



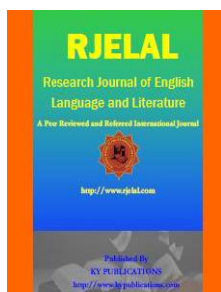
## GENDER AND DISABILITY: A STUDY OF CONNIE PANGARINO'S *THE ME IN THE MIRROR*

RAMESH SINGISALA

Research scholar

Kakatiya University

Hanmakonda, Warangal (District), Telangana (state)



### ABSTRACT

*The Me in the Mirror* was written by Connie pangarino, she was writer and activist. She struggled of her disability but she faced lot of problems at the primary stage. Basically she was disabled but she struggled for her identity in the society because the problem of her gender .So my paper going to examines how the gender was problematic in her life in the society .As a woman she suffered with the gender problems and another one is the disability. The miserable problems in her life she encounter due to her gender and disability. Throughout her autobiography, she expressed t the male dominant society in which the women are struggling of their identity. So I examine all these things and how the disability was problem of women's life these are issues in my paper. Another thing was disability how the disabled women are struggling for their identity in the society. How the disabled people, especially women's struggles can be seen clearly in Connie pangarino's *the me in the Mirror*.

Key Words: Writer, Activist, Gender, Disabled women etc...

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### INTRODUCTION

#### Gender

Gender is a cross cutting issue in social discrimination. Focusing on Broader social categories like caste and ethnicity can only partially allow us to analyze the Discrimination of any one segment of the population. Therefore, it cannot accurately reflect the problems of the totality. Caste and ethnicity based discrimination do not Account for the discrimination faced by the members within the units. Gender based Study helps to explore into the more adequately as it would open up the Possibility of analyzing the problems by breaking them down into the context of male and female components of each social unit. Men and women always comprise the two halves of the population in

every society. However, the rights and opportunities accorded to women have never been on par with the rights and opportunities accorded to men of the said societies. These differences in the opportunities of life found between men and women have forced women in many Contexts to bear a subordinate position. This can be seen in a number of sectors, namely the economic, political, social, and cultural life of each society. The prevalence of early marriages and polygamy, social aversion towards widow Remarriage, and other factors like low literacy rates, confinement to domestic work and Lacks of adequate access to productive resources for females. They are supported by the ideological contents of culture and rules and regulations of society. They appear in different forms and to

different extents. In different types of social settings. Ideologies are the fundamental forces perpetuating the socio-cultural milieu of any Society.

They are manifested in culture of those societies and influence many aspects of The lives of people living within those societies these ideologies are still the Basis of many ideological elements adopted by the state, and play a primary role in Shaping the structure of relationships between different sections of the population Including that between men and women this type of ideological belief is Put into practice in many spheres of the life of women. On the one hand, it is exercised by imposing the notion of "purity" and "pollution" with regard to certain aspects of their life Cycle events. Menstruation and childbirth are two important events in which women are required to remain in confinement. They are also not allowed to enter the shrine of family God during the time of worship. A male child is considered a must to perform death-Related rituals in the family. The social ideologies prescribing to this patriarchal form of marital relations have also negatively contributed to the defense of the interests of Women. As one who has to leave the parental home after being married at a young age, the daughter is generally perceived as "someone that adorns the other's house". This type of concept is paramount even in the preference of children. This has manifested itself in the form of popular sayings such as 'Never mind the delay as long as it is a son.' Alternatively, 'Birth of a daughter is a doomed fate'. It has helped to justify the relative differences of opportunities Available to men and women. It is legally supported, and tied to the Ownership of property, access to political power, and the attainment of social status. Women are for the most part confined to the domestic sphere. Males are considered the Breadwinners of the family and their roles are defined in the public spheres. We will now explore these modes of discrimination against women.

Gender based discrimination as a consequence of exclusion is wide spread Around the country but the nature, form and intensity vary from one place to another even Within the mid and far-Western region, where it is found to be predominant. This is despite the promises that came

with democracy; those human rights would be respected to the fullest extent. Even now the high caste dominant people from many areas favor Discrimination (mainly untouchability) despite being aware of law against discrimination.

