



Remembering the Forgotten Differences of Men and Women:

A Comparative Study of Jordan Peterson’s debate, John Gray’s Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus and the Selected Quranic Verses

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Abstract

Gender differences and their depiction has been a rich debate for last few decades in Gender Studies. The current paper aims at exploring differences between men and women To begin with Jordan Peterson’s claim that men and women are not the same and would not be the same; but it does not mean that women should be treated unfairly. Next gender differences in John Gray’s Men are from Mars Women are from Venus is discussed to explores differences between men and women in terms of language, psychology, stress handling. Lastly the gender differences are viewed from the Quranic perspective. The study concludes that man and woman are made to be different with distinctly different spheres of action and performance.

Keywords:

Gender, Differences, Essentialism, Martian, Venusian, Personality traits, Quranic verses.



Introduction:

The debate of gender differences has been a fertile debate in Gender Studies. It was late 1800 that the term feminism was used first. Different writers have discussed the issues of inequality and gender segregation. Consequently, the world is divided into two sections of people; feminists, those who claim that women should be given all those rights and privileges which men have. On the other hand anti-feminists claim that women are inferior to men on different grounds.

The present study contributes to gender debate in a new dimension that women and men are not segregated due to social constructs rather their differences are nature-constructs and that feminists' stance is an interest based-approach which creates hostility between them. In this regard, Jordan Peterson, a renowned Canadian psychologist, argues that the talks of feminists are just theories and ideologies which bring nothing but a competition between men and women. He further says that men and women are different and for a calm and peaceful world their differences are to be acknowledged. In an interview with Newman he says, "Men and women are not the same and they won't be the same: but that doesn't mean women shouldn't be treated fairly. The paper aims at exploring differences between men and women and hence it chiefly rings round three primary resources of discussion regarding gender differences. Firstly, it rests on Jordan Peterson's claim that men and women are not the same and would not be the same; but it does not mean that women should be treated unfairly. In this regard, it brings to the light gender related factors such as Five Big Personality traits i.e. Openness to experience, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Neuroticism, which have different degrees and levels in men and women. This taxonomy of personality traits has established itself as a model most consistently favoured by personality psychologists over the last two decades (Goldberg, L. R. 1993). Secondly, it discusses gender differences John Gray's *Men are from Mars Women are from Venus*. In this regard, it explores differences between men and women in term of language, psychology, coping with stress and their life on two different planets; Mars and Venus as Martians and Venusians. Finally it discusses gender differences mentioned in the Holy Quran. The selected verses of the holy Quran show that men and women are created differently, they are different in many ways such as biologically, psychologically, physically and in term of responsibilities.

1.1 Objectives:

- a) To analyse differences between men and women pointed out by Jordan Peterson in his debate on gender.
- b) To discuss differences of gender in John Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*.
- c) To find out differences between men and women mentioned in the Holy Quran.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A brief survey of gender differences opined by different theorists:

Gender is one of the most influential and significant traits of a person's identity. It influences a person's structure, activities, interest, responsibilities and style of

life. There are a number of theories/ideologies regarding gender development and differences. An interest in gender has been persistent and gender issues have been investigated in many domains, including workplace, marketplace, and leisure activities. It has been noted that although gender is a dominant structural force in families, it is constructed and reconstructed on a daily basis in private relationships. (Allen (2000) Gender differences were also noted in the "control" of the dispute and in how one communicates. Wives usually build a climate of agreement, and they also escalate or de-escalate the conflict with their verbal and non-verbal negativity (Thompson & Walker, 1989).

Manchanda, R. V and Elizabeth Moore-Shay (1996) found that boys usually use high power strategies such as asking and bargaining. On the other hand girls were found to switch more from high power to low power strategies such as persistence, begging and pleading, anger, etc.

Men and women use different styles in communication. Deborah Tannen (1990) asserts that women typically talk to build community and rapport whereas men use talk as a means of establishing status and independence. The differences between genders are further amplified by the ways in which men and women are socialized. Carol Gilligan (1982) opines that men and women experience relations and issues of dependence differently. Through socialization and subsequent moral development, males rely on separation and individuation to establish their gender identity. Feminine identity does not depend on the achievement of separation from the mother or on the development of individuation. Because masculinity is defined by separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy and female gender identity is threatened by separation.

