

# International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

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## THE GENERAL STUDY OF WOMAN – “OTHER”



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### ABSTRACT

In order to assess and examine black women thoroughly, the general study of women is mandatory; As black woman is a woman too, her experiences are like those of any other woman under patriarchy. Ancient history and civilization also was conceived through male perception and through hegemonically prevalent beliefs. Women were not recognized, but neglected and subordinated. The development of civilization depends upon culture which is deeply rooted in womanhood.

**KEYWORDS :** *Women, social system, black women*

### INTRODUCTION :

In fact, history reads that the Trojan War lasted for thirty years. It resulted into ruins of Sparta but Helen was held responsible for it. Buddha’s life of enlightenment is always upheld but his wife had to live a lonely life. None of the historians, poets and artists have recorded her endurance and fortitude. In fact without support of helpmate”, man alone would not have been able to achieve his goal, but women have not been recognized. It is because that the world has been divided by gender discrimination. Male is superior while female is inferior. Throughout history women have always been subordinated to men. Simon de Beauvoir States –

“Man can think of himself without Woman. She cannot think of herself without man. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her.”

Woman is a part and parcel of human civilization. Her contribution to its growth and development is great. And though women.

“They make up about one half of humanity they are not considered as human.” Women all over the world are oppressed, suppressed and marginalized in every walk of life, though a woman performs her domestic duties and carries out her responsibilities without leaving any stone unturned for the development of her family. In one of his speeches Jawaharlal Nehru, reflecting on „revolution in a country, opines,

“The greatest revolution in a country is one that effects improvement in the status and living conditions of its women.”

Hence, the general study of women will help us to define what is to be a woman in relation to

herself and to a patriarchal society.

In a Patriarchal social system, woman is thought to be „other” and she has to accept this because it was believed that she does not develop any quality associated with the other half of humanity.

“She is a certain lack of qualities.”

Therefore she is restricted to her roles. She has been marginalized. She is not allowed to live an autonomous life. She is differentiated from man. She has to play her roles assigned to her by the male-dominated society. Mary Ann Fergusson rightly remarks.

“In every age woman has been seen primarily as mother, wife, mistress and as sex object, their roles in relationship to Men”

As a mother woman is taught to be thoughtful and dutiful, as a wife she is supposed to be loyal and faithful to her husband, loving and selfless. Any breach of moral and social laws invites severe punishment. As a woman grows, she is trained to be gentle docile and not to consider herself so great and high. She has to follow the normal way of life of self-effacement and should cherish ideas of self-abnegation; abandoning her self-interests for others’ interests. She ought to take pride in patience and in acceptance of lower position. The patriarchal society assigns her place. She is not to perform outdoor activities but indoor household duties. Tennyson’s, Princess’ asserts

“Man for the field and woman for the hearth, Man for the Sword and for the needle she.”

It indicates that man and woman are inherently opposites. Man is the whole whereas woman is „other”. As Dr. Harihar Kulkarni states-

“Man is the center and woman a periphery, man is the signifier and woman the signified.”

Then it is assumed that man is the subject, woman is the object and she can never become subject. He is Absolute – she is the other.

Her position as the „other” in the so called patriarchal order of society is determined by her complete conformity to Phallic philosophy. She is sexually committed to man. She is the object which never changes into subject because.

“They (women) have gained only what men have been willing to grant; They have taken nothing, they have only received.”

Only through man, she can fulfill her sexual desire. She passively enjoys sex because she does not have the phallus. For gratification of her carnal desire and for having sons, she has to rely upon man. She is to please man; to set at naught her own desires and needs. She is not adequate as man is. So in order to make her life fruitful and meaningful Simon de Beauvoir points out -

“She should confine to the world of bedrooms, kitchen and Cradle nursing their children.”

Truly to say, man and woman both need sex. Man also is dependent upon female for sexual fulfillment. It is urgent for man for producing offspring. Man needs her as „the sex”, uses her as object of lust but does not empower her. Consequently woman has not been socially emancipated as women generally are „others” in the world of patriarchy.

Woman is considered not only as the “other”, but also as “woe” to man. She is thought to be a source of sorrow the evil – incarnate. This view has been maintained through various myths all over the world. By disobeying God Eve brought sorrow to Mankind. Immortality is changed to mortality. Above all she betrayed Adam – her own man husband. God punished her children that is mankind with suffering and death. Like wise Pandora was held responsible for inflicting sorrow on human beings. The myth reads that Zeus the king of Gods had sent box for Epime Theus, but Pandora herself opened the

box by lifting the lid of it and played a mischief. Thus according to male mythology woman is held responsible for bringing into the world, sin and death. Therefore man and woman never shared the world in equality. Though women constitute half of the world's population they are not treated equal to men. “Earnestine rightly observes.”

“Humanity recognizes no sex, mind recognizes no sex, life and death, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery recognize no sex. Like man, woman comes involuntarily into existence. Like him she possesses physical and mental and moral powers. Like him she has to pay the penalty for disobeying nature's laws and far greater penalties she has to suffer from ignorance. Like men she also enjoys or suffers with her country. Yet she is not recognized as his equal.”

