

A New Concept of Freedom and Recognition in Fictional Portrayal of Women in Beauvoir's "Second Sex" (Fictional Representation of Women and Gender)

Dr. Nutan Yadav,

Associate Prof. Department of English Govt. College for Women Hisar (Haryana)

Email - nutan76.ny@gmail.com

Abstract: *How women are viewed in society is a significant factor in the ongoing disparity between men and women and the continuation of sexist views. Since the power gap between men and women makes it possible for men's representations of their perspectives on the world. On the other hand women are confused with objective truth. They are not more valid than women's representations of their perspectives. Part of this perception comes from fictional representations of women from the perspective of creators who accept myths about the nature of women. 'The Second Sex' author and famous feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir discussed the problem of males creating their conceptions of women based on their own experiences rather than what women actually are. The transmission of shared ideas and experiences that reveal universal truths through stories and myths has been extremely common and influential. These forms of communication are also closely related to the idea of the 'Other' because, within the fictional universe the author creates for his story, his perspective is indistinguishable from the reality, with no input from the people he portrays. There are problems with the accuracy and value of fiction as a means of comprehending reality since women are disproportionately represented as "the Other," as constructions based on men's perceptions of them, while men are portrayed as the subject so their stories. In this essay, I will use Beauvoir to show how a variety of gender-related issues in media stem from the still-present propensity to see women as the 'Other' when viewed through the prism of the male Self. This is demonstrated by the persistent representation of women as the object rather than the subject of any work of art.*

Key words : *Other, Transmission, Fictional, Truth, Absolute.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Second-wave feminism is a period of feminist activity that first began in the early 1960s in the United States, and eventually spread throughout the Western world and beyond. Where the first-wave feminism focused mainly on suffrage and overturning legal obstacles to gender equality, second-wave feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues: sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities. , 'The Second Sex' by Simone de Beauvoir' analyzed the western notion of women by addressing historical, philosophical, economical and biological perspectives and which explored the power of sexuality, remains a 'triumphant revolutionary' book and an eye-opener for women. Beauvoir's statement, '**one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman**', is still compelling and controversial today. It indicates that patriarchal societies, where absolute priority is given to men over women, are responsible for the inferior status of women who lack access to resources and decision making, and whose low self-esteem and low self-confidence contributed to their own subordination due to feelings of discrimination and powerlessness. In addition, despite the progress women had made in the world, they are not given recognizes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Simone de Beauvoir noted in The Second Sex (Beauvoir 143), a seminal text of 20th-century feminism,

"Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth."

This statement not only provides an insightful summary of the long history of fictional portrayals of women, but it also raises questions about the influence of fiction on how people perceive the world and define what is true when it comes to privileged groups. The way women and gender are portrayed in fiction is crucial and instructive for feminist philosophy since it serves as both a metaphor and a mechanism of patriarchal oppression. At least in part, how women are viewed in society determines the longevity of sexist views and the continuous disparity between men and women. Women are framed by males as "the Other" whereas men are the self and the subject, according to Beauvoir, who first expressed her views of women's oppression in 'The Second Sex'. Men operate in a universe that is infused with their own point of view, so they define themselves from the same viewpoint and location from which they experience themselves. On the other hand, because they do not define themselves; men do, women are the 'Other' who is neither self nor subject, but object.

3. ANALYSIS:

Women's fictional depiction is a commonly discussed subject in feminist literature, and Beauvoir and sources that draw on her philosophical ideas have both given it in-depth consideration. Despite their value, they frequently take a different stance on the issue of sexism in fiction by criticizing certain gender-roles.

In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir argues that while equal rights, sexism and discrimination still exist since women's voices are suppressed due to their status as the 'Other'. Men identify them as objects, non-men, a negatively defined absence of maleness, a deviation and a supporting feature of humanity, whereas men are both the benevolent presence and the neutral norm (Beauvoir xxi). Men are both what people should want to be like and what people naturally identify as. The negligibility, eccentricity, and invisibility of women were required to permit. Second-wave feminism is a period of feminist activity that first began in the early 1960s in the United States, and eventually spread throughout the Western world and beyond. Where the first-wave feminism focused mainly on suffrage and overturning legal obstacles to gender equality, second-wave feminism broadened the debate to a wide range of issues: sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities.

