

Chapter V

A Genre beyond Gender

A gender equal society would be one where the word gender does not exist: where everyone can be themselves.

– Gloria Steinem, “Speech in Jaipur Literature Festival 2014”

This chapter looks at how the ‘New Woman’ theory is pertinent in showcasing the select feminist fairy tales to address the theme of ‘beyond gender’ in literature. The themes of gender and anatomising gender not only redefine the need for adults and children to celebrate women and all genders but also reimagine the requirement of humanity to traverse beyond the boundaries of gender. History being the judge and all gendered identities the commentators, the theories of the ‘New woman,’ the ‘feminine mystique,’ ‘matricentric feminism,’ ‘feminist mothering’ ‘intersectionality,’ ‘self-realisation,’ and ‘self-actualisation’ are discoursed in the presentation of ‘beyond gender’ in the inverted feminist fairy tales. The cherished feats of the reworking of gender and gendered identities are indubitably an accomplishment of feminist fairy tales. Despite foresight on gender as a tool of reasoning and logic, this study has resulted in the visualisations of realms beyond gender. Yet it seems difficult to predict a providential catastrophe about the motif of working out the feminist fairy tales towards the theme of ‘beyond gender.’ The eventful decades of the past that raised several gendered debates on gender roles and gender stereotypes can be answered through an understanding of ‘beyond gender.’ The deliberations in life and literature reflect that the impediments towards redefining the ‘new woman’ and the concept of ‘beyond gender’ are preordained in this context.

The theme of ‘beyond gender’ is a fiercely debated repository of gender deliberations which discuss gender specific issues. Gender binaries, gender identities,

gender wars, gender concerns, gender balance, gender dynamics, gender norms, gender bending and gender cues vouch for dominions beyond gender and envision a genderless world. While the pessimist looks behind and the optimist ahead, the sensible person, the planet as a whole ought to look in both directions to learn what is right, the errors of omission and commission to introspect with insight to sojourn beyond the boundaries of gender. It is in this light that the 'New Woman' theory and the theme of 'beyond gender' are re-envisioned in feminist fairy tales. The themes of 'beyond gender' depict how the texts in this genre blur the boundaries of gender.

Arguing for the notion of multiple identities and futurities, 'Beyond Gender' contends for a multi-disciplinary approach. It is a call to introspect on the concept of gender being criticised by varied theories pertaining to masculinity, feminism, queer and sexuality. It illustrates how the binary and hierarchical system of gender has alarmed humanity in varied spheres of life by questioning identity, power politics, and safety in private and public spaces, hegemony and colonialism. In this context, the feminist fairy tales reverse gender roles and gendered stereotypes to subvert gender identities by articulating women's experiences to rediscover the need to emancipate gender.

These select texts raise the consciousness of all genders and address the myth of the binary. Discernment facilitates children to grow with proper gender socialisation. An understanding of feminist and queer theories and ideologies of heterosexuality and homosexuality as the production of sexuality is perceived in these texts. The recognition of 'New Woman' as deliverance is addressed. Same sex love as a choice and the theme of self-liberation as unfettering the pangs of subjugation envision a society free from gender hegemony. This is well articulated in the postmodern, postfeminist, post gendered texts.

The feminist fairy tales can be read in the light of the 'New Woman' theory as a feminist ideal that emerged in the late 19th century as a social ideal that advocated

women's independence, education and career opportunities. It concentrated on independence, physical activity and intellectual activity, where the 'New Woman' controlled her own life, whether personal, social, or economic and was physically adept with activities like bicycling and the will to dare to do any work, regardless of gender constraints. She expanded her ability to engage with the world. The 'New Woman' like the feminist fairy tale protagonists was able to work academically and intellectually; work and socialize on par with men. 'New Woman' was a term coined by Henry James to pronounce the growth of independent, educated, career women in Europe and the United States. Sarah Grand used the term in 1894 in an article to refer to independent women seeking radical change.