This is mainly due to structured access of old hierarchy to political system that influences Economic opportunities. As a result, even after democracy, women, 'untouchables' who Call them Dalit, ethnic groups, Muslims, and plain dwellers (Madhesis) remain on the fence. Being on the margin between dependent and powerful, impure and pure, Inauspicious and auspicious, the lower caste people especially women are "on the edge of Auspicious" a place whose intended image draws our attention to multiple ideas. As Members of the lower castes, untouchable women are marginalized ideologically, ritually, economically; socially and politically likewise the females in Hindu society are the Victim of same fate. In attempting to understand how gender and caste hierarchy are intertwined, we need to be aware that these are not always direct correspondences. Far less gender hierarchy Exists at the lower levels of caste hierarchy than at the top, and not strictly for reasons of Impurity.

**Women forced to remain with limited power, access and control:** Despite the Legal provision of equal property rights, women do not have ownership over Household assets. Even now, the daughters are considered as a dependent of their Husband family and are not treated as one of the rights holders of paternal Property. Albeit women have heavy input in agricultural and livestock Production, they are entitled to consume the quantity decided by the male Members of the family without any power to decide on sale or purchase of the Land, house and agricultural supplies. However in case of the female headed Household, though the land and other property are registered in the woman's name all other decisions are taken in consultation with other male family members. Often the key decision makers at the household level in both Dalits and Non Dalits are male family members in career development, marriage and economic Activities in general. In very few households the decisions are taken in Consultations with other family members Women have access to the use of

natural resources such as forestry and water. However this is because women have to fetch or carry those things from far Distances. However women do not have control over the decision making and Management of these resources. This is mainly because of the balance of power between men and women. It is hard for a man to treat women as having the same Status or an equal footing, due to deep rooted and socialized practices in both Males and females. Generally the role of women in the management of natural resources is limited to Fetching water, fodder, saplings and firewood etc. Women have a minimal role in other dimensions of management such as decision making, controlling, Influencing and coordinating.

**General:**

**Faith, fate and fear:** Gender and based discrimination in fact is Trapped in a triangular equilibrium of faith, fate and fear which is further backed up by myth and superstition. The main factor which maintains and promotes Gender based discrimination is a myth that daughters are born for another home and son is the only one who will take care of this house and will continue paternal Line. In terms of caste based discrimination. People of both castes are reluctant to accept change because of deeply socialized Practices amongst all castes due to ideas of 'ritual impurity', fear of bad luck and Retribution from gods if they don't follow the customs.

**Lack of confidence on youth:** The youth forces are against gender and caste Based discrimination, which by all means is a positive sign to abolish Discrimination. But youth forces were found to be lacking confidence to promote Non-discriminatory behavior. Youth are quite rightly accusing tradition, the Elderly and faith for continuing discrimination due to "hidden power" embedded during the socialization process. And there is no doubt that this is hindering the Elimination of gender and caste based discrimination.

**Discrimination based on gender;** Although subtle and more or less hidden in Europe, gender discrimination is nonetheless pervasive. Many institutions of society, such as the media, family, childcare institutions or schools, preserve and Transmit stereotypes about men and women.

Traditional gender traits in Western societies often relate To power: men and their typical activities are characterized as outgoing, strong, productive, brave, Important, public-oriented, influential and having high financial rewards and social recognition and Value. Women's key characteristics reflect powerlessness: dependent, caring, passive and family-oriented. Women often hold subordinate positions, their work is less valued and it receives less recognition and remuneration. Girls or boys who do not conform to stereotypical expectations can experience criticism, ostracism and even violence. Such conflicts can confuse the development of children's gender Identity.

**Discrimination based on religion:** Freedom of religion is officially respected in Europe, yet discrimination based on religion is nevertheless Prevalent, often inextricably linked with racism and xenophobia. Whereas in the past Europe was Torn by conflicts and discrimination between Protestant and Catholic Christians, Roman and Eastern Orthodox Catholics and 'official' churches and dissenting sects, today these differences among Christians Have become far less important. At the same time many religious communities in minority positions continue to thrive across Europe, including Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Baha'is, Rastafarians and Muslims. This growing religious diversity is often ignored such as those millions of Europeans who are not religious as well as those who are not Christian?

