Waiting for the Other Glass Shoe: A Study on the Politics behind the Wants of Women by Reinventing *Cinderella*

Anitta S Cheeran
Assistant Professor
Little Flower College
Guruvayoor, Thrissur
Kerala

Abstract

Folk tales and fairy tales are for generations to read and it is the best way to uphold the social realities. We can experience the joy beyond the walls of the world by reading fairy tales. *Cinderella* is a popular children's story and the character of Cinderella passed from her fairy tale origins to mythical proportions. The myth element of unjust oppression is embodied in the archetypal image of Cinderella.

The character of Cinderella is complex and her issues are the issues of all women. Once Cinderella is given magical powers by her fairy god mother to attend the ball, she quickly gets the knack of utilizing it by leaving her one glass shoe, so her prince can find her. If the slipper's loss signifies another loss, the slipper signifies another slip. It is troubling that only one item retains its shape (the shape of magic) after the ball when everything else has returned to its poor normalcy, right down to the golden pumpkin. If everything is magical, then the missing shoe makes no logical sense in the story. But without that one glass shoe as a calling card, the prince may never find her.

In this context Freud's infamous question 'What does a woman want?' becomes valid. The paper tries to analyse the inner soul of women by the two theoretical concepts:

*Cinderella Complex
*Cinderella Effect

Women are always waiting for a good fortune which never comes at all! Once they begin to identify their own phobias, they can begin to challenge and change them-slowly, perhaps painfully, re-educating ourselves by realising their potential.

Key Words- unjust oppression, slip, phobias, Cinderella complex, Cinderella effect

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Folk tales and fairy tales are for generations to read and it is the best way to uphold the social realities. We can experience the joy beyond the walls of the world by reading fairy tales. One of the pleasures of fairy tales is their diversity. Some are more action-oriented; others are slow-paced and thoughtful and may include a romantic angle. Every culture has its own flavour too, so reading fairy tales from around the world can be an education in our differences and similarities as human beings. Like other good fiction, though, a good fairy tale can provide a moral compass. Fantasy can be a very efficient vehicle for truth. There are even deeper values to fairy tales that touches psychology sometimes.

Cinderella is a popular children's story and the character of Cinderella passed from her fairy tale origins to mythical proportions. Arne- Thompson system classifies Cinderella as the persecuted heroine. The story of Rhodopis, about a Greek slave girl who marries the King of Egypt is considered as the earliest known variant of the Cinderella story (published in 7 th BC) and many variants are now available. The Cinderella fairy tales have been told around the world. They are stories about a beautiful but a humble girl being victimized by her father's remarriage. Being mistreated by her evil stepmother and stepsisters, Cinderella has to be degraded and debased to wear shabby clothes, mop floors and wait on them. However with her beauty, submissiveness, obedience, passivity etc.., she wins a prince and lives happily forever. There are several common features in most of the Cinderella stories. They are:

1)   In most Cinderella stories, there must be a beautiful heroine having fallen from a position of high esteem.

2)   There should be at least one evil parent and siblings mistreating the heroine.

3)   There is a magical source helping the heroine

4)   There must be a restoration of the heroine's status from lower place to original or a promotion of even high status.

In these Cinderella plots, the man, here the prince is regarded as rescuers. By marrying Cinderella, the prince saves her from the boring daily domestic chores of cleaning and cooking and from the mistreatment of her family. The myth element of unjust oppression is embodied in the archetypal image of Cinderella.

Though Cinderella fairy tales are stories told long time ago, afterwards there have been films, soap operas and romance fictions based on the same plot and that all leave some psychological effects on women in general.

The word 'Cinderella' has by analogy, come to mean one whose attributes were unrecognized or one who unexpectedly achieves recognition or success after a period of obscurity and neglect. She would often arise covered in cinders, giving rise to the mocking nick name "Cinderella "by her step sisters. The character of Cinderella is complex and her issues are the issues of all women. Once Cinderella is given magical powers by her fairy god mother to attend the ball, she quickly gets the knack of utilizing it by leaving her one glass shoe, so her prince can find her. If the slipper's loss signifies another loss, the slipper signifies another slip. It is troubling that only one item retains its shape (the shape of magic) after the ball when everything else has returned to its poor normalcy, right down to the golden pumpkin. If everything is magical, then the missing shoe makes no logical sense in the story. But without that one glass shoe as a calling card, the prince may never find her.

The paper tries to analyse the inner soul of women by the two theoretical concepts:

*Cinderella Effect

*Cinderella Complex

The issue of the fairy tale character Cinderella can be analysed by the theory of Cinderella Effect. In Evolutionary Psychology, the Cinderella effect is the alleged higher incidence of different forms of child abuse and mistreatment by stepparents than biological parents.

