

Behavioural Nonconformity as A Primordial Concept Since Ancient Civilisations

Rhythm Bhati¹, Dr. Vishakha Pethkar²

¹Student of BA English, Department of Liberal Arts, MIT World Peace University

²Assistant Professor, Department of Liberal Arts, MIT World Peace University

Abstract

In recent years, there is a surge in the labels of the gender-identity discourse. This is seen through the acronym LGBTQIA+. The plus sign at the end indicates more identities to come. This leads to examining the history and development of these identities and labels. A quick overview reveals that all labels are not necessarily built on the same foundation - the labels past LGB are identity orientations not sexual orientations.

In this paper, the researchers show the permeance of identity orientations by tracing its existence since the ancient times. The rationale is to show the existence of gender fluidity or behavioural nonconformity and its reception in a different era. The research answers how the surge in gender identities and queer labels is not a recent one but a continuum of a yesteryear occurrence. The gap to note and analysed using a Jungian view is the response to such non-conformity and its expression in language.

To conclude, the paper shows that psychological androgyny, in relation with bisexuality or nonconforming behaviour is neither a recent nor a Western development. The only development is the language and labels that have evolved with civilisations.

Keywords: Behavioural nonconformity, Gender-identity discourse, androgyny, homosexuality, gender-critical.

1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of behavioural nonconformity, in effect with gender roles and sexual orientation can be found and traced back to ancient civilizations. Psychological androgyny can be observed through multiple historical texts and their recent rewritings through the norms and characters. Such texts show that rigidity of roles was not a necessary aspect of the two sexes. Through characters that fall in-between the concepts like androgyny, nonconforming behaviour, homosexuality, cross-dressing, shapeshifting, drag etc. the pervasiveness of fluidity is seen. This leads the researchers to examine and analyse the representation of yesteryears and their development in the later societies.

For instance, in the case of India, the post-colonial hangover resulted in a contrasting approach to behavioural non-conformity and fluidity. Literature shows this gradual shift and leads to the realisation that different cultures have evolved diversely in the current era. The societal understanding of social roles and the abolishing of those stereotypical roles through androgyny is backed heavily by cultures that have a long-standing history with fluidity.

Hence, the historical and literal existence of behavioural non-conformity, gender fluidity, androgyny confirms the view of the queer population today. While the norms that were developed later to bring a

sense of community and responsibility to people are considered traditional, they have proven to be detrimental and orthodox.

1.1 Gender Discourse

The 'Gender discourse' is an ongoing phenomenon which refers to the ways in which society discusses and constructs the roles, behaviours and expectations associated with different genders. According to the Oxford Dictionary, 'Gender' means "the state of being male or female (chiefly in cultural or social contexts)" ("gender" n.2). It further describes gender on the basis of its usage which could differ in terms with its context, "Although the words gender and sex both have the sense 'the state of being male or female', they are typically used in different ways: sex tends to refer to the biological differences, while gender tends to refer to cultural or social ones." ("gender" usage), which gives a brief idea on how gender as a term is used. 'Discourse' means "a formal written or spoken discussion of a topic" ("discourse" n.2). The overall 'gender discourse' refers to the discussions on the topic of genders and the societal roles which come with a particular gender. Since the early 2000s, gender as a topic has taken a different turn. Now, the society discusses more than the male and the female sex and gives more emphasis to newer terms like 'non-binary,' 'gender fluidity,' etc. "The study of gender and discourse not only provides a descriptive account of male/female discourse but also reveals how language functions as a symbolic resource to create and manage personal, social, and cultural meanings and identities." (Kendall & Tannen 1).

In her 2021 book titled "Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism", Dr. Kathleen Stock deduces that the term 'gender' has four different meanings. For analysis, the researchers have incorporated this nomenclature of "GENDER 1, GENDER 2, GENDER 3 and GENDER 4 (Stock, 38)."

1.2 Androgyny

Androgyny is an essential contributing factor in the gender discourse for its relevance in the discussions for its ambiguous nature and non-conformity to traditional gender norms. 'Androgynous' as described in the Oxford dictionary – "partly male and partly female in appearance; of indeterminate sex. ORIGIN C17 (earlier (C16) as androgyne): via L. androgynus from Gk androgynos (from aner, andr- 'man' + gune 'woman') + -ous ("androgynous" n.1)."