**Discrimination based on sexual orientation:** Homophobia is an aversion to or hatred of gay, lesbian or homosexual people, or their lifestyle or culture, Or generally of people with a diff errant sexual orientation, including bi-sexual and transgendered People. Although legal reforms in Europe have greatly strengthened the human rights of gay and lesbian People, conditions vary greatly, from urban areas where openly homosexual people live and work and Form civil unions with relatively little difficulty to rural areas and parts of Eastern and Central Europe Where gays may meet with discriminatory laws, harassment and even violence from both the public and Authorities. Many people still see homosexuality as a disease, a psychological disorder or even a moral Sin. Many others consciously or unconsciously apply heterosexual

norms to gay and lesbian people, faulting them for failing to conform to the kinds of behavior expected of 'normal people'.

**Discrimination based on disability:** The term 'person with a disability' may refer to many different conditions: a disability may be physical, Intellectual, sensory or psycho-social, temporary or permanent, and result from illness, injury or genetics. People with disabilities have the same human rights as all other people. However, for a number of Reasons they often face social, legal and practical barriers in claiming their human rights on an equal Basis with others. These reasons usually stem from misperceptions and negative attitudes toward disability itself. Many people have the misconception that people with disabilities cannot be productive members of Society. Chief among negative attitudes are either that people with disabilities are 'broken' or 'sick' and Require fixing or healing, or that they are helpless and need to be cared for. Instead, a positive attitude regards disability as a natural part of human diversity that should be approached with reasonable accommodation, which is any measure designed to promote full participation and access, and to empower a person to act on his or her own behalf (e.g. a wheelchair, or more time to accomplish a task). This positive approach suggests that society has a responsibility to accommodate the person with disabilities.

#### **SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY**

The barriers created by the social and physical environment that inhibit disabled People's ability to participate in society and exercise their rights should be eliminated. This includes promoting positive attitudes and modifying physical barriers (e.g. buildings with wheelchair access). In keeping with this social model of disability, children with disabilities are now considered as children 'With special needs'. Social institutions are obliged to take these needs into account and adjust to them. A large proportion of disabled children attend the regular school system today. The term 'children with special educational needs' also covers those who are failing in school for reasons Those are likely to impede their overall development and progress. Schools need to adapt their curriculum, Teaching and organization

and/or to provide additional support to help these pupils achieve their Potential. The long term goal of this Convention is to change the Way the public perceives persons with disabilities, thus ultimately changing society as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Education for non-discrimination Educators recognize the need to develop in every child a tolerant, non-discriminatory attitude and create a learning environment that acknowledges and benefits from diversity instead of ignoring or excluding it. As part of this development, those who work with children, as well as children themselves, should become aware of their own and others' discriminatory behaviors'. Activities that encourage role-playing And empathy help children to develop awareness and empathy as well as developing resilience and Assertiveness in children who experience discrimination.

These are the main and basic level problems of gender and disabled women problems I identified in the society, I will explore these problems with one autobiography, this autobiography has written by Connie pangarino she was struggled with gender and disability. She missed her lover with her disability no one marry her then she turned to lesbianism, so I pointed all her childhood and young age and middle age also.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Gender, as result of biology, has been thought to determine, all manners of social behavior on the part of men and women. In a similar way, disability, as biology, has been seen as deeming disabled people's chives and behavior. The image of disability may be intensified by gender for women, a sense of intensified passivity and helpless, for men corrupted masculinity generated by enforced dependence". (Asha Hans (Ed), *Disability, Gender, and the Trajectories of Power*, P.28).

Disability was the main problem of the every human being because, disability people life's was very different than other life's there are three main Disabilities in this society Orthopedic Handicap, Visually handicap, Hearing Handicap, these are the main, but in that many types are disabilities in. Disability persons faced lot of problems in everyday life especially it was very different they did not

reveal at any stage because, the people think in different way. In this disability they are two main subjects are One is the Men and Second one is Women ,Men can do his existence and he will share his feelings very easily with others but women are very different they will face the two objects in their life's one is Gender and second one is Disability .