The 'New Woman,' like the female protagonist of feminist fairy tales was a complex figure who addressed contentious issues, including marriage, maternity, and education for women. As a response to the limiting roles of wife and mother, women in these tales were educated, organised for women's suffrage, and worked outside the home. Ding Ling, the female writer, exemplified the ultimate 'New Woman' both in her visual appearance and in her ideas and stories where she had "her long braided hair cut short," a typical style of the new woman. The 'New Woman,' a controversial figure who became prominent in British literature in the late nineteenth century, challenged traditional views of femininity and represented a more radical understanding of women's nature and role in society like the feminist fairy tale protagonists. 'New Woman' as a stereotype of the modern woman, denounced the choices modern women were making and were fiercely independent. They pursued achievement and self-fulfillment beyond the realm of marriage and family and declared for themselves what was wrong with 'Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere.'

The 'New Woman,' a response to the limiting roles of wife and mother as seen in fairy tales, folk tales, legends and epics was echoed in feminist fairy tales. Education, career, women's suffrage, women's support during wars by Flappers, a group of women who during the 1920's rejected traditional norms in fashion, behaviour, values, social life and lifestyle defined the new women. The attempt to redefine the feminine was asserted by the pursuit of liberation in the spheres of morality and sexuality.

These themes of women's restraint, reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women's suffrage, sexual harassment, and sexual violence are atypical of the voices of feminist fairy tales. Sarah Grand's thoughts on the 'New Woman' to be able to choose their own mates, to ensure equal education opportunities, to rebel against marriage if it was loveless, to communicate about inequality and address their responsibilities to the nation, as women not trapped by traditional roles, are speckled in the feminist fairy tales. The new women in the select feminist fairy tales are the inversions of female protagonists of fairy tales. In her *The Heavenly Twins*, Grand states that "Withholding education from women was the original sin of man," and this echoes the need to re-read and rewrite fairy tales with innumerable reworkings from the feminist stance.

The feminist fairy tales, in tune with the 'New Woman' in literature explore the dangers of the moral double standards that punished women for promiscuity. It juxtaposes the value of men and women, reiterates the need for societal change, and encourages women to learn and work for themselves. The select texts subtly questions marriage and the inequality of women and assert the individualism of the female protagonists. Like Sarah Grand, the feminist fairy tale authors rework women into independent cultural phenomenon who address female suffrage. The feminist fairy tales were a mirror to reflect the patriarchal attitudes of a society which subdued the feminine.

Feminist fairy tale protagonists as ‘new women’ challenged traditional views of femininity unlike in the fairy tale texts. They represent a more radical understanding of women’s nature and role in society with unconventional visions to become a global phenomenon of revolutionary social ideals to challenge the racial and political orthodoxies. They reimagine history to address, what a woman is and what does it mean to be a feminist today? Like Toril Moi challenges the dominant trends in contemporary feminist and cultural thought, arguing for a feminism of freedom inspired by Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, the feminist fairy tales rethink women’s issues and current debates about sex, gender, and the body. They challenge the commonly held belief that the sex/gender distinction is fundamental to all feminist theories. The feminist tales akin to Toril Moi’s ideology, in “I am a Woman” expatiates how the relationship between the personal and the philosophical is reworked to voice one’s own philosophical voice by placing it in new theoretical contexts. The tales are a sustained refusal to lay down theoretical, social, ethical or political requirements of femininity as a powerful argument for feminist thought and independence. As Sarah Grand in *The Heavenly Twins* opined “I found a big groove ready waiting for me when I grew up, and in that I was expected to live whether it suited me or not. It did not suit me. It was deep and narrow and gave me no room to move” (450).

The theme of the ‘feminine mystique’ is also inherent in the feminist fairy tales and the tales can be read in the light of the feminine mystique. The ‘feminine mystique’ coined by Friedan to describe the assumptions that women ought to find fulfilment from housework, marriage, sexual lives, nurturing children and being truly feminine is enunciated. Their being prevented from the desire of work and education or having political opinions, is articulated and contended as women still fight for equality in varied ways. This theme of Frieden raised feminist consciousness by emphasising that