Androgyny as a concept has been significant in historical, philosophical, and cultural scriptures of ancient civilisations. Though its meaning can change upon usage, bisexuality, and gender fluidity both fall under the umbrella term of androgyny (Pande, xi).

2. Rationale

- This research seeks to probe into the primordial existence of psychological androgyny through historical, mythological, and ancient literature.
- It further aims to examine the contemporary perspectives on the same concepts.
- The research draws its hypothesis based on diverse sources which include historical and ancient mythological frameworks as well as contemporary works and retellings of mythological scriptures.

3. Methodology

The researchers have chosen and applied the methods of archival research and theoretical analysis to the selected characters from the texts. The selected texts are "Symposium" by Plato, "Shikhandi" by Devdutt Pattnaik and "Ardhanarishvara: The Androgyne Probing the Gender Within" by Alka Pande. Furthermore, the analysis is undertaken using the Jungian view of Animus-Anima from his 1969 work "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious" and the nomenclature by Dr. Kathleen Stock from her 2021 work

“Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism.” The paper analyses the selected texts through the theoretical frameworks and displays the permeance of behavioural nonconformity and its reception.

4. Analysis

The characters used in this research link the several ways in which the roots of nonconformity can be traced back to ancient times in various parts of the world. Culturally, this is an impressive diversity of thought and selection. The researchers have incorporated the nomenclature provided by Dr. Kathleen Stock for analysis and elaborated by using Jungian view.

The intent for incorporating the Jungian view is to provide psychological backing of the research. The archetype helps the readers understand the psychology of nonconformity and the subconscious means by which it pervades the mind. It helps in the understanding of nonconformity as a common concept, existing in the collective subconscious of individuals.

Stock’s distinction of the genders:

GENDER 1	GENDER 2	GENDER 3	GENDER 4
Synonym for the term ‘sex’. It refers to the two biological sexes i.e., male and female.	It refers to the social conditioning and stereotypes of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’.	The division between men and women as two sets of people, in context of social roles.	Referring to ‘gender identity’ and psychologically relating to your biological.

Shikhandi (Pattanaik 2014)

In Indian mythology is King Drupada who prays to Lord Shiva asking for a son who will kill Drona. The child born to King Drupada is a daughter named Shikhandini. Certain that the god is not one to trick him, Drupada claims that Shikhandini is a boy and orders her to be raised as such. Hence, the princess is raised to be a warrior not a homemaker. On the night of her wedding to another princess Shikhandini is discovered to be a woman. Dreading the doom of an impending war due to the marital trickery, Shikhandini runs into the forest to kill herself. She is rescued by a yaksha. As Pattanaik writes, “was it a woman he saved or a man? For the girl thought like a man and felt like a man and had always been treated as a man. But that body of hers was certainly not a man’s (Pattanaik, 42).”

A simple literary analysis reveals that biologically Shikhandini is a female who, given the circumstances, is socialised as a male. And the role she fulfils socially is GENDER 2 and GENDER 3 (Stock 38). To clarify, her biological sex is female and her social identity i.e., GENDER 2 and GENDER 3 is male. To elaborate further, Shikhandini is allowed access to the space and skills that her sex was not allowed in that era. Due to the manner in which she is raised, she does not experience femininity and feminising is not forced upon her. The social role is therefore vastly different for her due to this gap. And Shikhandini does not realise the difference between her biological sex and her social conditioning until she discovers the truth on her wedding night.

Considering the Jungian view, Shikhandini is the archetypal animus whose biology is immutably female while her characteristics are comparatively nonconforming. The behavioural nonconformity is seen through her fierceness as a warrior, the skills she develops as a capable fighter, her utter lack of exposure to a female space, her mindset of becoming the ruler of a kingdom one day etc. Furthermore, the androgyny is also observed through her sexual orientation. By its symbolic nature, the Jungian view reveals the

symbolism that Shikhandini embodies. Limited by her sex, she is freed by her circumstances but the space she occupies is a house of cards. Eventually, the death of Bhishma by her hands further highlights the depiction of nature over nurture. The point to note is she is considered an outlier rather than a well-developed female who is empowered and capable.

The Symposium (Plato 2003)

The text is written in the form of dialogues, in which Athenian philosophers discuss love and its origins. Herein, the text explores the myth of the Androgyne and other characters and gods with non-conforming traits. The context of androgyny and homosexuality in the text helps in the understanding of what was the ancient view of non-conformity, i.e. fluidity, androgyny, homosexuality, cross-dressing, etc. their importance and prevalence.

