



## WOMEN IN LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

Anita Desai, Mamoni Raisom Goswami, and Toni Morrison are the authors of the works that are the subject of this extensive research, which dives extensively into the complex portrayal of women in literature. The study focuses specifically on the feminist interpretations offered by these authors. With the primary goal of shining light on how these acclaimed authors traverse and explain the complexities of femininity in their literary creations, the major purpose is to unravel the multiple nature of female characters across a variety of cultural settings.

### INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that women make up half of the human population, they are largely excluded from possibilities for personal development and active engagement in the process of national regeneration. Over the course of the few opportunities that were open to them, they have demonstrated their value and validated themselves, sometimes even more so than males. On the other hand, there is no reduction in the horrors committed against women. In spite of the fact that they have made significant economic, political, and social advancements in the globe, they are usually subjected to male dominance and suffer a great deal from discrimination, marginalisation, and a variety of other forms of exploitation. The idea that women are inferior to men, which has been around since ancient times, continues to have a significant impact on the masses, which are still deeply rooted in ignorance and superstition. How did this global practise of one half of the whole population oppressing the other half, which does not exist in the lives of other animals, become ingrained in the lives of human beings alone? Various theories have been proposed to explain the reasons for the oppression of women. These theories range from genetic to cultural elements, and there is no one explanation that can adequately explain their oppression. Various factors, including but not limited to the family, society, religion, myth, culture, legal system, and literature, all contribute to the subjugation of women to male dominance. The family "functions as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state, which rules its citizens through family heads," who are most likely the male members of the family. Every single faith has given its blessing to this establishment. In the Christian religion, women are seen as an auxiliary category and are subordinate to males. This perspective, which is deeply rooted in the Bible, places a particular emphasis on the way in which women are subordinate to men: "Wives, submit yourselves to your husband the Lord."

It is stated in the Koran that "Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God had gifted the one above the other" (Rowell 415, translated). By virtue of the fact that they constitute a barrier to the attainment of spiritual power, Buddhism recommends that one avoids the company of women. This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be named woman, since she was taken out of man, the Bible says, which is the basis of the story about the creation of woman that has left an indelible effect on the minds of the people throughout the world. There is no exception to this rule of male dominance in the religion of Hinduism.

Women were not allowed to become priestesses, form religious organisations, or have any direct access to spiritual liberation, according to the Vedas, which are the early Hindu texts. This is demonstrated by the study of the Vedas. In Hindu culture, women are expected to exhibit characteristics such as virginity, fidelity, devotion, and dedication to their husbands through their marriages. On the basis of myth and tradition.

These are the things that are reinforced on women, and women, for millennia, have been following the tradition that was established by the mythological "pativratas" (virtuous women), regardless of how ignoble their male counterparts might be. There is a consensus among the majority of western and eastern moral thinkers that the natural state of women is



one of subjugation. By arguing that women are inferior on a biological, intellectual, and epistemic level, these theories have given legitimacy to the subjugation of women throughout history. Freud, a psychotherapist, is responsible for promoting the idea that women belong to the second sex since he consistently used a paradigm that was based on males. According to Freud, who is considered to have a scientific approach to his work, he has a patriarchal viewpoint. The husband is expected to be the breadwinner, the head of the family, and, in such circles, to a certain degree, an educator. According to him, a woman is expected to maintain her gentleness and sweetness, free from the responsibilities and corruptions of the world. There is evidence of Freud's masculine chauvinistic ideas in the letters that he wrote to Martha Bernays, who was his fiancée. In Freud's Patriarchal Attitudes, Eva Figes makes the following argument: "... Freud certainly did not consider it desirable for a woman's traits to remain unsuppressed until it was too late." It was possible that she would become neurotic, cold, and extremely hazardous to her spouse if she did choose this course of action. Additionally, she would attempt to compete with men in intellectual pursuits. To summarise, Freud was of the opinion that women could not help but continue to be repressed. This line of thinking underwent a sea change as a result of the Women's Movement that occurred in the 1960s. There was a widespread social movement that was attempting to improve the social position of women in a variety of different ways. This movement was comprised of a huge assortment of individuals and groups that came from a wide range of socioeconomic origins, political leanings, and theoretical views. On the other hand, the movement emphasised how important it is to treat women as individuals and as human beings respectively. It demonstrated that women are capable of being powerful, clever, and successful in their endeavours. As a result of the fact that the attributes may be found in either gender, it is adamantly opposed to the practise of exclusively classifying human qualities as belonging to certain genders. There is a significant amount of misinformation, misunderstanding, and fear that underpins these views against women.