She is subordinated, subjugated and devalued. Eventually her individual self is totally faded and has not been recognized though she possesses required attributes and admirable qualities. She is totally dependent on man for security in every walk of life. She has to remain „other“. If she is not willing to be „other“, she would deprive herself of all the advantages conferred upon her by man. Hence she has to surrender her liberty. She lacks definite resources and cannot break the bond tying her to man as it is a biological fact. Thus she is inferior, inadequate subordinate and other because as Simone de Beauvoir points out-

“Her misfortune is to have been biologically destined for the repetition of Life, when even in her own view life does not carry within itself, its reasons for being reasons that are more important than the life itself.”

Moreover woman has no identity. If she has a little identity she can maintain only by being a screen for the images that men project upon her. It means that woman has to be self-repressed and self-abnegated. She has to conform to desires of men and has to respond to their needs. Throughout history women have always been subordinated to men. This condition has never been changed because woman's dependency is not the result of historical event or a social change. It is a natural condition, hence it is beyond the possibility of change. Above all

“She herself fails to bring about this change.”

It is because women lack organization. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own. They belong to men only and even though they wish they cannot exterminate men and break the bond. Moreover society cannot be split up on the basis of sex. Even though there is a social change taking place; woman cannot have her legal status the same as man's, for social customs and conventions prevent her from taking part in worldly affairs. Laws and rules are made only by men without consulting women. Even the Christianity reveals, as Simone de Beauvoir notes that-

“She was destined by Him (God) for man, it was to rescue Adam from loneliness that He gave her to him, in her mate was her origin.”

Thus the patriarchal culture bombards the women with the messages that she is inadequate, inferior and source of evil. She is simply an appendage to man. Man is subject, woman is object. She remains “other” the big other. Different religions also have sanctioned her subordinate position. The Bible asks the woman to submit to man as to God. St. Augustine was delighted showing up the weakness of woman and he says –

“Woman is creature neither decisive nor constant.”

Philosophers – Aristotle and Plato also considered woman as the other. Plato thanked God for creating him man not woman an enslaved creature. The status of women continued to remain the same during the late 19th and the early 20th century.

They used to spend their everyday life in reading, serving, practicing music. However

sometimes they used to communicate to their friends by writing letter. They assembled together occasionally for tea-party which the only great event was for them. Visiting a town nearby was an exciting adventure for country women. Thus their choices were limited and restricted. They led „constrained lives“. They were to act, behave according to what the society expected. The society expected the type of woman who was

“Hopelessly inferior, physically and intellectually of service status, and whose usefulness was bound by activities like working cross- stitch.”

In order to increase their value and importance in the marriage affairs, Girls tried to be desirable types of women as the society expected. If they failed to attain it, the society pitied them. They were supposed to be chaste, virtuous, pious and loyal and to cultivate refinement in ways of living life. A Toyne remarks

“Women were supposed to find fulfillment of their lives in living not for their selves but for other. The only joy for a woman, people thought, was, the joy of marriage and of having many children.”

Her pleasure was in looking after her husband and children. She was confined to household work. She had no voice in matrimonial affairs and was not free to choose her husband. In this respect father’s word was absolutely law in a patriarchal order of society, as W. Arnstein states A wife was in no sense her husband’s legal equal but most obviously and significantly the mother of his children.”

Thus woman was not considered equal but the other and inferior.

So far their education was concerned, only women belonging to higher class could get education at home. The middle class girls were not given education because the society thought it would ruin a girl’s prospect in marriage. They were expected to emerge only as expected types—being amiable, inoffensive, submissive and loyal. They were not allowed to aspire to any intellectual career. And girls from poor class were not at all concerned with the idea of education. Because they had to engage themselves in earning their livelihood. In a male- dominated society, they could not enjoy political rights. They had no vote and could not take part in Government except when a woman was a monarch.

In addition to this women were paid low wages while men were paid high wages for the same job. It was alleged that women worked and earned money for frivolous purchases. Thus women had a long way to go, to be judged by their own standards, as free human beings. To conclude, woman in a patriarchal society is the socially sanctioned „other“. This is how masculine ideologies, phallic philosophy, societal prescriptions and different religions have relegated and marginalized these female creatures because as Simone de Beauvoir argues

“Woman has ovaries, a Uterus, these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature.”

So she is dependant and her dependency causes loss of her self-identity and dignity. Her situation becomes pathetic.

## CONCLUSION:

So the introductory chapter examines and assesses the place of woman and black woman in a patriarchal society in the historical context. Under patriarchy all women white and black sailed in the same boat. From the beginning of civilization women are generally treated as the “Other”, "Subordinate" and "inferior" to men. They have been marginalized, neglected and restricted in every walk of the life. In fact everyone comes through a woman and they make up about half of the population. But the world has neglected her and has hidden her heroic nature that lies in her enormous agonies and pains she endures in giving birth. Different myths, religions and philosophers also consider

woman as the 'other' and "unequal" and have sanctioned her subordinate position. She is dependent on man, economically and sexually. She does not enjoy any liberty in any field. She has to conform to social conventions, to male ideologies and to phallic philosophy. She is treated as an enslaved creature and has no desires and wills of her own in all matters: family; marriage and education. She has to play the roles imposed upon her by the society. She has to be submissive, and has to live life of self-abnegation. It is because of her biological peculiarities she is neglected in every age and in every civilization. As black woman is woman too, she shares almost the same experiences which any other woman does under the patriarchal imperialism.

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