Poetry Analysis On “Barbie Doll” By Marge Piercy

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Many poets and authors did a great job worldwide, but most of them leaned towards very few dimensions of society. Slighter personals in this category maintained balance among multiple societal dimensions through their creativity. Marge Piercy is one such progressive activist, poet, and novelist who magnificently demonstrated historical events, war episodes, heritage norms, and social, political, and feministic ideas through her creative work (Richardson). Her works are centric on political dimensions, women’s rights, and their recognition in society. She has highlighted women-focused issues with the full zeal of commitment in ‘a swift free verse’ throughout her energetic age. In addition, she became a voice for voiceless women who were grounded in the triangle of family, workplace, and society with a blanket of undue expectations. She is the author of more than seventeen volumes of fabulous poems, among which ‘Barbie Doll’ is a masterpiece. Barbie Doll made Piercy a torchbearer during the period of second-wave feminism in the 1970s. The marvellous poem depicts societal horrors and pressures on women in a male-dominated society. This paper explores unrealistic expectations and pressures on women in a patriarchal society regarding gender role stereotypes, crafting the body, and gaining perfect beauty, which results in depression, misleading, and diminished confidence in the women’s community.

A Feminist Narrative From Birth to Death

Barbie Doll is a narrative poem based on the voice of feminism for women’s rights in a man-dominated society. It is a concise and very comprehensive poem with a focus on the author’s message. Through her keen observation of society, she has divided women’s age into various phases, and every phase is decorated with multiple expectations. As the ‘girl child’ is born, she is given toys to prepare and craft her for specialized gender roles. Further, on reaching puberty, bullies are waiting for her to fulfil the desired parameters of others. She becomes conscious after teasing trauma and ignores her positive and bestowed qualities. In fact, the poem sheds light on the horrors and sufferings that women endure throughout their lives. Through this poem, the writer explores multiple sentiments for which feminists are fighting by elaborating on the story of a young girl. From birth to death bed, a woman is destined to face the pressure of fulfilling the expectations of other personals without thinking about her desires and wishes. Diversified horrors of sexism in patriarchy prevalent society left no chance of self-esteem for the women community. In addition, the magnified burdens on the woman by the corrupt and right-snatching society can only leave her as her soul departs.

Patriarchy and Enforced Female Obedience

Meanwhile, the patriarchal system adorned by humanity for centuries needs complete obedience from women towards men (Adisa et al.). Such desire and expectation are inherited male nature regarding multiple principles, norms, values, and standards formulated with the passage of time. These standards and principles have the foundation to dominate women according to the will of the men. For this purpose, a system of social organization has been constructed in centuries of experience where the ruling principal force rests with men. The role of women is to trample on their feelings and inner desires in such transformed ways which are suitable and acceptable to men. Specifically, the right of suitability and desire to mould women according to their needs rests with men. Such stereotypically societal attitudes and forced roles for women have generated a societal setup where women gain salvage status before men. Additionally, such subservience has manifested different modes of rules and laws that have had separate implementations and effects on men as well as women since historical times. In fact, patriarchy has exhibited its full-fledged power by curbing women's rights and forcing them to act upon the expectations of males.

Unrealistic Standards of Female Beauty

However, our society forces a woman to fulfil limiting and unrealistic expectations of men regarding her beauty. Every creature has a unique set of extrinsic and intrinsic qualities which are unchangeable. Those physical features that are categorized as aesthetically attractive cannot be altered to fulfil the idealistic and impractical wishes of men. Resultantly, such hollowness results in physical inadequacy and diminished self-image for those women who desire to compete for the opposite gender in every walk of life. At the same time, her other attributes like health, intelligence, the strength of nerves, and willpower are praised on one side, but her sex drive and physical features dominate such marvellous qualities. In this concern, the whole life span of a woman revolves around acquiring such features to soothe a man's desire for his love and affection. Meanwhile, such a woman loses self-esteem and confidence and adorns apologetic behaviour for those physical possessions divergent from man's idealization.

Low Self-Esteem, Depression, and Insecurity

Furthermore, worth and abilities are the main roots of one's self-esteem and confidence to proceed further in life. However, an apologetic nature and low self-esteem imply stagnation in the women's community, and they are at the mercy of those expectations which are imposed on them. Ultimately, such social pressure lingers a woman into a state of depression (Shaha et al.). In other words, happiness and a sense of empowerment are the products of accepting herself for who she is. Society implies external beauty pressure instead of interior media of a female, resulting in guilt for no mistake. Targeting females in such void criteria brings diminished confidence. In contrast, the female

community does not have such expectations of the opposite gender. Such a brutal review of societal attacks makes women lose confidence and adopt apologetic behaviour in male-dominated environments. This attack on the female community is basically the foundation of pushing women back to a patriarchal society. Additionally, such mental drawbacks on the part of women by males breed insecurities among young women. They intend to struggle hard to obtain perfect beauty and fulfil the desires of society.

The Barbie Doll as a Symbol of Artificial Perfection

Similarly, the desire to attain perfect beauty to fulfil societal expectations cannot come true in this life. Society imposes pressure on young girls to be perfect, which is impracticable. In this case, the poem's name is a symbolic representation for the reader, where the doll represents the perfect lady according to the desires and will of the male. That ultimately leads personals to exhibit themselves as 'perfect' beings for those who jeered at them. For their consideration, women expect to attain a figure like a 'Barbie doll'. The doll is, in fact, a sum of all those integrated ways and techniques that the women's community has to adopt to gain perfection. Such artificial perfection is achievable only through accepting the desires and standards of society imposed on young girls. Women's communities do not have permission to think about what they should look like and what they struggle for in life. The void and shallowness of a male-dominated society are vivid because the overall expectation revolves around physical appearance, with no attention paid to the inner soul and inner beauty.

False Body Ideals and Psychological Harm

Moreover, the societal pressure to craft young girls like Barbie Doll misleads this whole community towards an unrealistic world. Such misleading creates undue emotional panic and sadness among women. Whenever the word Barbie comes to any girl's mind passing through tendering age, she just sticks her mind to unrealistic and fake body types. Additionally, the desire for such a fake body type comprises multiple standards of waist, thighs, legs, and nose of women by the men. While realistic fact ponders that only two per cent of American women can craft their physical appearance according to such desired measurements. It is a psychological fact that adults can differentiate between realistic and fake body crafting, but at children's age, such crafting is amusable, and everyone tries to gain it. Such unfruitful desires breed disturbance, mental tension, and failure in achieving goals in life. Such cultural and social pressure imposed on young girls breeds chaos regarding human personality development as well.

A Parable and Warning About Women's Lives

Last but not least, the style, mode, and simplicity of the poem embedded with a golden message are

above board. The Barbie Doll can be considered and observed as a parable regarding what is happening to women in a patriarchal society. In fact, this is a short narrative poem with a moral, and the message of the poem represents a warning. The message makes the reader aware of the integrated ways through which the women's community is suffering. Society and practices of societal units shape, formulate, and craft women's ideas about equality and life with dignity. The simple notion of the poem is a comparison of women with men and concludes with a choice of either feminine beauty or feminine behaviour. The ultimate choice rests with men along with the self-esteem, dignified, and self-governed life of women without any insecurity.

Irony, Symbolism, and Feminist Resistance

Further, the choice of words, conciseness, and grammatical construction make this poem a unique piece in the world of literature. In addition, the words have been weaved in contemporary language. The poem also suggests that modelling and crafting modern women according to the expectations of men, like Barbie Doll, is the latest oppression of the women's community. Ultimately, the poem is symbolic, full of irony, and has a central significance regarding the feminist movements and securing women's rights.

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