2.2 Feminism as a gap-creating practice between men and women:

Emma Watson (2014) argues "The more I have spoken about feminism, the more I have realized that fighting for women's rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating".

The slogan of feminism is not being used to achieve equality for both men and women rather it is used to create hatred of men. People- men and women are segregated as feminist and anti-feminist and this division itself brings a breach when it comes in society and on media. This thing has also been pointed by Jordan Peterson who argues that gender related theories are just theoretical stance which brings division in the society and spread aggression and hatred between men and women. In this regard the movement of feminism has failed bringing considerable reforms in the society due to its interest based nature. For that a brief overview of this campaign is being discussed here. The term feminism was basically originated in late 1800s and first appeared in France and the Netherland. Then it emerged in UN in 1910. Marlene Gates, a scholar of women studies, has divided it in three phases. The first phase attempted to remove women's suffrage and was to secure right of vote for women. Further, in UK and US focus was made on women's rights such as marriage, parenting, and property share. Similarly, in 1905 Iranian Constitutional Revolution aimed to bring equality for women in education, career and legal matters.

The second phase comes in the 1960s and it broadened the debate to issues such as sexuality, workplace, reproductive rights, domestic violence and legal inequalities. For example, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* addressed the despairs of housewives. But her work only depicted the issues of upper class white women only. In this phase the feminist started to pushback against the men and the argument was that "all men oppress all women". Thus ironically this movement launched a war between men and women. The third phase of feminism is actually the extension of second phase. It turned from politics into culture which included that how feminist should live and behave. This phase focused on dress style and manners etc. Feminism in the current age advocates women's rights on political, social and economic grounds to bring equality for women. Beborach L. Rhode(2014)in *What Women Want* argues that feminism implies activism and it makes many women believe that they have to hate men in order to be feminist. Similarly, in the view of Bolzendahl and Myers (2013) feminism conceals an 'interest-based approach' which includes economic standing, sexual orientation and social status.

Moreover a research scholar has done work on one of the social websites titled Tumblr Page. The researcher has analysed the comments of anti-feminist women. Some of these comments are given below which shun the idea of feminism:

- 1) "I am not a feminist because I am not a delusional, disgusting, hypocritical and men-hater" (post-1)
- 2) "My rapist was a woman" (post-8)
- 3) "Men and women are inherently different and that's great" (post-17)
- 4) "I want to be treated as a lady by a gentleman" (post 52)
- 5) "Focusing only on women will never bring equality" (post 20"

All above cited comments reflects that why these women discourage feminist stance and substitute it with alternatives by arguing that we need to advocate for the rights of all people regardless of gender. They termed the feminist school of thought as a hypocritical, man-hating and illusionary practice which has ironically divided men and women and has created war between them. This paper specifically discusses gender differences such as biological, psychological, social and five big traits of personality in three different resources. The paper tries to fill the gap regarding the debate of differences between men and women as essential and innate. It significantly adds considerable ideas in understanding the differences of gender.

3. Limitations:

The chief limitations of this paper is that it specifically deals with the views of Jordan Peterson's debate on gender differences in term of Five Big Trait of Personality in which it just discusses difference between men and women and does not talk about the concept of inferiority and superiority. Further, it covers few important points regarding gender differences in term of biological, psychological, communicative and coping with stress described by John Gray in *Men are from Mar, Women are from Venus*. Finally, it discusses few Quranic verses which reflect gender differences in term of creation of men and women, their psychological dissimilarities and difference of responsibilities etc.

Research Questions

- a) What are the differences between men and women raised by Jordan Peterson in his debate on gender regarding Five Big Traits of Personality?
- b) What differences of gender are described in John Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*?
- c) How men and women are different in the light of selected Quranic verses?

