

Evolution of The Concepts of Gender and Gender Equality

Gafurova Munajat Bositovna

Independent Researcher at Namangan State Pedagogical Institute, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: The article analyzes the historical evolution of the concepts of gender and gender equality, as well as their significance in modern society. It examines the distinction between gender and biological sex, the various interpretations of gender equality, and the impact of gender stereotypes on society. The aim of the article is to identify the main trends and prospects for ensuring gender equality.

Keywords: Gender, gender equality, gender stereotypes, evolution, social construction, feminism, discrimination, equal rights.

Introduction: The concepts of gender and gender equality have deep roots in the development of philosophical thought, and their evolution is closely linked with cultural, economic, political, and legal processes. In defining gender equality, the principle that "every individual, regardless of sex, has equal rights to access resources and opportunities" is emphasized. The historical evolution of the concepts of gender and gender equality is one of the important indicators of the development of humanity's socio-philosophical thought. The formation and transformation of these concepts reflect the improvement of society's moral values, legal norms, and system of social relations.

Gender – social sex. In English, there is a distinction between social sex ("gender") and biological sex ("sex"). From the perspective of terminology, the concept of gender emerged in the process of the theoretical development of feminism and later evolved directly within the framework of gender studies. The meaning of the concept of "gender" is primarily embodied in the social modeling or construction of sex. Gender is not biologically determined but rather a set of characteristics conferred by social phenomena. Gender can be described as the cultural revolution of sex, representing our perceptions of sex within the framework of our socio-cultural ideas. Thus, the concept of gender provides us with important insights not only about the social roles of sexes but also about

our cultural values, traditions, and place in society.

Gender studies and theories are crucial in observing changes within these concepts and in achieving gender equality. From the perspective of social philosophy, the concept of gender is regarded as a cultural construct that defines an individual's social roles regardless of their biological characteristics. According to the "doing gender" theory, gender is a dynamic process that is constantly reconstructed through everyday social practices. Unlike the biological determinism approach, the concept of gender is shaped on the basis of social constructivism. Biological determinism assumes that the differences between men and women are based on biological factors, considering gender roles as natural and immutable. In contrast, the author demonstrates that gender equality is formed on the basis of social constructivism rather than biological determinism. This approach provides an important theoretical foundation in the struggle for gender equality.

METHODS

Throughout human history, the era of matriarchy, often described in many socio-philosophical works as the "rule of women," is noteworthy. During this period, women were active in various spheres of society and established their dominance. The doctrines of matriarchy have been extensively studied by analysts and scholars, who regard this era as distinct from the traditionally male-organized societies. Researcher M. Kholmatova notes that women were the founders of

agriculture, pottery, and animal husbandry, introduced the division of labor, created the first tools, and initiated household management.

However, with the transition to the patriarchal era, the social balance began to shift in favor of men. Men emerged as the primary productive force in society and were distinguished by their roles as community leaders, heads of families, and protectors. K. Millet, who studied the patriarchal era, emphasized that: "The dominance of men as a patriarchal institution is stable, deeply rooted in all forms of political, social, and economic stratification (caste or class, feudalism or bureaucracy), and notable for its historical and geographical diversity." This perspective highlights changes in social structures, as patriarchy not only consolidated men's roles within the family but also strengthened their socio-political positions in broader contexts. It also underscores the formation of social structure and hierarchy, as well as the distribution of roles between men and women. Thus, the patriarchal period altered the social balance, reinforced male dominance in society, and manifested in diverse and variable forms across different regions and historical contexts.

The historical evolution of gender roles dates back to ancient civilizations. Analyses of archaeological and historical sources reveal that gender concepts and the social status of women varied significantly across different cultures. In ancient Egypt, some elements of gender equality were observed: women had higher legal status compared to Mesopotamia and other ancient civilizations. Egyptian women could own property, engage in commercial activities, and even participate in state governance.

The discourse on gender issues and male-female relations is also reflected in ancient philosophical traditions. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, in his work *Politics*, taught about naturalized differences between men and women. He interpreted the man as the "active principle" and the woman as the "passive principle," a view that dominated European philosophy for centuries. These ideas reflect Aristotle's conservative approach to gender roles and significantly influenced social structures and interpersonal relations. Aristotle's views had a long-term impact on shaping gender stereotypes in European philosophy and society in general, as they legitimized the differentiation between the sexes.

