

# The tale of hong kiltong | love suicides | analysis



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Gender refers to a range of behavioural, physical and mental characteristics that people use to differentiate masculinity from femininity. The context of definition may take the concept as a synonym to sex, which means the state of being male or female. The term can be used to define social roles and gender identity among different individuals.

In the text, *The Tale of Hong Kiltong*, the story revolves around a man who rises beyond his birth circumstances to prove his masculinity among the people. Masculinity has a much far horizon than just being male or female, as the text reveals. The living circumstances of the young boy, Kiltong, who was not a very famous son, and his father wanted to kill him but when he realized that, he disappears to another land. His life story reveals another side of masculinity when he takes the role of fighting for the unfortunate. The concept of masculinity conveys the fact that one's behaviour is a reflection of whom they are. In the spirit of capitalism, Minister Hong wishes to eliminate his bastard son because he bore him with a maid-servant. This is the concept of masculinity in the society. The man has the power to have affairs with the maid servant without caring about the consequences. The presence of the other main wife does not bother, because women also understand their place as feminine, in the society.

The play, 'love suicides' also depicts aspects of feminism and masculinity regarding the lives of the two protagonists, Jihei and Koharu. By virtue of being a man, the society expects Jihei to be responsible enough to take care of the family, implying that masculinity regards to responsibility. The society also does not criticize Koharu for being a prostitute, but lays emphasis on the reckless life of Jihei who the playwright accuses of being as 'worthless as a

wastepaper...' (Chikamatsu & Shively, 1991). The masculine aspect of being a man eludes Jihei. The reader also gets the feeling that femininity in the society is described as a pleasure provider since the society deems the lifestyle of Koharu as normal. To the society, prostitution is fine as long as it is a woman.

In understanding masculinity, there are three basic features that have been widely used, and they are evident in the text *The Tale of Hong Kiltong*, which Kiltong expresses, rather than by the virtue of just being a male. The first one is a definition feature, for instance, risk taking. Masculinity has been defined in the past and the present as characterized by risk taking. In the text, the aspect of risk taking is rampant, with Kiltong taking numerous risks by stealing from the rich to help the poor. Despite being wanted for the 'atrocities' he commits, risk taking produces him as a man. This implies that masculinity is not only being male, but also having such characters, meaning that there are females who as well manifest masculine characters since there can have been cases of risk-taking female. In the same respect, taking responsibility of situations as a feature can define masculinity. In this case, responsibility over other people was and still is the role of men in most contemporary societies, although in some societies, women have come up to challenge the believe; hence depicting their masculinity. The text, *The Tale of Hong Kiltong* opens by talking about the minister, who has responsibility over people, his wife, sons and maid servants. Responsibility is the defining feature of masculinity over femininity. Just like the minister, his son is also a vibrant young man whom despite being waned, takes charge of unfortunate people, and when he takes the government post, the people continue

suffering; hence showing that he was directly responsible for the poor people. In the love suicide, Jihei does not fulfil his masculinity duties as a man, and lives recklessly ignoring his wife and children. On the other hand, his brother is responsible and runs around trying to prevent the death of his brother and Koharu. This is a depiction of masculinity. Jihei's wife possesses what the society would refer to as femininity by being remorseful to the extent that she sacrifices her savings to save the life of Koharu. She is passionate and strong, portraying attributes of femininity and masculinity. Despite being a woman, she takes more responsibility of the family than her husband. This implies that the society had different views about responsibility as a factor of femininity and masculinity.

Normative standards of classifying feminists and masculine regards to using the characteristics of what men ought to do and what women ought to do in order to qualify to be in either group. Although this concept is widely accepted, it has a major loophole that masculinity can not be a one minute show. Going by this definition, an individual can depict characters of masculinity in a minute and resume the normal characters. This cannot define the individual as masculine. For instance, the Hong tradition expected the male to have several sexual partners, which led to the Minister having an affair with the maid-servant. This took place for only a day, which bore him a son. The one day affair may not be used to classify the minister as a masculine since he ended up declining the responsibility of taking care of the results of his one day masculinity show.

In love suicides, masculinity evades its normative standards if one is to analyse the life of Jihei. The only aspect of Jihei that classifies him under <https://assignbuster.com/the-tale-of-hong-kiltong-love-suicides-analysis/>

masculinity is the fact that he is the man of the home, but his actions in entirety, for instance, ignoring his family and his wife taking the responsibility, him being broke to the extent that he cannot redeem his lover and leaving it to his wife, among others, are the depictions that he has more of the feminine attributes than the masculine attributes.

The final landmark that defines masculinity as a distinct aspect is the semiotic approach, which depicts the symbolic differences between femininity and masculinity. In this case, masculinity is the opposite of femininity, meaning that being masculine is not being feminine.