3.1 Methodology:

The study is qualitative in nature as it discusses gender differences. This study employs a qualitative content analysis technique. According to Krippendorff (1980) "content analysis is a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (p. 18). Content analysis technique helped me analyse the selected contents of three primary resources of the discussion in this paper. In this context, selected passages/contents from the debate of Jordan Peterson, Gray's *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* and Holy Quranic verses were analysed in the light of research questions and the objectives of the study.

In this study, the mentioned texts/sources discussions were viewed in the contexts of Gender Essentialism theory. The concept of essentialism goes back to the work of Plato (428-348 B.C.). He was the opinion that natural world has finite, fixed and unchanging realities. In other words, everything has an innate essence that is absolute. There are three distinct schools of thought on essentialism: (a) Plato's classical essentialism, (b) modern essentialism characterized by biological determinism, and (c) cultural essentialism characterised by cultural determinism based on biological factors. Fuss (1989, p.2) argues:

Essentialism is classically defined as a belief in true essence - that which is most irreducible, unchanging, and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing. This definition represents the traditional Aristotelian understanding of essence, the definition with the greatest amount of currency in the history of Western metaphysics.

Gender Essentialism theory opines that men and women are born with distinctively different natures biologically. There are certain innate and unchangeable features that are the roots of difference between men and women. Gender essentialists argue that the differences between the sexes are of an intrinsic nature, closely associated with physical, physiological, and/or spiritual differences. On the other hand, feminists argue that although there are some biological sex differences between men and women, much of them are in fact socially constructed.

People who identify as non-binary explicitly reject the notion of gender essentialism.

The present study rests on theoretical framework rather a conceptual framework, as it based on the theory of gender essentialism. The study claimed that men and women are different in aspects such as biological, psychological and in five big personality traitsetc. And the chosen theory propagates the same factors that men and women are two different essences and their differences are innate rather than

social constructs. The mentioned factors of gender differences have been analysed in detail in the chapter of analysis.

2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 Men and women are not the same and would not be the same; but it does not mean that women should be treated unfairly, says Jordan Peterson

Jordan Peterson, a renowned Canadian psychologist, has silenced the feminists of recent century through his crucial debate on gender differences. He claims himself a classical-liberal whose basic claim is that men and women are not the same and would not be the same; but it does not mean that women should be treated unfairly. He is of the view that a war has been started between men and women on the name of equality by feminists who are just fans of fanaticised theories and ideologies without any practical results. He argues that we should not see the world a competition between men and women and this is what so-called feminist school of thought is doing which actually segregates men and women on the name of equal rights and privileges which seem quite unachievable.

He is of the view that the more the countries are egalitarian the more the differences they reflect between men and women. He cites the example of Scandinavia where women and men have free choice for the selection of their desired professions. But after a careful survey it was noted that after twenty people a man desires to be a male nurse and similarly after a twenty people a women desires to be an engineer. This clearly shows that the division of profession is not a social construct phenomenon rather men and women have natural inclination in choosing professions. Similarly he, in an interview with Camile Pegile, argues that he had been among different ladies who desired to be housewives but their political setting and cultural climate did not permit them to be in that way. Peterson recalls the differences between men and women particularly in respect of Five Big Traits of Personality such as Openness to experience, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Neuroticism. These mentioned traits are being analysed in following paragraphs.

2.1.1 Openness to Experience:

Feingold (1994) defined Openness to Experience as an encompassing interest in novel people, ideas, and aesthetics have been either inconsistent or of negligible magnitude in large, statistically well-powered samples. It is the creative dimension in which some people are extremely high in openness to experience. Openness is reflected in cultural and artistic pursuits.

It breaks down into intelligence and creativity. According to Peterson, men are generally found more open to any kind of experience. They have more openness to any sort of circumstances than women. They are more daring and adventurous. People with low openness to experience are conservative and reserved and they are not interested in novel ideas. Women are less open and adventurous and they are more restricted and restrained to domestic and subjective activities.