Simone de Beauvoir's analysis focuses on the Hegelian concept of the 'Other'. It is the social construction of woman as the quintessential 'Other' that the author identifies as fundamental to women's oppression. The capitalized 'O' in "other" indicates the wholly other. De Beauvoir asserted that women are as capable of choice as men, and thus can choose to elevate themselves, moving beyond the 'immanence' to which they were previously resigned and reaching 'transcendence', a position in which one takes responsibility for oneself and the world, where one chooses one's freedom. The text is divided into two parts. In part 1, the more academic section, de Beauvoir discusses instances of women being oppressed throughout history, from early nomadic societies until the surprisingly late grant of suffrage in France in 1947. She draws impressively from a wide range of disciplines, including biology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, literature, and, of course, history. She attempts to assess women's biological and historical circumstances and the myths by which these have been explained, denied, or distorted. She recognizes that men have been able to maintain dominant roles in virtually all cultures because women have resigned themselves to, instead of rebelling against, their assigned subordinate status. 'Second Sex' in this way provided a plan which could liberate women from the oppression of a dominant patriarchal society. Beauvoir's book comes with the ideology which shaped the second wave of feminist movement. Beauvoir is currently more studied by left-wing and feminist academic circles in the United States than in France described by Sanger as 'an encyclopaedia of the evolution of woman'. These demonstrate the influence of Beauvoir's book on the feminist movement and what it stands for. In the early 20th century, the economic, political and social standing of French women was not improving due to the ruling patriarchal mentality. 'The Second Sex' which was published in France during that era brought out the extreme ideas of women's rights. In the long run, the book acted as a catalyst to propel the second wave of the Feminist Movement and to break the patriarchal monopoly of the publishing industry. No doubt, the book accumulated cultural, economic, symbolic and academic capital which is made evident throughout. In addition, the book played an important role in shaping policies related to birth control and abortion.

In the early 20th century, women's political, social and economic choices in France were limited due to patriarchal dominance in almost aspects of life and businesses, including the publishing industry. Despite these challenges, a few women such as Simone de Beauvoir were able to break through these challenges, especially with a book such as 'The Second Sex'. Although the book received much criticism by notable literary figures, the book also received praise and support by many others including and most importantly from women within the feminist movement. Beauvoir's book played an important role in shaping legislation related to birth control in France and acted as a catalyst for the second wave of the feminist movement. The symbolic capital accumulated by this book is evident in the push it provided for the second feminist movement on one hand, and the changes it influenced in birth control legislation in France on the other

Institutionalize play a major part in the construction of this phalli centric notion of humanity that marginalizes

women. There are several ways to interpret this.

Beauvoir notes that writers before her have described the difference between men and women as a difference in what their existence is contingent upon – "Benda...in his Rapport d'Uriel:...Man can think of himself without woman." – When describing the existence of women within the boundaries of the male point of view. She is incapable of picturing herself without a man (Beauvoir xxii).

She is sex to men, says Beauvoir, "total sex, no less. She is defined and distinguished in relation to man, not in relation to herself; she is incidental and non-essential as opposed to important. She is the other; he is the Subject and the Absolute (Beauvoir, xxii).

One of the most well-known parts of the 'Other' of woman is Beauvoir's depiction of how woman is associated with sex in this male-dominated worldview. It is not necessary to define women as universally denoting, suggesting, or symbolizing sex to say that there is no specific relationship between sex and women (either the reproductive act or the biological category) that is more significant, closer, or special than the relationship between sex and males. Women symbolize, suggest, and symbolize sex for men, as bees symbolise pollination for a cherry flower. Because the male viewpoint is positioned as the perspective of the self, it is positioned as the entire truth and nothing but the reality of sex.

Beauvoir writes,

"...woman is defined exclusively in her relation to man...the truth that for women man is sex and carnality has never been proclaimed because there is no one to proclaim it (Beauvoir 143)."

This mechanism of sidelining women's perspectives is by no means restricted to sex, but as it is the most obvious point of difference between men and women, it is a particularly salient example done that has a special prominence in fiction. These ties into the perception that women are defined only by limiting criteria and being a woman is a peculiarity for a human, in Beauvoir's words:

In the midst of an abstract discussion it is vexing to hear a man say:

"You think thus and so because you are a woman"; but I know that my only defense is to reply: "I think thus and so because it is true," thereby removing my subjective self from the argument. It would be out of the question to reply: "And you think the contrary because you are a man," for it is understood that the fact of being a man is no peculiarity. A man is in the right in being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong...there is an absolute human type: the masculine (Beauvoir xxi).

Beauvoir analyzes 'the Other' power of stories created within a patriarchal society by looking at the archetypes men create to represent women. Beauvoir describes these archetypes as the result of men projecting their perspectives and desires on the silent and undermined 'Other'.