Disabled women cannot continue their life's without any support of their life's because they caring by the others they are dependable their daily activities were very different than men. Even in the society disabled women's were not married till the end of their life's because no one think about them to marry because they were disabled even disable men also they try to marry able – women, who they had disable children's that families they have some economical backgrounds they will arrange attendant of their disabled children's but below poverty families are very different. Because their existence was the main problem of their life's so they did not dare to do paid expensive for their disabled children's life's, that's why women with disability was the it's a un bearable think and just understand their life's with humanity, recently disabled women raped by one person he drank heavily, that disable women did not run way from her, this news was came recent times.

Disable Women's unfortunate people in this society. So, everyday life was the very pain but they felt like that pleasure this are the subject I have taken in my presentation of my brief reading of the disable women auto biography *the me in the mirror* by Connie Pangarino. She felt in her life every pain like a pleasure .I found out in this autobiography she struggled in her child hood, and she struggled at the young age, and fight for the disable person rights this is great autobiography of disabled women. In this how she fought for the specially disable men and disabled women's she struggled for the empowerment of their lives.

**Childhood Experience of Connie Panzarino's:** "World filled with some pains and some pleasures behind this, only one thing was there that is Man thought".

Connie pangariono was great writer and artist and activist, she was born in 1947 with rare disease of "Spinal muscular atrophy type III, formally

called amytonia congenital. She filled with her life lot of pains, in her childhood was very challenging days because every child had some attitudes to do with other kids and to play in her child hood she missed her everything in her life, but she thought only one thing that psychological approach of her life she felt unhappy when she was at other kids than suddenly she recover her thoughts. Many situation in her life especially in childhood, her mother and father paid lot of expensive for her treatment but there is no result came in her physical attitude.

"She thought she knew, I was different".

When she was at neighbor children Vinnie she is younger than Connie, she raised purple dripping hands up on Connie face, she screamed and she felt the urge to slap with her hands away, but she knew I wasn't fast enough so I screamed again, "No stop it". She laughed and she would have to, if I wasn't so terrified that grape juice would drop on cloths and her mother get mad my screams actually brought aunt Ro to the door yellowing.

"Stop that, vinny: don't you know she cannot fight back"?

This was things were every disable children faced in their childhood life they cannot do that's things. She loved "tinker toys" but she couldn't push them together hard enough to connect them, well she knew the this time I was different, at the "Jump rope", she want to neighbor children I wanted her to by a jump rope, I told her if I couldn't jump myself, let the kids jump for me. This type desires and playing thoughts has every disabled child but here Connie herself felt pain but she converted like a pleasure. Her illusions what in her mind, to behave like able-child? She practiced all the games in fantasies. What she did not do physical those think in her fantasies? She becomes omnipotent.

This was the position of her childhood when was thought to play games. Here, I explore the disabled children's had some desires to do all thinks As like able-children's but there physical fitness will not support. In her life fantasy was protecting herself from "the pain and the truth". When she was growing one important thing when have to go bathroom her mother said she was busy with house

works in the home. Finally she came "She picked me up and carried me to the bathroom saying".

"You are so ungrateful, you don't care about me, and I hate you! I hate you; what do you think I am, a slave; you appreciate me; you don't deserve anything". She put her hands on the toilet directing me to go (Connie Panzarino's, *The Me in the Mirror*, Seal Press, London, 1994, p.31).

These was the one hurt touching incident of her life even disabled women's children mother are felt like this way because here observed the their thoughts then Connie realized if I had to walk and would not happen may be some would come and help me so she would be tired. Her disability was tested every disabled person in every moment every day. They bore some pins but Connie diverted those feelings like a pleasure here also she suffered of her gender problem. Her beautiful hair has cut by her mother because every day it was long trouble for her wash. Disability women's are hiding their feelings in every step of life. This was the position of her childhood. But this stage she moved to great power of inner mind even any ordeals had in her life. Connie in her life she struggled of her disability specially from childhood onwards so problem was gender and the problem was disability, generally disabled men's easily express their feelings and desires easily with their friends but the disabled women's are struggling to reveal their feelings and desires with others because every time the question was arising their minds.