2.1.2 Extroversion:

Extraversion appears to be reflected primarily in social engagement. It actually runs quite deep and fast in people. There are people who are extremely social and spend each moment of life with others. On the other hand, people are so introverted that they can bother spending their few moments with others. In the

view of Jordan Peterson, men are more sociable as compare to women. They are more out-going and fun-loving. On the other hand, women are found less sociable and more reserved. They are less energetic than men in doing out-door tasks and activities. This is the reason that Peterson argues that the top FTSE 100 companies of the world are run by only seven women why they prefer adding men labour who work 70-80 hours a week whereas women hardly work 40-50 hours a week. So men are more extroverted whereas women are more introverted.

2.1.3 Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness appears to be marked by a lack of indiscreet and unproductive behaviours.

This trait refers to ambition, self-discipline, reliability and consistency. Conscientious people are hardworking and dutiful. Women are more self-conscious than men. In this regard, men are found more ambitious and disciplined in doing things than women. They are reliable in the sense that they do not have domestic issues such as the issue of children nurturing and feeding. While women most of the time quit job on account of domestic issues and hence they are considered less reliable when it comes to hiring them for any job in different organizations. Peterson argues that actually women taught men to be self-conscious and still teach all the time because nothing that makes the man more self-conscious than to be rejected by a woman whom he desires. And this is a motif that really runs through the story of Adam and Eve centrally. He cites that in the book of Genesis the story of Satan is associated with the snake that means that the Garden is a conceptual system within which people exist.

2.1.4 Agreeableness:

Jordan Peterson in an interview at BBC talks about pay-gap as a significant fact that women are more agreeable than men. He cites the example of pay-gap that women are offered less pay as compare to men in the society. He is of the view the prejudice is only a small factor in the phenomenon of pay-gap which has often been claimed by feminists. Rather, he presents other factors in this matter and these include women's tendency for neuroticism, their likelihood to experience stress, depression unpredictability and level of agreeableness. In other words, he says that women are more agreeable while men are less agreeable in term of their personality trait. Moreover, he mentions that the top FTSE 100 companies of the world are run by only seven women why they prefer adding men labour who work 70-80 hours a weeks, why not women? Because women have other issues such as of maternity and work hardly 40-50 hours a week due to their domestic concerns. He further says that eradication of pay gap may go against the interest of women because they will be unable to adjust the affairs and concerns they have got to manage. Therefore, the outcomes of equality will be undesirable in this regard too.

2.1.5 Neuroticism:

This trait of human personality indicates to negative emotions. It includes emotions such jealousy, pessimism and hatred. People with high trait of neuroticism feel much more anxiety and emotional pain. They are more sensitive and towards depression and anxiety than the people with low in neuroticism who are known as emotionally settled and imperturbable. Jordan Peterson argues that

although men and women both have this trait in their personality but the degree of this trait in women is higher than in men. It is much more likely to be females than males because when puberty kicks in, women trait neuroticism rises and it stays higher for rest of their life. That so reason that females are vulnerable and can easily be hurt and harmed.

2.2 John Gray's *Men Are from Mars, Women are from Venus*

John Gray (1992) in his work, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* terms men and women as Martians and Venusians. The author is of the view that men once lived on Mars whereas women lived on Venus. He presents the characteristics of their respective lives on two different planets; Mars and Venus. In this regard, Martians seek power, competition, achievements, competency and skills. His view here resembles with that of Jordan Peterson's notion that men are more interested in things unlike women who are curious in people. They do not like reading magazine such as today's psychology rather they find interest in doing outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, racing cars and sports activities. Similarly, Gray argues that a Martian feels satisfied by achieving anyone of the abovementioned things. He cites "A man's sense of self is defined through his ability to achieve results" (p. 16).

On the other hand, Venusians on the Venus live in their own way. They seek love, beauty, relationship and sharing problems. They unlike Martians, feel satisfied through their feelings and degree of relationship with others. They unlike men, lament for protection and they feel complete when they are best guarded by men. He further says that men mistakenly expect women to think, communicate and react the way men do. Similarly, women expect men to feel communicate and respond the way women do. And this thing fills our relations with uncertainty and conflict. He cites example of gender difference that if two men go on a lunch they would be talking about the project on which they are working whereas two women while having lunch would be discussing people, relation and beauty.

