“Women” by May Swenson

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Introduction

May Swenson is known for her use of imagery in poetry. Her poetry reflects her observations, images, and how she sees the world. Her poetry is believed to be her response to specific energies of the world that affect her style in poetry. The poem “Women” by May Swenson uses symbolism and a sarcastic tone to describe women’s purpose and the reason for their existence. The poem, by its appearance, is unique in its design. The stanzas are arranged in the form of oblique lines with two horizontal lines between stanzas. The design appears to have pointed to two kinds of women who are under the influence of men.

The poet uses symbolism to explain her point and point towards the main issue. The poem describes that women who were initially used as pedestals should be pedestals to men. By the symbolism of horses, the poet may be pointing towards power or purpose in the life of women, while the use of toys may be pointing towards a time of leisure and enjoyment. The poet in this poem may be explaining the time of 1978, and her words may point toward the condition of women at that time.

Discussion

The poem takes advantage of metaphors and sarcasm to describe what she feels should be a respectful treatment for women. The poem uses words that represent the poet’s belief about the treatment of women and what the true purpose of women is. There are references to the words “horses,” pedestals, and toys that are felt to have been used to describe the poet’s notion about women.

The poem has several issues that relate to women’s position and roles in life. The poet beautifully uses sarcasm to describe the roles of women by describing what should “NOT” be their purpose. Our current society considers women as objects and a source of pleasure for men, while they should be a support for men and a force that drives men in life. The first stanza of the poem is all about sarcastic symbolism and uses words that describe the expected roles of women. The use of “pedestals” is used in a broader sense. It points to the roles by which women can provide support to men. Nowadays, we see that women are participating with men in all fields of life, be it medical sciences, education, military, research, or politics; women are proving themselves to be equally compatible with men and that they are no less than men in any way (Roderick, 2016). The poet uses this word to point towards

the importance of women and why they should support men in every field.

This concept also points towards the fact that women can upgrade men in many ways. If a woman, for example, is intelligent and highly qualified, she will improve her husband's status in his social circle. She can help him by working in jobs while taking care of the house and children. She can help her husband by motivating him if he is not earning well and can support him to earn for their family together (Donnelly, Kristin, et al., 2016). These qualities belong to the women who hold high values for their families and love their husbands. These are the women who are always respected in every society and receive appreciation from their families.

The poet in the line *"the gladdest things in the toy room"* symbolizes the purpose of women as things and toys. These words are also used to oppose the idea of using women as objects. When a person refers to another person as an "object," he is silently claiming that the other person is useless and his or her purpose is only like a tool, which people use when they need it and leave when their purpose is fulfilled. The thing that is wrong about it is describing a living, breathing human being as an object. God created everyone for a purpose, and like men, women are also sent to earth for a purpose. It is wrong to objectify women as a tool and something whose purpose is only to please men (Dhaliwal, Sukhwant, 2015)

The poem also uses terms to contrast the true purpose of women. The *"wooden old-fashioned painted rocking horses"* point to the use of women as a showpiece. It is true that physically beautiful women always get the most attention, and they improve the social status of their husbands. It is also true that pretty women do not need to be brilliant or wealthy, as their purpose in society is entertainment. This is a shameful dilemma of our society, which has made women a showpiece and attraction, and a thing that looks good to the eye. Women themselves are responsible for this state in society. They have symbolized themselves as a prize or trophy, which upgrades the status of the person who owns it. This term is used to objectify the concept that women are not a showpiece and men need to understand their true purpose and value them (Delacoste, 2018).

The sarcasm in the third stanza is even harsher. The line "To be joyfully ridden/ until the restored egos dismount and the legs stride away" refers to the fact that women are meant to support men. When men suffer failure in their lives, they seek shelter and a driving force that pushes them to lift themselves and acts as a refuge in their harsh times. Women's purpose as wives, mothers, and daughters is to support the male members of their family in their harsh times (Walsh, 2015). The identity of women is already a source of peace, and when a person faces failure, he seeks support from his wife. The same stanza uses the term *"Immobile sweet-lipped, sturdy and smiling,"* which points to the soft nature of women. The women, by their soft and pleasing nature, comfort men, and by their actions, satisfy men in their needs. This service is not enforced on women. Rather, it is part of themselves to be sweet, joyful, pleasing, and loving.

The concept given in the poem describes women as support. Being a support to men negates the idea of women having their own identity and will. It revokes their right to decide what is best for

themselves and whether they can do something for their benefit. The poet is in favor of seeing women as support and conveys a message to all women that they should stick to their sole purpose and do what they are made to do. The poem accepts the purpose of the women but does not revoke women's own right to choose the best for themselves. The poem does not claim that women should not have their rights, but it claims that they should also never forget that they are the face of support men look to. It encourages women to support their families whenever they need them, irrespective of what they are getting in return.

Conclusion

In short, the poem conveys a message to men that they should not treat women as tools and respect their identity and rights. It also serves as a guideline for women that they should understand their purpose, which is to support, care, and love for men. However, it also gives a message to the reader that women of today will fight for their rights, they will ask for their right to speak, and will ask for acceptance of their identity, and they will serve men but should not be considered a tool only for pleasure.

Works Cited

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