It is an act of oppression against women to assert that characteristics such as aggression, power, competitiveness, and violence are characteristics that are associated with men. The development of compassion, sensitivity, and nurturing capabilities in women occurs when these traits are denied to them. It is a movement that rejects every differentiation between individuals on the basis of sex, attempts to abolish sex privileges and sex burdens, and strives to recognise the common humanity of woman and man as the foundation of law and custom. Feminism, which is a later name for the Women's Movement, seeks to reorganise the world on the basis of sex-equality in all human relations. Feminism therefore seeks to reorganise the world. The feminist concepts that are highlighted in the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Betty Friedan, and Germaine Greer, together with a host of other western feminists, have had an impact on the consciousness of a great number of intellectuals, particularly women authors. In this particular setting, it is important to talk about a few different strains of feminism. In addition to advocating for the collectivization of child care and housework, social feminism raises doubts about the conventional definitions of marriage and family. It is the contention of the social feminist Juliet Mitchell that the status and function of a woman are simultaneously defined by her involvement in the creation and reproduction of children, as well as her sexuality and the socialisation of children.

- i) Production: despite the fact that women are physically and mentally suited for high-paying employment, they continue to fall behind in the production sector.
- ii) Reproduction: they are governed by the chain of causality, which includes matriarchy, family, inability to participate in public life, and sexual inequity despite the advancement of technology.

A full-time career is constructed out of motherhood, which is a form of socialisation. Why does the freedom of women take so long? According to Mitchell, the oppression of women will continue to exist until our minds go through a revolution comparable to the economic revolution that brought about the shift from capitalism to socialism.



Marxist Feminism finds Capitalism as the causative factor for the separation of workplace from the homestead and for the devaluation of the homestead activities. These feminists declare that economic revolution will overthrow capitalism and make men and women equal partners. Nevertheless, Marxist Feminists are unable to provide an explanation for why capitalism places women in positions of employment. The reasons why women are submissive to males both inside and outside the home, as well as the reasons why it is not the other way around, are not explained by them in any manner. The Marxist categories are not gender-specific.

On the other hand, radical feminists provide a gender analysis. Women are either consigned to low-paying jobs or are forced to remain restricted to the confines of the house for as long as every avenue of power remains in the hands of men. In the standpoint of radical feminists, patriarchy is a phenomena that occurs everywhere. According to this group, the most fundamental kind of oppression is that of women, and the reason for their oppression is because reproduction is the root of **Wf oppression A** is their contention that reproductive technology is the answer to the problem of women's oppression. It is said by Shulamith Firestone that sexual roles will be removed if the inequalities that exist between reproductive roles are erased.

The necessity of having a biological family will be eliminated by the use of artificial reproduction. In its capacity as Reproduction Controlling Technologies, Firestone promotes the use of contraception, sterilisation, and abortion, in addition to artificial insemination, embryo transfer, and managed motherhood.

In addition to being a notable radical feminist, Adrienne Rich is of the opinion that motherhood is power. Rich asserts in his book "Of Woman Born" that every single human life on the globe is born of a woman. Rich is of the opinion that the reproductive technology that is supported by Firestone is detrimental to parenting. The act of becoming a mother is not a component of the institution of marriage; rather, it is an experience that might be considered a prospective relationship. In Rich's view, the institution is a social evil because it treats "mothering" as the only profession that women are allowed to have, it prevents women from entering the public domain, it disregards their gynocentric demands, and it prevents them from having even intimate friends. Because they are held responsible for everything that goes wrong, a significant number of women do not have children.