There are several critiques of the Cinderella effect. Understandably so many people are generally uncomfortable with the findings that stepchildren are disproportionately victimized by their stepparents. Instead of the results being a function of inclusive fitness, some have wondered if other socio-cultural factors are at work. Poverty and bad parenting skills have been considered as the factors to replace the evolutionary explanation. We can see a disproportion in the amount of step children who run away or leave their homes early in comparison to biological children.

Although Cinderella's specific tale is fictional, the underlying ideas of maltreatment and abuse are sobering realities that numerous step children face today. Cinderella begins with Cinderella's primary absence: her mother. In fairy tales, motherlessness indicates an absence of quality attention and the necessity for men to remarry. Their second wives are invariably brutish, and fathers die off like flies. The next absence in her life is her father. The other missed parts are proper clothes, food, friends and opportunities to socialize. However the Cinderella effect builds upon the premise that children require a large parental investment but not as pampered kids.

This is only one side of a problem. But the real complexity lies in the woman herself. In a sense her whole existence is 'waiting'- Women are always waiting for a good fortune which never comes at all! This can be studied with the help of Cinderella Complex theory.

Cinderella complex was first described by Colette Dowling who wrote the book *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence*. It is the unconscious desire of all women to be taken care of by others. The complex is said to become more apparent as a person grows older. It is based on the idea of feminity portrayed in the story of Cinderella, where a woman is beautiful, graceful, polite, supportive, hardworking and

maligned by the females of her society, but she is not capable of changing her situations with her own actions and must be helped by an outside force, usually a male (Prince in the story).

The Cinderella complex, in Colette Dowling's case was mainly conflict with herself. Woman (often submissive and needy) spends all her time searching for her Prince charming to rescue her and she is brainwashed by rosy romantic images and ideals. This fact touches not only on the dependency factor, but focuses more on another problem of unrealistic expectations and resulting disappointment.

The characteristics shared in the Cinderella Complex are:

1)   Females have been educated that they are subservient and inferior to males.

2)   Outwardly many females lack self confidence.

3)   Unconsciously these females long for a "Prince" to save them and take care of them.

4)   These females intend to idolize their fathers and desperately seek for males' attention.

5)   Females define their identity in terms of their man's identity.

Women herself recognizes the fact that the world is masculine on the whole. Those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it today are men. As for a woman, she does not consider herself responsible for it. It is understood that she is indifferent, inferior and dependent. The concept of women's emotional, financial and other dependency on men from the Cinderella complex can be interpreted in different ways in today's society and culture.

In this context Sigmund Freud's infamous question 'What does a woman want?' becomes valid. To quote him:

"The great question that has never been answered and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul is 'What does a woman want?"

The specific answer to this question is rather difficult, but there are reasons for this. The words of Gloria Stuart make it perfect. "A woman's heart is a deep ocean of secrets". Take the life of a woman. From childhood onwards parents provide answers for everything and protect her instead of teaching their daughters to be an individual. Of course puberty becomes a first crisis in her life. She starts dreaming a life just like a fairy tale and tries to discover her inner fairy god mother. Take the case of Cinderella. She is a girl with three mothers- a mother who has died (about whom we know nothing), a wicked step mother and a fairy god mother. Without her fairy god mother she would never have been able to get her life started.

It is a story about why women don't want other women to have pleasure. The one glass shoe trick played by Cinderella is a proof for that. She can lie to other people to protect her pleasure, that's why she convinces her stepsisters that she hasn't been to the ball. Cinderella achieves some magical connections with animals and nature. She has some psychological disorders too. She has a nervous demeanour and her voice and facial expressions are childlike. Women are different and their wants too. They want different things at different points of time. They see themselves as princess waiting for a prince to come to their rescue. They are unable to accept the men in their lives in a healthy way because of the unrealistic expectations, low self esteem and independency issues. It is a tragic state in which women willingly give over their own growth, preferring dependence to independence. Women yearn for freedom but they are afraid to take it.

Since childhood both men and women have been bombard by the stereotyped gender images in romance fictions and popular medias. These gender images have been consciously or unconsciously incorporated into their souls. According to Dowling, the reasons why the women are willingly to subordinate themselves to men could be that they have never trained to have the idea of taking care of themselves, speaking up for themselves or asserting themselves. Instead they are trained to avoid independence.

It is high time she be permitted to take her chances in her own interests and in the interest of all. Once they begin to identify their own phobias, they can begin to challenge and change them-slowly, perhaps painfully, re-educating ourselves by realising their potential. The women of today are in a fair way to dethrone the myth of feminity. They are beginning to affirm their independence in concrete ways. Once Karl Marx has said:

"The direct, natural, necessary relation of human creatures is the relation of man to woman".

To conclude my paper I would like to quote the last lines of *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir:

"The case could not be better stated. It is for man to establish the reign of liberty in the midst of the world of the given. To gain the supreme victory, it is necessary for one thing, that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood."

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