Symbolically, an example is that masculinity is marked by authority whereas femininity lacks the authority. In cultural analysis, this is the definition that was effective in stating the traditional gender roles of both sides. In the text, *The Tale of Hong Kiltong*, the minister is the symbol of authority and he has the power of command in the territory to the extent that he orders the pursuit of his son. Masculinity under this aspect regards to the widely accepted relationships through which male and female accomplish their gendered lives. This implies that masculinity is a 'place' in the relationships and depends on the daily practices that fit them in their gendered lives and the consequences of the practices in terms of bodily experience, culture and personality.

The texts also reveal the fact that one can understand gender as a social practice that regards to the bodies and their social functions. This can be widely understood by the fact that the daily conduct is organized in relation to the reproduction sphere regarding to the structures of the body and the reproductive system. Despite this revelation, there is no relationship with the <https://assignbuster.com/the-tale-of-hong-kiltong-love-suicides-analysis/>

body biology because gender presents itself because of the lack of the link between sociology and biology. This aspect, gender relations, is the major aspect of the entire contemporary societies.

Femininity, in the society in 'love suicides', comes out as a sacrifice for the survival of men. For instance, Magoemon is ready to force a divorce between his brother and Osan in order to source funds to redeem Koharu and save his brother from suicide. Further, Osan is ready to sacrifice her savings to save the life of her husband and his lover.

Masculinity and femininity regards to the gender practice configurations, rather than being male or female. Understanding the role of male and female in the text, The Tale of Hong Kiltong, can help elucidate this aspect of gender. Understanding gender can take place through various aspects like understanding the course of individual life and their character, the ideology, discourse or culture, and the institutions in the society such as schools and work places. Therefore, the model of understanding gender can adapt power relations, production relations and cathexis, which regard to the characters surrounding sexual desires and the practices that define it, as the aspect of gender order.

The text reveals such aspects of gender through hegemony. The leadership of the Joseon dynasty seems to revolve around the Hong family and the male characters. Masculinity in this aspect is the gender practice configuration embodying an accepted answer to the problem of authenticity of the patriarchy guaranteeing the male dominance and their women subordinating them in their positions.

Subordination is also a feature of gender as there are gender relations that are specific in terms of dominance and subordination between groups. An example in the contemporary society is heterosexuality verses homosexuality.

Complicity is the complexity of the fact that despite there being few men supporting and maintaining the concept of hegemony, many are beneficiaries of the subordination by their women. This provision does not give men a chance for tensions or risks of being in the frontline to protect their positions.

Historically, masculinity and femininity as subsets of gender were distinct from each other by acts of violence and crisis. The structures tend to change with time in response to various factors including external pressures, and sometimes from internal pressures. The conflicts of interest between the two classes of gender have been streamlined by factions like women movements in the past. The socially defined unequal structures, which placed male and female in defensive and offensive positions respectively has met widespread resistance over time. Such battles may not lack violence; hence reducing the aspect of masculinity and femininity as a mere theoretical notion that can erode with changing times.

The system of dominance (in this case, male dominance) is characterised by violence and a measure of imperfection. The hierarchal system may not be legitimate, and the perpetrators employ violence in order to maintain the system. Extreme masculinity has proved fatal in the attempts to maintain dominance. There have been cases of sexual harassment, murder and

domestic assault in homes and streets. This implies that in gender politics, violence is important in order for one to prove a point to the other group.

Femininity regards to the set of behaviours, attributes and roles associated with the female individuals in the society. The concept is a social construct, although it may include the aspect of biological functions. In behavioural traits, femininity included moral characters of empathy, sensitivity to other peoples' problems and gentleness. The behavioural traits eliminate the aspect of biological disposition in defining femininity in the contemporary society because either gender has possessed the above character traits at one time or another in a social context. The original context of the definition of femininity encompassed emotional outlook of the female as a distinguishing factor from the male. The texts, love suicides and The Tale of Hong Kiltong present women as emotional characters who, by virtue of their gender roles do not have the audacity to reproach the male for their atrocities. Their emotional outbursts lead to some of them committing suicide for love in the ' Love suicides'.

## **Conclusion**

The texts provide numerous aspects of masculinity and femininity and depict both as important entities in the social settings of the texts. Femininity and masculinity were respected definitions of the roles of gender in the traditional society. Although the distinctive roles are waning, they remain important concepts in many fields in the contemporary society. Violence and crisis have been characteristics of the gender wars, with the male dominantly staying above the rest by use of violence to maintain their status quo. Feministic movements have arisen over time to challenge the



demeaning roles of the gender classes, and through diplomacy, and most times violence, they have succeeded to some degree.

The representation of gender in the texts have been characterised by violence and emotional oppression in order to achieve the gender goals by the powerful masculine practices.