In her book Sexual Politics, Kate Millett makes the following claims:

- i) the oppression of women has its origins in the male-dominated gender system;
- ii) patriarchal ideology exaggerates the biological distinctions that exist between men and women; and
- iii) males acquire the agreement of the very women who they oppress via the process of conditioning.

Those who subscribe to the liberal feminist ideology believe that societal changes ought to provide women with equal standing. Their theory of liberalism is predicated on the notion that every single person possesses an equal capacity for rational thought. The ability to reason distinguishes human beings from other animals. On the other hand, liberal feminists are of the opinion that the way women are treated in today's society is in direct opposition to the principles of equality, liberty, and justice. As a collective, women are subject to certain limits, and these restrictions are imposed without taking into account the interests, capabilities, or virtues of each individual woman.

In her article titled "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," Mary Wollstonecraft argues that reason should be given the highest priority when it comes to directing the affairs of humankind. The article, which was written at the period of the French Revolution, pushed the liberals of her day to extend the rights that men had to those that women had. The idea that there are no sexual qualities and that no virtue is primarily associated with either sex is one of the most important themes that she explores in her writing. According to what John Stuart Mill argued in his book "On the Subjection of Women," the most plausible reason for why



women's intellectual attainments are lower than those of males is that women have been given less opportunities to develop their brains. To him, the elimination of discrimination based on gender is not only the right thing to do, but it is also an endeavour to make the most of the contributions that each person makes to society as a whole..

The archetype of the oppressed consciousness is the woman, who is also known as the second sex. Beauvoir levels harsh criticisms at Freud. "The boy is the norm, and the girl is the deviation from it," Freud believes, according to Beauvoir's interpretation of him (305). She adds, 'the psychoanalyst describes the female child, the young girl, as incited to identification with the mother and the father, torn between 'viriloid' and 'feminine' tendencies, whereas I conceive her as hesitating between the role of object, the other which is offered to her, and the assertion of her liberty (de Beauvoir Qtd. in Mitchell 77). From the perspective of these psychoanalyst-feminists, the patriarchal culture is the source of the girl's knowledge of her actual social inferiority, while the boy is the source of the boy's perception of his own superiority.

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The perspective that Betty Friedan takes on Freudian psychology is distinct from that of Beauvoir. "The ideology of women's emancipation included Freudian psychology, which placed an emphasis on liberation from a repressive morality in order to achieve sexual fulfilment" (quoted in Mitchell 319). On the other hand, Eva Figes comments that Freud, who was himself a Jew, was adhering to a long-standing Hebraic tradition that was already recognisable to us from the Old Testament, particularly Genesis. [Quoted in Mitchell 329] "Man came first, then woman came after him."

In spite of the fact that these branches adhere to a variety of different ideas that overlap with one another, feminism may be defined as a social movement that recognises women as the most oppressed group and fights to protect their rights. It's possible that the views of psychoanalyst-feminists have some bearing on this situation. "Each consciousness defines itself as subject, by opposing other consciousness and defining them as objects," says Simone de Beauvoir. "This is how each consciousness defines their own subjectivity."

Every awareness is a transcendence that achieves its freedom by an ongoing process of overcoming itself in order to achieve other freedom. Man defines himself as a subject against the supreme Other, which is woman. This is not done out of reciprocity, which would suggest that he is the object of the woman's subjecthood, but rather as an act of mental tyranny. The archetype of the oppressed consciousness is the woman, who is also known as the second sex. Beauvoir levels harsh criticisms at Freud. "The boy is the norm, and the girl is the deviation from it," Freud believes, according to Beauvoir's interpretation of him. She adds, 'the psychoanalyst describes the female child, the young girl, as incited to identification with the mother and the father, torn between 'viriloid' and 'feminine' tendencies, whereas I conceive her as hesitating between the role of object, the other which is offered to her, and the assertion of her liberty (de Beauvoir Qtd. in Mitchell 77). The patriarchal culture, according to these psychoanalyst-feminists, is the one that bestows upon the female a consciousness of her actual social inferiority, while the boy is bestowed with an awareness of his superiority.

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