2.2.1 Different reaction of Martians and Venusians against problems and stress

Men and women differently react to problems. When Martian faces any problem, he does not consider it worth sharing with others. He secludes himself to a cave, disconnects with the community and tries his best to solve the problem himself because by doing so he feels pride and satisfied. So he does not come out until he solves it. Gray (1992) coins the phrase, "Men go their caves and women talk" to describe this psychological difference in coping with stress between men and women. (p. 29) Similarly, he does not seek any help or advice from his fellows regarding his problem. If he does not find any solution, he tries to forget it for time being by playing games or sometime drinks alcoholic too. This seclusion of Martian from his society is due to his sense of achievement as he loves doing the things himself without any help. Once the problem is settled the Martians come out of cave and try to reconnect with society, but at this point Venusians do not go smooth with them because they think Martians indifferent and careless to them due to distance they have create during the span of problem. Whereas this is not the real case rather, they earlier became secluded for they wanted to solve the

problem themselves. So a clash point arises between them due to different way of reaction against stress and problems.

On the other hand, when Venusians face problem, they love to share it with other, they make a circle and share it with others in order to resolve it. They feel satisfied when they are heard by others. This is something different that if they find the solution or not but they must be listened and should be proposed advices and suggestions by others. But if they are immediately proposed with solution to their problem, they do not feel good in this way too because when a women share any problem with a man she does not mean to get a solution rather she likes being heard and acknowledged by men. In this regard, Tannen (1990) argued the same notion that Men aim to avoid failure and taking orders from other people as they see it as a sign of losing independence implying they have a lower status. On the other hand, women avoid isolation and are often fine with taking orders as they see it as a form of connection and intimacy with the other person.

2.2.2 Differences of communication between Martians and Venusians:

Gray (1992) argues that Martians and Venusians on their respective planets had the same words but the way they were used gave different meanings. Ironically, they have the same language/ languages today too, but they use it the way that it brings different meaning and this different use of language is due to their different understanding about each other. Even when today when men and women use the same words they do not mean the same things. For example when a woman says, ‘yes I feel like you never listen’, she here does not expect the man to take the word “listen” literally. Rather the use of this word is just the way to express the frustration she has at the moment. The writer is of the view “ to fully express their feelings, women assume poetic license to use various superlatives, generalizations and metaphors” (p. 60). In this connection some of the academic researchers have also shown that women use communication as a source to enhance relationships and social connections whereas men use it to achieve tangible outcomes and practical activities such as affairs of business. (Leaper, 1991; Maltz &orker, 1982; Wood, 1996). The same thing Gray (1992) argues in these words “The main differences Gray identifies between communication styles of men and women are as follows: Men are goal-oriented, they define their sense of self through their ability to achieve results Women, on the other hand, are relationship- Gender Differences in Leadership oriented as they define their sense of self by their feelings and by the quality of their relationships”. Deborah Tannen, (1990) in her book, *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, wrote that differences between men and women start at a young age. She argued that boys create relationships with each other by doing things together; activities are central to their friendship. Girls, on the other hand, create close relationships with each other by simply talking, “talk is the essence of intimacy” (Tannen, 1990, p, 55).

In order to understand barriers of communication between men and women some of the examples from Gray’s book *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, are given below.

Women’s utterances/ complaints
Everyone ignore me

Men’s response to women’s complaints
I am sure some people notice you

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| I want to forget everything | if you don't lie your job, then quit. |
| The house is always a mess | it is not always a mess |
| Nothing is working | are you saying it is my fault |
| We are always in a hurry | we are not. Friday we were relaxed. |

The above cited example openly exhibit misunderstanding between men and women due to different perceptions of the utterances. It is seen often that women say the things indirectly often whereas men take the literal meanings of those utterances which lead to linguistic barriers. So here too, both genders need to recall the difference they have so that misunderstanding and wrong perceptions be avoided.