1. Androgyne, is a mythical creature regarded as the primordial form of humans mentioned by Aristophanes in a dialogue with other Athenian philosophers. The androgyne is half man and half woman in the shape of a sphere, the creature is cut in half by the Greek God Zeus. Allegedly, the need for a 'significant other' in humans derives from this myth, as these creatures had to roam the earth to find their other half, directing at the sense of reunion of the feminine and the masculine—the original androgynous form (Plato, 22-24).
2. Aphrodite - The goddess revered for her maleness and fluidity of nature is recalled by Pausanias in his speech. It is denoted that her love directed at boys, which is observed as peculiar through the lines "the other love derives from the heavenly Goddess, who has nothing of the female in her but only maleness, so this love is directed at boys (Plato, 13)." This indicates the lack of inclination towards heteronormativity.

Myth and mythmaking examined, though not exactly a human, biologically Androgyne is a hermaphrodite. Examining from the view of Stock, the behaviour of the character matches the lesson it carries. The gender (GENDER 2 and GENDER 3) is fluid. The character behaves the way it appears as it cannot be categorised as either sex. The Jungian archetype of animus is applicable here through its physical and symbolic embodiment. Androgyne appears as a culmination of the Animus-Anima and acts like it. On the other hand, Aphrodite, the biological female, displays behavioural fluidity (GENDER 2) through masculine attributes and sexual orientation. The Jungian view shows how symbolically a goddess is a balance of behaviour and an attuned Animus-Anima.

Ardhanarishvara: The Androgyne Probing the Gender Within (Pande 2004)

The text entails the mythological and spiritual aspects of non-conformity. It discusses Ardhanarishvara, the androgynous form of Lord Shiva and other Hindu deities reflecting the idea of an inner 'feminine' and 'masculine.' According to Indian mythology, Lord Shiva through the form of Ardhanarishvara helped Lord Brahma in the creation of the universe. Brahma lacked the feminine capabilities to do it himself so he asked Shiva for help. The form displays 'Shakti' (the inner feminine) of the lord, which is then externalised for the greater good of the universe.

1. Mohini - Lord Vishnu's form of Mohini which is a recurrent avatar that he takes on through different texts in Indian mythology. It highlights the female and the feminine in the male and the masculine. The avatar originates during Vishnu's first transformation when the demon Araka is defeated by the God through his magnificent female form. The demon who has never laid eyes on a woman before is allured by Vishnu, who in his Mohini (female) form.

2. Lord Krishna's Mohini form - In the battle of Mahabharata Lord Krishna takes on the form of Mohini in Mahabharata to marry Aravan, the son of Arjun. As Aravan is sacrificed the next day, the lord as his widow engages in rituals performed to mourn the loss of her husband. This form celebrated as the in the Koovagam festival every year as the Hijra community from all over India gather to celebrate the Mohini form and mourn the loss borne by the Pandava widow.

The nomenclature of Stock reveals that the sex of both Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna is male but their transition into Mohini affects their gender (GENDER 2) very obviously. The demeanor and the role of Mohini is that of a female and one that is stereotypically feminine. The Mohini and Ardhanarishvara forms both befit the Jungian archetype of anima as the influence of the feminine is discovered in the masculine self. These forms are nonconforming in nature for their fluidity.

The Hijra community -

Indian Hijra community's essence lies in the acceptance of trans-hood, by relying on concepts of transvestism, transgenderism and transsexualism. They group together as devotees of the Hindu mother Goddess Bahuchara-Mata and are thought to possess unique powers by traditional Hindus. These individuals dressed as the other sex (per say a person from the male sex dressing like a woman) and are honoured for their spiritual capabilities, deep knowledge of self and acceptance for who they were since ancient times. Hijras consider themselves to be "neither male nor female (Nanda, 145)" albeit some may be crossdressers, autogynephiles, homosexual men, behaviourally nonconforming men, individuals with DSDs (Developmental Sex Disorders), castrated men or women who did not menstruate.

Their presence is observed in the present times as well though they are socially stigmatised and ostracised and often refused employment for their nonconforming behaviour and acceptance of androgyny. They are feared for their peculiar nature and take on the role of begging and prostitution, having no other means of living and sustainability. The individuals from this community have been adapters of nonconforming roles in society. In essence with the Jungian theory, the men who take up trans-hood represent the anima, the women exhibit qualities of the animus.