Plato, the father of philosophy, also expressed loyalty to the ideas of his great contemporaries. In his work *The Republic* (Ideal State), he supported these discussions, concluding that the difference between men's and women's natures is relative and pertains

only to the reproductive sphere. According to Plato, a woman could choose her profession freely: music, philosophy, or other fields, including military service. In the work, Plato raises questions such as: "Can a woman be considered capable of performing such a difficult and responsible task? Can the female half of humanity participate equally with men in all matters?" By depicting the strong and long-lasting influence of traditions and customs, which confined women to "cooking" and "childcare," Plato exposed the social roots of the issue concerning women's roles in society.

The Roman statesman and jurist Aemilius Papinian also wrote about the status of women in society: "According to the general principles of our law, the status of women is worse than that of men." Although a woman might be free, she did not enjoy civil rights. For example, she could not serve in the army, vote in assemblies, be elected to public office, serve as a judge or prosecutor, or act as a third-party advocate in court proceedings.

In the *Dialectics of Human and Society Relations*.

The issue of gender has long been one of the central points of philosophical thought. In the land of Movarounnahr, where Eastern and Western philosophical traditions intersected, gender relations underwent a unique evolution — here, at the crossroads of social units, cultural paradigms, and economic necessities, the status of women always carried a certain ontological meaning. With the advent of Islamic teachings in our region during the 7th–8th centuries, gender relations acquired a new philosophical meaning. During this period, Eastern philosophy viewed the differences between men and women less as biological determinism and more as socio-cultural constructions. Although Islamic teachings defined the roles of men and women to some extent, the concepts of femininity and masculinity were understood dialectically, as complementary forces. Importantly, within the Islamic paradigm, women held equal spiritual status with men, though differences in the distribution of social functions remained. At that time, women's status in society was regulated not only by religious teachings but also preserved remnants of centuries-old matriarchal traditions in the region.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The concept of gender and the ideas of gender equality have traversed a long and complex historical path. Their evolution is closely tied to societal development, socio-political changes, philosophical views, and shifts in scientific paradigms. The term "gender" was originally used in English solely to denote a grammatical category (the "masculine" and "feminine" of words). As a concept in the social sciences and

humanities, gender emerged in the 1950s–1960s. During this period, American psychologist John Money and psychoanalyst Robert Stoller began to use the term in the sense of “social sex,” which is socially and culturally constructed, as distinct from biological sex. As Money and Ehrhardt pointed out, gender identity forms from childhood and develops under the influence of numerous social and cultural factors, in addition to biological sex.

By the 1970s, the concept of gender gained wide currency under the influence of the first wave of the feminist movement. At this time, the issue of gender became politicized under the slogan “the personal is political.” During the second wave of feminism, the concept of gender was reconceptualized and completely separated from “sex”: sex was regarded as a biological characteristic, while gender was understood as a social construct. In her famous article “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” Joan Scott developed the category of gender as a tool of historical analysis, substantiating its importance not only for studying women’s history but also for understanding the system of social relations in general.

The 1980s–1990s marked the consolidation of the concept of gender within academic circles. During this period, the field of gender studies developed, with special courses and faculties opening at universities. As Boxer noted, in the United States, women’s studies, and later gender studies, developed as a unique union of academic activity and social movement. In this period, gender began to be understood not only as concerning women but also as a complex social construct encompassing men and other gender groups.

By the 21st century, the concept of gender had broadened and become more complex. Contemporary gender theory seeks to overcome the contradictions between essentialism (the view that gender results from biological determination) and social constructivism (the view that gender is purely a social construction). New concepts and approaches emerged, such as gender identity, gender performativity (Judith Butler), and queer theory.

CONCLUSION

Reinterpreting our nation’s cultural-historical experience is a serious hermeneutic task facing today’s thought. Turning to the history of gender relations, we gain the opportunity not only to reassess it through the paradigm of contemporary gender philosophy but also to perceive more deeply its hidden meanings and its place in human existence. The continuous transformation of gender roles throughout historical development indicates that this issue is not limited to legal norms or biological traits but embodies a

profound philosophical-anthropological essence. Indeed, the concepts of “woman” and “man” are cultural processes that reflect the era’s understanding of humanity, society, and existence.

Therefore, contemporary philosophical approaches require us to abandon a superficial evaluation of past gender relations through a one-dimensional dichotomy of “equality–inequality.” Instead of this reductionist view, it is more appropriate to analyze the phenomena of femininity and masculinity not as mutually exclusive poles but as ontological categories that co-create a specific social text, complementing and constantly interacting with each other. Their dialectical unity and contradictions form one of the fundamental mechanisms of society’s self-awareness, the definition of its values, and the construction of historical reality. In turn, this allows us not only to analyze the past but also to understand it — and thereby gain a deeper comprehension of our present.

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