Gray is of the view that if we want this world peaceful and harmonious places, we will have to remember our differences like that of Martians and Venusians. In this regard he says "without awareness that we are supposed to be different, men and women are at odd relation with each other, we usually forget this important truth" (Gray 1992 page 1). Similarly, texts such as 'The Rules' (Fein & Schneider, 1995) and 'The Surrendered Wife' (Doyle, 2001) urge gender traditionalism in intimate relationships as the road to gender harmony.

2.3 Men and women: Two different genders in the light of Quranic verses and Islamic history

Men and women are termed as two different genders in the Holy Quran. They are assigned different responsibilities and have various differences. Some of the Quranic verses are being interpreted below.

1) "Men and women are not the same", says God (Surah Al Imran, verse 31) In the light of Islam, both men and women are created by Allah. Adam is created from mud whereas Eve is created from Adam's left rib. In this regard, Quran declares "May the people fear your Lord, who created you from the same one, and created a husband and wife and sent many men and women to her". (Surah Al-Nisaah, verse 1). Similarly, it is cited by Allama Muhammad Baqir (1983) "woman is created from man so she attempts and struggles to get man so men should care their women. Whereas man is created from soil, so he attempts in its cultivation and fertility (p. 113).

The same stance has been given by Peterson in one of his interviews that women are more interested in men than things whereas men are more interested in things than women.

The differences between men and women can also be seen in the light of Hazrat Ali's sayings who once argued "O people, women lack in faith and intellectual capacity than man. They don't say prays during the period of menstruation, similarly, two women are equal to one man's testimony, she has half share in property whereas a man has full share". (Address, 80 mentioned in Nihajul Balagha 1980). Moreover, in Islam men and women are two different yet inter-dependent genders. God has endowed men with certain potentials but it does not mean that women are all-deprived species. For example, where men have the power to lead, protect and pedigree, women is gifted with the power of love, care, motherhood and sustainability of domestic concerns. Therefore, God being the creator of both; have assigned separate and respective duties and responsibilities to them.

Further, it was reported by Hazrat Umar bin Abdullah who heard Hazrat Prophet Muhammad saying “women who adopt resemblance with men are not from our community and similarly men who resemble with women in appearance are not from us”.

Man is not a secluded or individual being rather has social temperament. Man is social animal as Aristotle defines and lives within a different social settings such as in family and community. In family husband and wife are the basic units who have rights upon each other. Allah, almighty declares in holy Quran, “**And they (women) have rights (over their husbands as regards living expenses) similar (to those of their husbands) over them (as regards obedience and respect) to what is reasonable, but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them**” (Quran, 2:228)

In Islam man being husband, is supposed to provide all the needs of woman especially the arrangement of bread and butter for family whereas woman is assigned to do domestic affairs such as look after the children. Although, man is responsible for running family yet for a peaceful and united life man should decide and settle the things with the consensus of wife.

Thus Islam does not burden the woman with any kind of financial responsibility. Before her marriage father is supposed to fulfill all her needs whereas after marriage husband is responsible to provide her all the things she needs. In this regard, the Holy Quran declares, “Upon the father is the mothers' provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable. No person is charged with more than his capacity”. (Quran, 233). Similarly, Quran says, “Men are guardians and managers over women.” (al-Qur’an, 4:34)

On the other hand, wife is directed to obey husband. Husband is given priority to wife. In this regard the Holy Quran declares, “But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise”. (Quran, **verse 233**) In fact men and women are two different and distinct members of the society. They have respective tasks and responsibilities. So for a peaceful and harmonious society, it is necessary that they should work recalling their differences.

Conclusion:

The study was aimed to analyze gender differences between men and women. Three important resources were used such as the debate of Jordan Peterson, John Gray’s *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* and the selected verses of Holy Quran. The paper has summed up that men and women are two different essences. Their differences are nature-constructs rather social and cultural. The above cited three primary resources of discussion have proved that the gender essentialism is natural and desirable phenomenon whereas feministic approach is an undesirable and a gap creating practice which has widened hatred between men and women. The study has systematically achieved the objectives and the research questions, raised in the introductory part of the paper.



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