Yuvanashva

While he is known as the king who got pregnant and gave birth to a son, his masculinity is where the nonconforming aspect is detected. King Yuvanashva is quite young when he takes over the throne, and his competition is with his mother. Queen Shilavati is an ambitious woman who is widowed at a young age. Intelligent enough to be the ruler, she understands the sexism and hypocrisy of the society. So, she yearns autocracy in a manner restricted to females. This leads to a clash between the mother and her son and eventually there is a game of thrones.

The literary analysis reveals that biologically Yuvanashva is a male and Shilavati is a female. Socially, the roles they step into are different from the one they yearn. The role (GENDER 3) forced onto both is a contrast as Shilavati wishes to rule a kingdom while Yuvanashva does not. But the era does not permit the mother and her son the space that they wish. This leads to Yuvanashva abandoning his throne as Shilavati weeps over her misfortune.

To analyse, Shilavati is a classic example of the Jungian animus while Yuvanashva is the anima. Behaviourally, both characters display characteristics that are nonconforming to the social roles allotted to their sexes. Symbolically, the male is understood as the one uninterested in power while the female is shown to be the outlier by being ambitious and intelligent. Shilavati is also shown to be ruthless to her son whereby she opposes the role of the sacrificial mother.

Galli priests -

Ancient Roman priests were known for their feminine nature and engagement in extravagant clothing. They were known for their self-castration upon joining priesthood and transgressing the boundaries of socially enforced norms (GENDER 3) through feminine clothing and rituals condemned later by Christian followers. They were devotees of the Phrygian Goddess Cybele who is associated with nature and fertility. (Roscoe, 1)

To analyse, the priests were biological men who practised self-mutilation through castration. Therefore, socially the role they abjected is the one forced onto them externally i.e., GENDER 3. In effect with the Jungian theory, the gallis are eunuchs who took up the role of priesthood, displaying the anima in men. Symbolically, their anima relies on a biological and social abandonment of genitals and roles to achieve nonconformity.

5. Major Findings

Through various textual interpretations it is concluded that nonconformity is a recurring theme since ancient times. It is observed through the lens of behaviour, androgyny and sexual orientation.

Gender nonconforming endeavours have played a significant role in the realms of gender-identity discourse by becoming a balancing factor in the gender binary. The roots of non-conformity lie in the behavioural, psychological, and philosophical segments of these texts; outside of the realms of appearance and fashion.

The representation of homosexuality and androgyny in the realms of history, mythology, art, and culture proves that nonconformity does not just limit itself to the external being, it is a part of the behavioural and psychological factors as well. Its historical and literal existence proves that genders in their primordial existence have always been fluid and the rigid gender roles were enforced later.

Through Jungian archetypes of 'anima' and 'animus', it is discovered that the presence of the 'feminine' and the 'masculine' (GENDER 2 and GENDER 3) in the collective unconscious of a biological male or female has been a recurring phenomenon.

6. Conclusion

This research concludes that nonconformity in the realms of gender-identity, sexual orientation, cross dressing and fluidity have been a recurring theme since the establishment of ancient civilizations. It helps in the confirmation of the existence of nonconforming endeavours and the inclination towards nonconformity, which could be easily found.

The Jungian theory reiterates the inherent nonconforming nature of humans, representing a different approach to 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in recent times, through the archetypes of anima and animus in the collective subconscious of people.

REFERENCES

1. 'Gender'. Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Eleventh Indian Edition (Revised), Oxford University Press, 2008 p. 592.
2. 'Discourse'. Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Eleventh Indian Edition (Revised), Oxford University Press, 2008 p. 409.
3. Katherine Stock. Material Girls: Why Reality Matters for Feminism.
4. Shari Kendall And Deborah Tannen. (1995) "Discourse and Gender".

7. https://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/bpl_images/content_store/WWW_Content/9780631205951/028.pdf
5. 'Androgynous'. Concise Oxford English Dictionary, Eleventh Indian Edition (Revised), Oxford University Press, 2008 p. 48.
6. Carl Jung. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious
7. Plato. The Symposium.
8. Alka Pande. Ardharishvara: The Gender Probing the Female Within.
9. Serena Nanda. (1990) "Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras Of India".
https://www.hansrajcollege.ac.in/hCPanel/uploads/elearning/elearning_document/Neither_Man_nor_Woman.pdf
10. Will Roscoe. (1996) "Priests of the Goddess: Gender Transgression in Ancient Religion".
<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/463425>