

ROLE OF LITERATURE IN THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN AND THEIR ISSUES

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Abstract

Literature being a reflection of the society can go a long way in the depiction of women's role that has evolved over the years and ages yet in the representation of women literature has also been fluctuant. Literature reflects the perception and attitudes of the society. The present paper throws light how women have continued to register their presence from the ancient period to the modern period. It is the fact that women had to face many ill-effects in the society, however, it was not the same in the ancient times as women were given due respect. That women had to face the inferiority complex even then as compared to men could hardly be ruled out. Apparently enough, the status and position of women have undergone many a significant change. The changing role of women in literature is a sure indication of the evolution of feminism, the women problems etc.

Keywords: Reflection, Literature, Evolution, Fluctuant, Inferiority complex, Violence, Feminism, Intellectual, Spiritual etc.

INTRODUCTION

Topics galore often keep coming up under the concern of women in general and their issues in particular. Of course, there was a time when women were considered inferior even nowadays women are confronted with the same fate that is inferiority complexes. The much-discussed concern of women issues is gender based violence as it is considered that men have all powers to do anything which women do not have. Even in Literature, it has well been born out that men are superior to women. During the ancient times in India, women were given due respect as women had pivotal contributions towards the welfare of their family and society. There was a time when wealthier classes believed in polygamy while monogamy was confined to the less-privileged.

In the Rig Vedic society, women were appreciated as women were provided the opportunity to attain high intellectual and spiritual standards as no discrimination was found with women at that time but in Vedic period, discrimination was seen in terms of acquisition of education child marriage, widow burning, the purdah as well as other rights and facilities. Women have to face the prevalence of child marriage, sati, polygamy etc. It will be true to say that the position of women varied from religion to religion.

The tradition of women writing has been ignored because of their inferior position in male dominated societies. The position of women is greatly outnumbered by male writers in literature. Literature has witnessed the roles of women evolving through ages, but until recent times, most of the published writers were men and the portrayal of women in literature was without doubt biased. It is the fact that in the ancient world, literacy was strictly limited and this was the main reason that the majority of those who wrote were men. Women have to face gender based violence. Physical or sexual violence against women could be seen in India, especially by men. Women have to go through the domestic violence, sexual assault and murder. This is purely called violence because the victim is a woman. Men with a superiority complex commit these acts. According to India's National Crime Records Bureau, incidents of crime against women have increased and it is considered that a crime is committed against women every three minutes. In modern era, the role and position of women in society has been changed due to globalization and commercialism.

Nothing better than Raja Ram Mohan Roy can serve as the case in point here as he was strictly against the evils prevalent in society in his time and to teach people a lesson he himself married a widow to set an example for the whole society. The status of women in the modern era is a paradox. On the one hand, women are well on the way to success where as on the other hand, she has to suffer at the hands of her own family members. If we compare the status of women in the present times with that of women in the past, she seems to have achieved a lot but in reality she has to suffer in many ways even in this present scenario. There are plenty of problems that women have to go through daily. A society with equal rights and opportunity for women is always desired and there is no denying the fact that consistent struggles and voices raised for the rights of women have reduced the gender biases to a great extent.

The role and position of women can be seen in literature as well. A number of books have been written by women writers showing the poor position of women in the society. A few examples can be taken here to bring forth this fact about the position of women. **The Second Sex by Simone De Beauvoir** which was published in 1949 in French is known as a classic of gender studies. It was the starting point of the distinction between gender and sex. In the modern times, it is considered to be among foundational texts in Philosophy, Feminism, and women's studies. The modern thesis of **fThe Second Sex**~ revolves around the idea hoe women have been held inferior to men since long. The concept of woman is a male concept as male is the seer and woman is the other. He is the subject and women are called the object as the meaning of fwomanhood~ is defined by men in the same society of which both should be at par with each other. If we explore the case studies of the various life stages of female life, we find both positive and negative views showing women both free and oppressed to certain extent. In reality, developments in female body like menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause are considered to

make women inferior to men in a patriarchal society. As a girl starts growing, her body changes make a strong demarcation from the opposite sex. The society as well as the family starts behaving in a hostile and over conscious manner which threatens the girls. They start feeling like being a sexual object exposed to everyone's gaze. Women have to go through the lust and bad comments of men while walking on in street. Even if somehow, a girl tries to forget embarrassment regarding her body, the society soon reminds her that she is a female and must behave accordingly. Women also have to face the stage of marriage and physical trauma in which they have to go through the intercourse and most of the girls are quite ignorant about this aspect of marriage.

A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf also deals with the topic of women and fiction. Woolf says that *fa* woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. She describes the time of university when ladies are only admitted to the library if they are accompanied by a fellow of the college or a letter of introduction. This picture contrasts sharply with the history of male universities, which have been continually and generously supported for centuries. She always asks the question “why did men drink wine and women water?” Why have women always been so poor? Money is considered the primary element that prevents women from having a room of their own. Intellectual freedom depends upon material things, poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. That is why, only a few women have written successful poetry. Women are more likely to write novels than poetry because of frequent interruptions. Without money women will remain in second place to their creative male-counterparts. The financial discrepancy between men and women perpetuated the myth that women were less successful writers. Woolf emphasizes the role of interruptions and by dramatizing the effects of these interruptions, Woolf shows that a private room is a basic requirement for creative work. The fact is that women have not historically been granted space or leisure for uninterrupted thinking. Throughout **A Room Of One's Own**, it is emphasized that women are treated unequal in her society and that is why they have produced less impressive works of writing than men.

CONCLUSION

It will well be in the fitness of the things to state that one of the major issues of the contemporary literature throughout the world is to reflect the condition of women living in different time periods. Women have to face many problems including their physical and emotional exploitation along with their mental anguish suffered in silence in their families even if it might mean going against their own grain in the name of cooperation within the fabric of their families. Literature goes a long way in reflecting the condition of women prevalent in the society and also in the inculcation of their own moral principles for the betterment of the society as well as for their survival in the society.

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