

Insidious Delineation of Gender Bias in Animated Movies and its Impact on Children.

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Abstract

Gender bias exists almost widely irrespective of one's culture and dogma. This prejudice is sadly being implanted into the younger minds even before they become cognizant. Media plays a major role in structuring the tender hearts. To be more precise, the animated movies engross the children. An unanswered query persists whether these animated movies are doing justice in molding the children in an upright manner. The researcher tries to prove the gender bias being indirectly delineated in the animated movies by taking Cinderella, Aladdin and Tangled into reference. The paper further assays to draw solutions and also gives fair examples from the very genre to remind the existence of few unbiased animated movies which could be set as good examples for the upcoming days.

Keywords: *Gender bias, prejudice, media, animated movies, solutions and fair examples.*

Gender bias exists almost everywhere irrespective of one's culture and tradition. This threat exists starting from family to work space. Each nation has its own culture and tradition. But we find that gender discrimination exists almost in most parts of the world. Female are considered as a lower being, whereas male counterparts are dominant. It is sad to see that it is being continued even today. Gender bias has become and still being the topic of today. This issue cannot be ignored. Media plays an important role in portraying human beings and their behaviors. But knowingly or unknowingly, few disturbing and threatening issues have intruded it. Women are portrayed as characters that are meant to be less educated, doing household chores

and being submissive. Even if they manage to secure a job, they face inequality in terms of payment and in attaining decent posts. We are in a position where we cannot blindly accept the intrusion. We have to research, analyze and make the needed change for the betterment.

Media is a powerful weapon. It has a wide reach among people. Media is in a position to do the needful in eradicating the gender bias. But it is sad that media itself has opted the wrong path and portray wrong concepts strongly. Media is generally known for creating intense impact on viewers. This strong weapon could be positively used in breaking the walls of gender bias. Media mainly serves as a powerful tool in educating the children on gender and gender behavior. They involve in shaping the sense of self in a child's mind. Animated movies are widely seen and loved by kids, which is also a part of media. But sadly these movies too indirectly induce the gender bias and exhibit the stereotype. An insidious delineation of gender bias is being injected into a child's mind through animated movies, which in turn creates a negative impact on the children. Male characters are portrayed as strong and aggressive, whereas female characters are portrayed as weak, innocent and submissive. Parents too fail to spot the gender bias silently lurking behind. In this case both the genders are affected. Parents should be cautious enough to spot identify and reject the stereotype the media shows.

Media is closely related in the cognitive development of a child. Media and especially, the animated and cartoon versions have become a global business. These people target the younger generations only. The young children are tender and anything they see would create a great impact. Human beings are the prisoners of situation that too kids are like the unmolded clay. Thus, the themes and concepts have to be carefully chosen for their optimistic development. An apt environment has to be created for the children so that they grow up without gender bias. A common stereotype is being implemented in the animated movies. Stereotypes of both male and female exists in animated movies and male characters outnumber the females in a plot, which itself is a proof of gender bias. Women or girls are shown as weak, submissive, passive, and day dreaming. They are shown as silent creatures accepting their fate. On the other hand, men or boys are shown as strong, independent, smart, aggressive and proud. A negative impact is created among the kids who view such plots. The other basic reason for gender bias in media is that, the writers, directors and others in the media field are themselves men. The male outnumber their female counterparts in this field. This stereotype too has to change.

The researcher has taken the animated movies *Aladdin*, *Tangled* and *Cinderella* into reference to justify existence of gender bias. *Aladdin* is the movie having Jasmine as the heroine. She is a princess who is living with her father, the king. She is being secured, cared and given a sophisticated lifestyle which a princess is meant to experience. Though Jasmine seems to be a strong character; a deeper analysis would prove it wrong. She is unaware of the outer world and of the dangers it holds. She lives in a world of fantasy, dreaming of her better half and creates for herself a romantic aura. Only when she faces the outer world and meets the bitter reality does she realize the truth. Otherwise, for most part of the movie, she is shown as romantic, innocent and unaware. Even at times of crisis, the hero is the one who comes to rescue her. Until that, she is all submissive and quiet. Another important issue to be seen in this movie is that, women are shown as possessions or properties to be owned by men. The knight wishes to marry Jasmine to acquire the position of the existing Sultan. On watching such movies, the young girls unconsciously take up a wrong model. Even *Aladdin* is shown as a thief doing mischief and playing pranks. It creates a negative impact in young boys too. This is likely to happen because they are unaware to differentiate between reality and the world of fantasy.

