heart; man to command and woman to obey; all else confusion”

– Alfred Lord Tennyson

Introduction:

The majority of published writers were men and the portrayal of women in literature was inevitably one-sided. In the ancient world literacy was severely limited, and the majority of those who could write were male.

Patriarchy's greatest weapon is female subordination. The role of woman in the society is biased. Social practices like: Sati, Widowhood, Dowry, and Female Feticide are the results of patriarchy. Even the marriage is a kind of business without payment. The famous Victorian novelist Thomas Hardy in his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* depicts how the husband, Micheal Henchard, sells his wife, Sussan along with a girl child for the sake of money.

Male-constructed images of women are so embedded in any culture that they appear quite "natural." Once it is recognized that they are constructions, it becomes necessary to enquire not only how they are constructed but also why. In the legends of Eve and Pandora men have taken up arms against women. Eve was born from the rib of Adam shows her secondary existence and she is blamed for evils and sorrows of life; loss of Eden Garden, the