

Perspective shift in fairy tales: Study on the portrayal of gender roles in Disney princesses.

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Abstract:

Fairy tales have been a major influence on children's literature across the world for centuries. It is an agent of teaching young minds stereotypical patterns of male and female characters. Many studies have found that fairy tales had an impact on a child's understanding of gender roles and adherence to these roles. Animated movies of Disney are a new mode of fairy tales in the present millennium. Movies, cartoons, are in a way the first form of literature that a child come in acquainted with. Hence it has a great hold on the child's understanding of his or her immediate cultural codes. There is a shift in perspective in portraying the female characters of Disney.

Keywords:

Feminism, gender role, marginalisation, stereotype

Introduction:

Fairy tales has developed from time immemorial. Origin of these tales can be traced to the folklore, fables, oral traditions of different cultures across the globe. In Europe the prominent figures who popularized fairy tale s were Charles Perrault and Grimm brothers. With their versioning children started to crawl into the world of wonder, imagination, love, fantasy and magic. These stories blurred the border between reality and imagination to a great extant that they started to integrated with these images and patterns that opened before them. These patterns in turn taught them cultural codes, social realities and moralities. They taught them on gender functioning and gender moulding took place.

When we analyse these tales we find how the gender moulding occurred. It created an stereotypical image for the male and the female. The male was always the young, handsome, muscular. Bold, intelligent man who is there for the meek, gentle, beautiful, female characters usually circle by trouble, hardships, distress. The man, the honourable worshipped saver could only save her from her miseries. The female figure lamented over her problems never took initiative to solve them because she was the other'.

Earlier Disney princesses illustrations like Cinderella, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty mere cartoon version of Grimm brothers textual fairy tales. Portraying the stereotypical 'damsel in distress 'the domesticated girl, overwhelming in feminine qualities and prince on the other hand was the e handsome young brave man who is always there to save the beautiful young damsel from troubles and miseries.1985 onwards Disney brought before

us the real women of our age brave, adventurous, self willed, and more over little mermaid, Mulan, Rapunzel in tangled (fairy tale of Grimm brothers)muhana Elsa Anna from Frozen were away form the stereotypical patterns of Princesses. These helps in deconstructing earlier notions of the male and female stereotypical imaging and developing a new definition of women in children's literature.

These images embedded in the mind of every growing child over centuries. With development in modes and techniques of narration the printed version of fairy tales where adopted into cartoons. In 1920 Walt Disney inaugurated a new era in cartoons production with introduction of his Disney Brother s studio. With in no time these images captured the sense of children and adults alike. In 1935 the Snow White and the seven Dwarfs inaugurated the Princess series. The children across the world was mesmerized by the charm and glitter snow White that every girl wished for being a princess and every young boy dreamt of being the prince that put the curse off his princess .Then on these stereotypes started to evolve to a new self in the form of Cinderella (1950), Sleeping Beauty (1959), little mermaid (1989),Beauty and the Beast (1991) Jasmine in Aladdin(1992), Pocahontas (1995), Mulan (1998) ,Tiana (2009) in frog Prince, Rapunzel (tangled 2010), Miranda in Brave (2012) Elisa and Anna in Frozen (2013). The princess where remoulding themselves to independent brave, self sufficient women who now are equal to their male counterpart.

Transition of fairy tales:

The transition in tales occurred gradually with time there were many factors that was the cause of this change. The society were transforming itself that got reflected in the animated movies. The earlier cartoons like Cinderella and Snow White were mere adaptation of Grimm brothers tale. It narrated about the domesticated lives of heroin plainly adherence to the role of women cleaning, stitching, doing the dishes, preparing food like duties and their fancies of true love that could clear all ills and downs in their lives. Their greatest desire was only obtaining the true love of their life nothing more or less. They had never tried to fight their problems or wished to liberate themselves from these troubles. This image of a woman who found her solace only in hard work and servitude later became stereotypical image of a women. Patiance, meekness, gentleness, selflessness were her defined qualities and endurance being the greatest virtue that she possessed.

These gender stereotyping later got a shift in paradigm with the introduction of women right movements and feminist movements questioning these roles. Later on Disney started to correct the mistake s that is being done on the long run. The change can be traced from 1989 cartoon movie The Little Mermaid, Ariel the female character was different in her character and will. She stepped out of the often given picture of obedient, selfless girl and adopted a rebellious self, she was keen explorer and adventure

seeker. Even her tale too was involved with prince rescue and happily ever after ending. But the initiative for the change was inaugurated with the movie.

Great was the transformation we found in Pocahontas and Mulan. They were breaking down all norms in fairy tales. The Heroines were playing lead roles and they were a step above the heroes, Mulan was much more a Innovative move Heroines rebellious toward the customary practice of preparing oneself for institute of marriage and it's mannerisms. Mulan chooses a life of a warrior over the marriage domain and proves herself to be better than anyone in the team. The tale told in the back drop of Chinese mythology was raising the heroin away from feminine self to a new perspective of an empowered women serving her country in the battle field. It question the role of women and institution of marriage.

Then came the tale of the frog Prince. The heroin raised above all the perspective of fair skin and blue eyes. The female protagonist 'Tiana' was dark skinned and beautiful. She was after an ambition other than being marriage to Mr charming. She had a dream a career before her. Her dream was to set up a restaurant and fulfil the passion of cooking. Cooking here was not a domesticated activity. It was her passion and an independent self arouses from her character. This step was further boosted in Tangled which came out in 2010. Tangled was a remaking of the Rapunzel tale .The girl with adorable long hair. The hair a symbol of beauty and feminity was now a symbol of strength. The adventurous journey that she takes up and breaking the rules are the highlights of this version. Another factor that caught our attention was the hero was a thief his smartness is outlived by Rapunzel s character.

Then Disney was stepping out of the box and doing a reworking of stereotypes, marriage, love, and beauty, moralities. It was paving the way for a new generation of female characters that never wanted happily married kind of tale Brave was the icon of this change. In Brave we a Miranda deconstructing the well groomed beautiful princess 'types'. She was getting herself away from marriage fighting for her independence. Winning the archery mend for finding her suitors she announced that she is married to herself. Thi was a great break in literature.

These trends got repeated again and again in Frozen were the relationship between two sisters were more powerful then the love stories between a man and woman. The curse in the movie Broke with the love of the sisters. This was pointing to relationship in fairy tales can not be always dealing with love stories but women have other relationship that can narrate much more Fantasies and values. The identity crisis and liberation of the self got prominent in this movies this is a guidance to our children to find out what we really are and never to learn the gendered roles. Apart from that these imaginative platform is giving young minds to understand the new realities of identities and their roles. Which will take them away from prejudices on gender and cultivation a ground for self sufficient growth.

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