deliverance for women was liberation for men too as was evident in 1963 with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. This may have been an inspiration to address the themes of domesticity and femininity, psychoanalysis and sexism, consumerism and the power of advertising, sex and marriage, education and work in feminist fairy tales. It focuses on advocating justice, impartiality and equivalence in all arenas for women including reproductive healthcare, cessation of violence against women and discrimination based on race, class and sexuality by addressing the acumen of women and the challenges they face in balancing career and family. At the forefront of the second wave of American feminism. Frieden championed equal pay for equal work and campaigned the need to end sexual harassment in the workplace, legalisation of abortion and urged women to eschew the 'cult of domesticity.' She addresses "the problem that has no name," the emotion and sensation among many 1950's housewives who sensed something was lacking in their lives. This, in tune with feminist fairy tale agenda, analyses as to how domesticated ill-fated heroines of unhappy and unfulfilled gender roles of domesticity ought to be critiqued. *The Feminine Mystique*, in a critical and never aggressive tone discourses on "the problem that has no name." It challenges the "feminine mystique" and proclaims that it is a false notion that women find fulfilment and happiness only in marriage and motherhood.

The feminist fairy tales recapitulate how any aspect of femininity that remained outside the periphery of domestic virtue and male influence was labelled "dark feminine archetypes," "evil ruthless Mother," and was demonised as in the labelling of strong women as old hags, witches, terrible mothers or pretentious divine feminine archetypes or overtly seductive women in fairy tales. Akin to *The Feminine Mystique*, feminist reworkings, debated on how there is no other way for a woman to dream of creation or the future about herself, except as her children's mother or her husband's wife. Despite

fifty years, *The Feminine Mystique* continues to be relevant addressing the trauma of women and domesticity and asserts that women can be emancipated only through self-discovery, education and creativity to live her life without remorse or guilt. Frieden says,

We have gone on too long blaming or pitying the mothers who devour their children, who sow the seeds of progressive dehumanisation, because they have never grown to full humanity themselves. If the mother is at fault, why isn't it time to break the pattern by urging all these Sleeping Beauties to grow up and live their own lives? There never will be enough Prince Charmings or enough therapists to break that pattern now. It is society's job, and finally that of each woman alone. For it is not the strength of the mothers that is at fault, but their weakness, their passive childlike dependency and immaturity that is mistaken for femininity. Our society forces boys, insofar as it can, to grow up, to endure the pains of growth, to educate them to work, to move on. Why aren't girls forced to grow up - to achieve somehow the core of self that will end the unnecessary dilemma, the mistaken choice between femaleness and humanness that is implied in the feminine mystique? (*The Feminine Mystique* 282)

The feminist fairy tales, and their authors, like Frieden, believe that women who adapt to the conformist image of femininity can never celebrate womanhood. The feminist reworkings echo the 'feminine mystique' and address themes of domesticity and femininity, nature versus nurture, psychoanalysis and sexism, consumerism and the power of advertising, sex versus marriage, education and purposeful work. The select tales welcome women to veto the feminine mystique and focus on balancing career with family to be enlightened to emancipate themselves from the 'cult of domesticity' which often hampers self-actualisation. Unlike fairy tales wherein women lived in relation to their lovers, husbands and children through all forms of tedious and repetitive household

chores of femininity along with the social prejudices that hindered women's development, functionalism asserted that men and women must complement each other within their outmoded traditional roles.

“The problem that has no name” pervades ‘The Feminine Mystique.’ It manifests a chronic sense of dissatisfaction with the fact that housewives had been taught to want a house in the suburbs, a husband with a career, children, and the purchasing power to buy as many appliances as they want. Advertising firms, eager to exploit the purchasing power of housewives, vended the idea that women could be dolls at home. Frieden offers work outside the home as the true antidote to “the problem that has no name” and does not advocate for just any kind of work since purposeless work would only reinforce a woman's sense of purposelessness. Work that allows a woman to display her talents and to build relationships with people outside the home is emancipation for women from the drudgery of being ruled over by patriarchy. The ‘feminine mystique’ inverts the fairy tale significance of gender roles. It resents the importance given to the performance of menial housework that exaggerated the burdens of scrubbing, cleaning, washing, dusting of the fairy tale heroines in the canonical texts.