In *Tangled*, Rapunzel is the heroine. She is brought up by a witch, the so called mother in a high tower who uses the magical power of her hair. Rapunzel is shown as a very energetic girl but for most of the time she is found cooking, cleaning, dreaming and passing her time carelessly. She too is unaware of the outer world and blindly believes the witch. She equally believes the stranger (the hero) and goes out with him to explore the world outside the tower. She is easily misled by people around her and saved by the hero when she happens to face a threat. She fails to understand the truth that people use other people for their own motive. She is shown as a compassionate, kind, quiet and submissive girl. Here too the hero saves her, which again is a stereotype. The hero here is a thief and is in the most wanted list. Still, he is shown as smart, intelligent and brave. The children are morally misled on seeing such characters. The boys might feel that stealing is an awesome thing and girls might feel that she has to be saved by boys at times of crisis. A girl might also unconsciously develop an unsecured feel regarding the world outside, which may break her existing courage. It might make her a dependent on the opposite gender.

In *Cinderella*, she is tortured by her step mother and her two step sisters after the death of her father. But Cinderella endures all the torture silently. She shows neither fighting spirit nor dislike. She is shown as a very quiet and obedient girl taking care of the household chores. At times she sings to herself and dreams; she never talks back even at the most needed times and lets herself to be tortured by her step mother. Cinderella cleans, cooks and mends for most part of the plot. She is shown as a kind hearted girl with a lot of endurance. Only because of her fairy God-mother was she able to attend the ball or else it would have been impossible since she stayed passive at home. Even during the close, it was only because of the prince that she was spotted out and was asked in hand for marriage. Otherwise there is a bulk chance of her continuing to be the same Cinderella. She totally leaves everything in the hands of fate. Another vital issue to be noted here is that, she is being tortured by the same gender. This would affect the real relationship between the sisters and step mothers. The story indirectly instill jealousy, self pride and importance to external beauty in young minds where they fail to see the real inner beauty of heart.

Aladdin, Tangled and *Cinderella* serve as examples of animated movies inducing the gender stereotype in young minds. Even the female characters are less shown on screen and are outnumbered by male characters. Animated movies serve as fun factories which simultaneously serve the educational purpose. These movies show gender bias thus creating a negative impact. The media and the people related to this field should come forward in correcting the errors committed. One of the two genders is shown dominant. Cartoons are largely viewed entertainment but it induces numerous incorrect messages. Since the kids are immature to differentiate the good from bad and fantasy from reality, it would lead to a disaster and in turn affect them negatively though they grow up. Women and girls are shown as inactive, with less responsibility and with childish nature. They are portrayed as being emotional, romantic, domestic and compassionate and in need of protection. Most importantly, they are shown as sexual objects and as a possession. Whereas men or boys are shown as highly skilled, smart, furious, attractive, free and responsible. They are mostly with self pride, boasting, indulging in criminal activities and dominant. Here both male and female children are prone to fix an opinion on the other gender, which is liable to be false.

In the recent days, there are traces of unbiased animated movies. Animated movies have few optimistic examples like *Moana* and *Brave*, where the gender bias is being broken down. Both the female protagonists are shown as independent, brave and adventurous. They equal the male counterparts and occupy a place in every girl's heart. Here too they face problems, are dominated but they are smart, intelligent and risk takers. They are not shown as a passive, silent, tolerant weeping girl; instead they set foot into the issues themselves and find a solution. These kinds of animated movies will definitely be encouraging to the young minds. This would lead to a shift of mind set among the kids and of the way they approach the opposite gender. These films would add clarity and better understanding of gender and would teach the children to respect each other. The media and production people should strive to break the stereotype existing in the media field and come forward to take unbiased gender movies. It would be encouraging if more number of women set foot into this field. Using asexuality in movies too is a positive approach. It would help in eradicating the problem of gender bias instead of dominating one gender and suppressing the other. Next parents must actively take part and help out and teach their children the equality and unbiased attitude. Media is not only an entertainment portal but also an educational site. It should do justice in social reformation through its productions. Thus, it is in the hands of directors, parents and society in helping the child in attaining clarity over gender and equality. More number of positive animated movies has to be produced and parents have to first be cognizant before guiding their children.

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