**Diverted as like lesbian:** Disability was the basic problem of Connie life she was growing firstly her thoughts diverted some desires because she is a women, but she was a disabled women. After encounter of her childhood she felt she needs some privacy life. In this stage she met Ron Kevin was the one of the famous wrestler, she proposed her love with Ron but simply rejected and then spoke like this:

"If I love you as much as I do, and cannot marry you, I don't think anyone will ever be able marry you" (Connie Panzarino's, *The Me in the Mirror*, Seal Press, London, 1994, p.116).

After encounter of this she met another college friend "Tom" also they moved together but finally

proposed with him. She felt inner thought that and realize herself disability oppression, the discrimination based on what someone thinks another can or cannot. This not just disability issue but affected all persons, after all anyone could become disabled it any moment in their life and even able bodied people had varying degrees of disability (Connie Panzarino's, *The Me in the Mirror*, Seal Press, London, 1994, p.122).

These are the thought in her mind people always thinking about the disability, it's like oppression not to understand of every disable. Her disability seemed to be what made life most difficult for her as well as for her family. She often hated it, which meant she often hated herself, sometimes that frustration grew into anger at any whole self, she overcome her thoughts, and she felt like pain but she has taken pleasure, she increased her own power of sense.

But she did not care her when Ron was bled but he met an accident he changed his thoughts when lived together but there no name that relationship but her mother one day has seen both are nude on the bed but. Connie thought that there is no problem because he is also disabled person he did not have that capacity to make pregnant but after some continuation relationship Connie proposed her marriage but simply rejected and he want to live alone and he had old girl friends. And then he encouraged Connie to go other men, because she had girl friend, he also encouraged Connie to have relationships with women.

Connie move to Hafts University to do some courses and she joined five week intensive course on sexuality. She appointed new attendant name "Maura" she was lesbian. Continue course of her life she knew about the how the women's and men's diverting their ideas to other side way. She developed her feelings on Maura day by day she really love her ,she hiding her feelings in every moment of their conversation. But Connie has broken her feelings:

"As a woman, I had been taught that in order to get what I needed from someone I was attracting to, I should be indirect". But Connie has broken her feelings with Maura.



"I don't expect you to love me, or love me some way, I just want t you to know that I think you are wonderful and that I love you" (Connie Panzarino's, *The Me in the Mirror*, Seal Press, London, 1994, p.208).

This was the proposal of Connie. Maura came at her touched her there. She felt like there was a whole world between Coney's legs that went up inside of her every cell.

#### Conclusion

Disability was the social content because we don't have in our hands our future, so it is the very challenging thing of every disabled person, it was more difficult that disabled women even they are looking for best life's , my findings in this disabled autobiography of Connie. Her life was the one example. Her life turned to lesbianism, and she was the main social worker of the disabled women and men. And after continuation relationship with of Maura she had got an idea about disable women's identity and empowerment in their life's the society requiring for their life and empowerment of every disabled women. Disable women's childhood life was the very challenging, every time of her life pains bore but in every pain behind it was truth so she developed her will power. My close observation of reading this "*the me in the mirror*", I found the disabled women's life specially their child hood. Disabled women are their personal and sexual needs are constantly hidden and ignored. First of all, a women is at double advantage because women is seen as an embodiment sexually, and have disabled disfigured body is, going absolutely against the norms established and enforced by the media stereotypes, disabled women, directly and terrify, are taught to be ashamed of their bodies, and disabled women too shy away from the problem, thinking they are sexual, and usually hide behind a self created brave front of denying that sex and their sexually matter to them. A moot point to be considered thus is: what are the hidden problems that disabled women face? Is it treatment they get from men, or is it the way they are shaped be society? Why do disable people consider themselves a sexual? Despite our sexual desires remaining similar to other people, why does insensitive society

suppress them? Disable men get more able-bodied partners than do disabled women.

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