Frieden coined the term ‘feminine mystique’ to describe the societal assumption that women were disgruntled with “truly feminine” chores in their lives and the gender roles attached to them and they had struggles in articulating and asserting their feelings and mental state. Friedan deemed that unhappiness and inability to live up to the feminine mystique as the “problem that has no name” would result in unfulfilled and neurotic mothers and proclaimed that the feminine mystique would hurt women both personally and professionally. She believed that the “key to the trap is, of course, education,” that empowerment is through work- life balance and wished to save women from the greater dangers of the feminine mystique. The argument is “Why should women accept this

picture of a half-life, instead of a share in the whole of human destiny?" (66-7). This is precisely what the feminist fairy tales purport through the female protagonists and their authors.

Betty Frieden in her latest work, "Beyond Gender" opined, "A basic restructuring of our economy is needed now." And this restructuring according to her "cannot be accomplished in terms of women versus men, black versus white; old versus young, conservative versus liberal" (18). She believed that a new political movement in America that puts the lives and interests of people first without separate single-issue movements was the need of the hour. It had to be political to protect and translate a new empowerment with a new vision of new structures of community that open the doors again to equality of opportunity and egalitarian thought. Frieden believed that men and women often made up the same families, so women need to be more cognizant of gender concerns and men's concerns. She interrogates, "If women are winning and men are losing now, how can we really win?" (13). She steps back from her identity as a feminist and says, "There has been a false polarisation between feminism and families" (83).

The traditional fairy tales which echoed oppression of stereotypical heroines was reworked with the deconstruction and reconstruction of masculinities, femininities and all other genders by challenging gendered systems of thought. All the select tales reiterate how sexual difference refers to men, women and other genders as not just biological identities, but subjects of social stratification. Like humanist feminists, feminist fairy tale writers believe that in the context of equality of women and all marginalised and relegated genders, the female protagonists, like the subaltern are denied the rights of humanity and are devalued as individuals. Thus, the celebration of gender in feminist fairy tales raises pivotal questions like the envisioning of gender in fairy tales and feminist fairy tales as masculinity and femininity. It calls for an understanding of how

these constructs shape the thinking of the reader. It queries, whether there is no one grand narrative and if there are many “*petis ecrits*”.

The texts contest the idea that “Woman is nothing but a womb. Woman’s body is her destiny” (Filene 15). All the select texts challenge the old Latin saying, “*Tota mulier in utero*” and opine that while marriage is the ultimate goal of fairy tales in the traditional canonical versions, it depicted the complexities of life and how the realistic modes of femininity and masculinity are paralysed by the institution of marriage. The tales force children to nurture egalitarian attitudes. From time immemorial, the symbolic archetypal tales are metaphoric. The poetic visions of the tales are psychotherapeutic and bridge the gap of centuries to take the reader back in time to the times of the storyteller. The motifs of different variants of the tales across cultures were patterned like a kaleidoscope and passed on from one generation to another as a cultural heirloom. These tales were transmitted and transmuted through oral and written forms which shaped the society of the times.

The tales of Andersen, Perrault and Grimms, popularly “The Angel,” “The Bell,” “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” “The Flying Trunk,” “The Match Girl,” “Thumbelina,” “The Tinderbox,” “The Ugly Duckling,” “The Wild Swans,” and other such fairy stories were gendered. So were the tales of Grimms namely, “The Frog Child,” “The Wolf and Seven Young kids,” “The Twelve Brothers,” “Rapunzel,” “Hansel and Gretel,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Little Red Cap,” “The Elves,” “Snow White,” “Rumpelstiltskin,” “The Three Feathers,” “The Golden Goose” and other fairy tales. Perrault’s works were also gendered and include “The Sleeping beauty in the Wood,” “The Master Cat” or “Puss in Boots,” “Snow White” “Cinderella or the Glass Slipper,” “Riquet with the turf,” “Little Thumb,” “The Ridiculous Wishes,” “The Donkey Skin” and fairy stories that portrayed passive

female protagonists. The feminist tales revised the plot with active and strong heroines, upturned gendered messages and envisioned realms beyond gender.

