

**AN ANALYSIS OF BIBLICAL WOMEN SILENCING THE GENDER
DISCRIMINATIONS OF THE ANDROCENTRIC SOCIETY**

B.Sharan^a and Dr.S.Franklin Daniel^b

^aPh.D Scholar, Department of English, Madras Christian College, University of Madras.

^bAssociate Professor, Department of English, Madras Christian College.

ABSTRACT:

Women's status in society is an essential part of almost all religious texts and the social set up of religious treatise. While the diction 'Gender' scrutinizes a woman's role in society from a rational point of view, this paper attempts to throw light on select Biblical women, thereby presenting an egalitarian reading of the Gender roles in Scripture. The paper attempts to exalt womanhood by silencing the gender discriminations that are formed out of the androcentric society.

KEYWORDS: Women, Religious texts, Society, Gender, Egalitarian, Scripture, Gender discriminations, Androcentric society.

FULL PAPER:

The attitude in the world toward women has always been catastrophic. For most of the religions of the world, women were a problem. They were brought up with limited rights, and they were participating with limitations in worship. They have always been treated as subordinates to men and they were often treated as second-class in terms of business, politics, and family. As many tend to misconstrue the term "gender" within the Holy Bible, there is considerable confusion in the minds of women and men regarding a woman's role in the Christian tradition. The patriarchal interpretations of Scripture, coupled with the movement for female liberty has even directed many women to revolt. However, regardless of all these male-centered notions,

the Evangelical feminism broke all the fundamental norms of the so-called patriarchy by augmenting the egalitarian perspective of the gender roles in Bible. In those days, though there were specific strict rules on treating women, the egalitarian reading of the gender roles in Scripture deflates the norms of the patriarchal society by elevating the archetypes of women from the Bible. According to present-day research, there can no longer be any question regarding women's subordination as women played significant roles throughout the Biblical literature. In the Scripture, not only in the New Testament, women were also considered important even in some places of the Old Testament. Though the Old Testament has some subordinate figures among the Biblical women, the writings of the New Testament express the unique functions of women, thereby elevating the standards of women. In the Old Testament, God created both female and male gender. While they both disobeyed Him, He received both of them on the same conditions of repentance and in the New Testament, Jesus died for all, and both men and women have been given the command to share the Gospel with everyone according to the book of Mark, chapter 16, verse 15. "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'" (NKJV). The book of Genesis 1:27 says "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them" (NKJV). This verse implies that the "image" of God is reflected in both females and males. While God's nature has all of the most excellent qualities of female and male how will the creation of a female be an afterthought? From these examples it is evident that the submissive imageries of women are all human-made, but not God made. Though the Old Testament stayed behind, the writings of the New Testament have done its job of liberating women. During the Old Testament days, when the society ranked women equal to slaves, the books of the New Testament amidst its patriarchal forces acknowledged women's value and raised their status similar to that of males. Christ himself had fellowship with women, defended them when the male-centered society put them down and taught women as He taught His male

disciples. In the book of Luke, chapter 8, verses 1 – 3, there is a fact of Jesus' ministry being financed by women.

Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities-Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance (Luke 8:1-3; NKJV).

Biblical women of the Old and New Testament, in spite of their patriarchal society, never hesitated to break through the cultural and sexual barriers. The Christian religion never robs women of their honor as both the Old and New Testament women upheld the privilege and poise of womanhood. Though the society during the Old Testament was highly androcentric, the Old Testament establishes some venerable women like Deborah, Ruth, Hannah, Esther, and a host of others. In the New Testament, there are a lot of named and unnamed women whose deeds and stories are of more importance. For example, the Samaritan woman mentioned in the book of John chapter 4. The Samaritan woman had been given a greater honor of being called as the first evangelist in Biblical history. Many women took part actively in the Christian ministry, e.g. the woman who anointed Jesus with perfume in the book of Mark, chapter 14, Lydia in the book of Acts, chapter 16, and Priscilla in the book of Acts, chapter 18, etc. The patriarchal interpretations of the Holy Bible mean to say that males have nothing to learn from females. But to the contrary few women in the Old Testament were ruling people by their wisdom amidst their society being highly patriarchal, E.g., Deborah, Jael, Huldah, etc.

“Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment” (Judges 4:4-5; NKJV).

“Most blessed among women is Jael, The wife of Heber the Kenite; Blessed is she among women in tents” (Judges 5:24; NKJV).

“So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her.” (II Kings 22:14; NKJV)

Still, when patriarchal society was demotivating women that they were created as subordinates to men, there were also specific women examples from the New Testament who were the authorities of the church, set to develop the Christian mission. These examples could be generated many times over. Men were not considered as intellectuals, or spiritual beings when compared to that of women in the Holy Bible. This statement proves that the term “gender equality” is not grounded in any ideology, that is derived from various cultural factors and philosophies but is solely rooted in the proper elucidation of God's word. On this basis, the egalitarian reading of the gender roles in Scripture confirms that the callings and gifts of the Spirit are dispensed without regard to gender roles, which further explains that all of Christ's believers are equal before God, thereby disclaiming the belief of Gender discriminations. Since dominion over everything was given to both women and men, it is proved that a woman was not created lesser to man, nor was a man superior to a woman. Viewing gender and law as social constructs allow the male-dominated system to construct "women", as social inequalities create ideas that male and female are two different sexes characterized by different labeled masculine and feminine. Hence Egalitarians began to attach theology with a feminist perspective thereby reinterpreting the Holy Bible in terms of Egalitarianism. They never

changed any scriptural essence but underwent the social pressure to appraise the Church's stand on the role of women. The egalitarianism, thus associating with the definition of equality, gained widespread acceptance in the secular world. These acts also demolished the sex roles in Church and marriage in terms of gender equality. The egalitarian reading of the Biblical women thus rejected the traditional view of gender discriminations in the androcentric society. And by doing this fundamental precept of feminism was also achieved.

This paper thus proves that gender discrimination was created by society, and when compared to those days' male domination, men treating women as equals can be seen today. The paper thus highlights that the androcentric society despite criticizing women understands the status of women, and the culture would radically improve if every woman and man put the morals of God's word to exercise.

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