Role Of Women In The Text 'Epic Of Gilgamesh'

The role of literature is to create a reflection and a mirror of society. Writers write with the idea of revealing how things are done in society and how various individuals are positioned. On reading and understanding the author's work, readers will realize the position of various people at a particular time in history. In the 'Epic of Gilgamesh,' women in the ancient Mesopotamia are perceived to have fewer privileges and rights than men. Women in the Sumerian Culture were used as sex objects, low in the society, respected only if they were goddesses and had little respect. Despite them being weaker gender in the society, women were temptresses, tamers and important people in the Mesopotamia culture. Woman in this story, therefore, can be regarded as a hero as they are the reason why man is transformed from the uncivilized world to the current world of civilization.

Men are always weakened through sex. In this story, women use sex as a tool to attract the attention of men and make them be the people they want. Through their tricky behavior, woman can manipulate how men behave and cause them to be different people. The Priestess Shamhat in the story was sent to tame the wild man Enkidu. She performs this role by stripping off her robe and lying naked in the forest making Enkidu erect for seven days and make love with her (79). With the sex act, Enkidu finds the best life and signals a break with the animal world that he has been living for many years. This act made the beginning of the civilization of Enkidu making him eat 'human food,' civil responsibility and hygiene (85-86) Shamhat in this role of bringing knowledge and civilization to great hero gives women a powerful role in the society.

After the death of Enkidu, Gilgamesh meets Siduri, tavern-keeper wondering and looking for means of immortality. She does not take the explanation by King of Uruk about himself and the nature of his life, and she explains the best understanding according to her (168-169). She encourages the king to put away his grief and enjoy all the things he has in life. At this time, Gilgamesh does not heed the advice from the woman, which according to the story is a treasure of typical wisdom and symbolizes the goddess. By rejecting the information and going ahead to seek for immortality, Gilgamesh will end up failing as a human.

Women take big roles have roles as goddesses. Humbaba was a powerful goddess in the Cedar forests and threatens Gilgamesh. It is with the support of Enkidu that Gilgamesh manages to kill Humbaba. The role of goddesses in the story gives women powerful roles as leaders in the society. The position of Humbaba that women could be powerful than men when they are put in leadership position and will always require men to obtain support from other women in order to overcome powerful women. The story creates power of women through the use of goddesses who makes various scenes in the stories in a way of creating a positive role of women in the society.

Anything done by women in the society is for the betterment of a man. In this society, women are doing not have many rights on what they own. Women use wisdom and knowledge for the benefit of a man. Women kind of control society through men. The women in society create the kind of culture through men. This aspect is demonstrated by the role of Ishtar of borrowing the Bull of Heaven from her father Anu to help Gilgamesh kill his enemies. Even though women

have the knowledge and the trick of making the society, the credit is given to a man and always behind a successful man is a strong woman who makes that man to be the person that the society sees.

The society gives little respect to women. Even the goddesses in society fail to be respected while men are being granted respect. The Gilgamesh and Enkidu joint together to kill Humbaba for no apparent reason, other because the women held positioned which are perceived by the society as the role of men. This aspect is also created in the book when the King of Uruk does not heed what Saduri tells about immortal life, a scenario which causes Gilgamesh to fail in his pursuit to immortal life and at the end failing in his journey. Although in the past women were accorded less respect in society, in the current societies, women are being respected, and most women hold leadership positions which makes them equal to men.

In most traditional societies, women were treated whit much disrespect. Women did not have rights like their men counterparts; the never participated in a public role such as voting, and they were dependent on men. In the story, 'Epic of Gilgamesh' these aspects were brought out in many scenes. However, out of civilization and modernization which is being addressed by the book, society has changed on the value of women. Now, women are respected equally to men; women have more rights than they used to have, women have the strength of doing many more things than they used to do, and they have all equal rights to men. In the story, therefore, the readers observe that the roles of women changed all through the book to the best.