Unlike the fairy tale texts, feminist fairy tale texts redefine women's quest for economic reality. This was hampered as in the present day by systems that do not tolerate creative solutions to the standard work that was scheduled like telecommuting, job sharing, flexible week work, childcare and home responsibilities which is actually "the province of both sexes" . . . "Not the work of one sex alone" (35). Frieden does not venture for an academic treatise, but it opened a window of discussion which is a clarion call to the dream of gender harmony and a life on this planet beyond gender. Frieden argues, that "Old solutions no longer work" (38). And women and men ought to move forward from identity politics and gender-based single-issue political activism. The tales in *The Moon Ribbon and Other Tales*, portray strong empowered heroines.

'Beyond gender' envisages a paradigmatic shift. The feminist fairy tale authors as gynocritics celebrate the social and cultural constitution as difference. Difference feminism reconceives relationships as difference and complementary and opine that the emotional disposition and life-giving potential of women make them feel superior and confident and thus the relevance of the theme of 'beyond gender.' Germaine Greer discussed 'clitoridectomy' to elucidate victimisation and this idea is discerned in "The Bloody Chamber." The paradigm shift, Betty Frieden calls for is "A transformation of the intellectual and political structure within which these issues are viewed" and one in which the new paradigm embraces a world of work, family and community where crucial questions are raised. These issues are raised in *Kissing the Witch* and the tales depict the empowerment of the fairy tale heroines who as strong 'new women' stand on their own with resilience, poise and dignity. Frieden's reflections and conversations with policy experts, scholars, corporates, labour leaders, journalists and political thinkers enable her

to explore the social anxiety caused by corporate downsizing and displacement of middle-aged employees and the impact of housewives who suddenly become the sole providers of their family. The part time temporary work done due to outsourcing undoubtedly affects women workers and there is loss of community space in the suburbs and breakdown in many parts of society, herein, the American Society. The archaic fairy tales presented women as nurturers, caregivers and home makers and thus the ‘feminine mystique’ charmed the female protagonists. This passivity of women cloistered in their homes as objects of patriarchy are reworked in these tales.

‘Beyond Gender’ thus revisits the correlation among work, jobs, home and society. It addresses the issues of the relevance of men’s roles in gender equality to attain a fair and equal balance between work and private life, between paid and unpaid labour by the uptake of various family friendly measures of men and women. This is done by breaking gender stereotypes tied to traditional roles, to sensitise and empower society as is evident in *Kissing the Witch*. It encourages the dominant gender to take action to combat or prevent unilateral responsibilities, to share ‘duties of care’ responsibilities to strive towards equal economic independence between genders.

‘Ethic of care’ as a virtue depicted in fairy tales expected women to be compassionate. It asserts that moral actions were based on relationships where benevolence was highlighted as essential for young girls, and this was attributed to women. Beyond gender, embraces the ‘theory of care’ and this concept is raised in feminist fairy tales. Carol Gilligan describes ‘an ethic of care’ that complements an understanding of morality as concerned with justice. This can be cited as a proof of the existence of woman’s morality. Gilligan opines that women’s alleged affinity for “relationships of care” is biologically natural and represents a female model of moral development.” This theme was replete in fairy tales but interrogated in feminist fairy

tales. If this 'ethic of care' is understood as a gender difference, it is dangerous because it ignores the boundaries of broader intellectual context within which actualities of gender difference are established. The feminist fairy tale, "The Bloody Chamber" inverts the tale as the heroine and her mother retort when injustice is meted out to them. The tales define that the society one lives in, is one "where man stands for human and the norm is equated with the male . . . and then, women's morality asserts . . . that it is not just a collection of moral leftovers" (23).

Feminists ought not to celebrate an 'ethic of care' as a factor of gender difference that constructs superiority. 'Ethics of care' is just a set of sensibilities that every morally mature person should develop alongside the sensibilities of justice morality. So, instead of rethinking the nature or future of moral philosophy; educational or familial institutions that are responsible for making the difference between justice and care gender specific, are inverted. Hence, two equal moralities should be left to individuals to decide when to apply either morality. But, as gender difference in morality is a psychological artifact of femininity, a cultural product of caretaking activity, or a positional result of social subordination, this affects individuals and the consciousness of a society in which "care will flourish" regardless of gender.