The double standard was given voice in ancient mythological understanding of the world that created and whose influence in part perpetuates what Beauvoir refers to as "the myth of the woman (Beauvoir 253)," which occurs when man establishes woman as the 'Other' and defines her according to his experience of women. This is not a holistic or internally consistent experience, but one that is compiled from many incompatible and contradictory myths (virgin, whore, Earth Mother, angel, child, etc.) Most women have partial similarities to multiple myths, no woman is completely personified by one myth and no myth completely describes all women or provides a satisfactory embodiment of Woman.

"A myth always implies a subject who projects his hopes and fears toward a sky of transcendence. Women do not set themselves up as Subject and hence have erected no virile myth in which their projects are reflected...they still dream through the dreams of men (Beauvoir 142)."

The problem of fictional representation of women is not solved by male and better female authors, because the vocabulary of fiction, in the form of archetypes, symbols, acceptable tropes and ways of telling a romance story, and the like has been built over time by men and in order to be intelligible, women authors must still use this vocabulary to communicate their meaning. This narrowing of available acceptable options reflects Beauvoir's analysis of the real life problem women face in how they are allowed to define and shape their own identity. Not only are women nearly always supporting characters in stories not specifically and exclusively about women but also, when they are supporting characters their main function within a story is usually being related to a male character in some way like a mother, daughter, or love interest rather than have multiple functions or a role all of their own that is not attached to a male character. As fiction is a way of communicating information, the information communicated here is that women are

meant to be auxiliaries to men. Ignoring the fact that these other people are actually human beings capable of creating their own meaning, capable of bestowing meaning based on their own experiences upon the people who are Other from their point of view, and capable of defining and objectifying and 'Other' the first group of people right back – or of communicating and creating a reciprocal flow of information and a mutual shared understanding in the form of stories where both groups of people may be protagonists – is willful misrepresentation that, due to its fundamental inability to authentically reflect or resonate with reality, become confusing, irritating, guilt-inducing (if one feels incapable or acting like a woman or treating a woman the way one is told is the normal human way), or simply stupid, false, and unbelievable.

5. CONCLUSION:

The perpetuation of sexism through fiction is partly an epistemological problem. Epistemology is the study of how we know what we know. Beauvoir's analysis of the 'Other' as contrasted with the active, knowing Self/Subject, provides deep insight in this area. Some ideas are by far best communicated, in efficiency, intelligibility, and enjoy ability, through fiction; so one of the many ways we know what we know is through fiction of one form or another. This works because we suspend our disbelief and accept, for a moment that the fictional universe an author has created in his image and has absolute control over represents reality. This is how we are able to know and believe things that are conveyed through fiction. However, this means that a story we hear is partially about the real world and partially an invention of the author with resultant biases and departures from the real world, and it is our job to understand which parts – ideas, attitudes, lessons both overt and implicit -- are about the real world and which parts -- characters and events -- are inventions that exist only within the story. Stories cannot exist without bias, but when nearly all stories have the same bias, the bias becomes invisible and taken for granted, and the idea the bias is related to, which should be understood as invention particular to the story, is absorbed as truth about the real world instead.

In these cases, "woman" as portrayed by the author has nothing to do with real women and is simply a personification of what the author sees or desires in women, or what the author has been taught by society and by restrictive tradition and historical context about women – but if either the creators or consumers of such stories do not notice this distinction due to the bias's invisibility, it allows the momentary suspension of disbelief to meld reality and fiction in a misleading rather than illuminating way, and causes the person who hears it to come away mistakenly knowing something that is fiction as fact.

REFERENCES :

1. De Beauvoir, S. (1949, 1952). *The Second Sex*. New York, NY: Random House.
2. Berghoffen, D. B. (1997). *The Philosophy of Simone De Beauvoir: Gendered*
3. *Phenomenologies, Erotic Generosities*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
4. Hooks, bell. (1992). "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators." in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, South End Press), 115-131.
5. "J.K. Rowling Biography." Retrieved from: http://www.jkrowling.com/en_US/about-jk-rowling/biography
6. Mead, R. (2011). "What George Eliot Teaches Us." *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/02/14/110214fa_fact_mead
7. Mulvey, L. (1975). "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema." *Screen* 16(3). Pp. 6-18.
8. Nelson, H. L. (2001). *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell
9. University Press.
10. Scholz, S. J. (2000). *On De Beauvoir*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
11. *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Critical Essays*. (2006). Ed. Margaret Simons. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.