The feminist texts position men and women as working for the same cause. The article "Beyond Gender: The Example of Mrs Dalloway," is concerned with the problems of woman, particularly the literary woman. Woolf in the review she wrote in 1918 on *The Women Novelists*, questions feminist literary criticism, that "Experience seems to prove that to criticize a work of sex as sex is merely to state with almost invariable acrimony prejudices derived from the fact that you are either a man or a woman" (68). In *Three Guineas*, a feminist is, "'one who champions the rights of women.' Since the only right, the right to earn a living has been won, the word, no longer has any meaning. 'It is dead,

and the corpse must be cremated and burnt and destroyed” (19). She concludes that the word, “Feminist is destroyed, the air is cleared and in that clearer air, what do we see? Men and women working together for the same cause” (19). While the traditional texts suppressed women, the feminist fairy tales empower the heroines and subtly persist that men and woman work for the same cause.

The discourses in feminist criticism about bodies, anatomy, physiology of bodies, psychology of bodies, sociology of bodies, writing the bodies, Butler’s performativity theory, Cixous’ *écriture féminine*, Simone de Beauvoir’s concept of women as second sex and the theme of same sex love, debate on the emancipation of genders. *Beyond Bodies, Gender, Literature and the Enigma of Consciousness* by Daphne M Grace, contextualises women’s writing and debates of consciousness studies. The feminist texts depict how articulations, expressions, terminologies and lingoes of gender can be undermining, transgressive, innovative and radical incorporating both an excruciating legacy of manifestation and jubilant exploration of newer experience. This is apparent in the tale of Mona in *The Moon Ribbon*.

The feminist tales depict how the gendered world of “sexualised space,” whether “internal or external,” “mental or physical” is redefined. The delusion of gender difference is addressed by effacing sexism and patriarchy. “Pygmalion” in *Sweeping Beauties* depicts Rowenna and Emily as strong identities and defines how “identity” is a shifting multiple, negotiable controversial concept in the representation of the female body in literature. “Writing the body” incorporates knowledge of consciousness concepts like the quantum theory in physics. ‘Beyond the body’ allows insights to elucidate the anomalies of subjectivity and what it means to be essentially human. For instance, in the tale, *Alice in Thunderland*, the fembly says, “I am just told, and I believe what I am told.

Faith is the thing. We must have faith.” When Alice inquires, “Faith in what, the fembly replies, “just Faith. We’d better watch it” (30).

The concept of beyond gender streaming, “a strategy which aims to bring about gender equality and advance women’s rights by infusing gender analysis, gender-sensitive research, women’s perspectives and gender equality goals into mainstream policies, projects and institutions, has of late become anodyne, mechanical and depoliticised, lacking in revolutionary power. In feminist fairy tales, ‘beyond gender mainstreaming’ echoes a transformative approach with liberation struggles by the heroines who focuses on overthrowing despotism with the support of both sexes. In “Alice in Thunderland,” Alice finding the femblies shrinking shouted for justice when the femblies were shrinking and expected to get angry responses, but the senior membly in a calm voice says “it is not moral to decide the fate of either being. All has been pre-ordained. It is in the nature of things that femblies shrink and memblies swell. So, it has been and so it shall always be” (36).

Women’s gender concerns are addressed in “The Tale of the Brother” in *Kissing the Witch* to redefine the prominence of men, women and all genders in gender mainstreaming initiatives. The study therefore projects that no empowerment is possible without an understanding of gender and working together is impossible without the involvement of all gendered identities. Men are also critically important as a constituency which can either make or break the success of gender mainstreaming. Senorina Wendoh and Tina Wallace point out how working together with men and women in community leadership roles are essential to the success of gender mainstreaming initiatives.

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming is an intrinsic part of the vision of humanity and cannot be just unless structural gender inequality is defied. So, the question is whether to fix women or fix the world? In the feminist fairy tale, “The Tale of the

Brother,” the female protagonist says that his brother was unlike other brothers and tutored him with the names of birds and beasts in the picture books. He lent his second-best icepick, teaching him to fish through a hole. “Sometimes he stayed out so late he had to throw pebbles with his blue fingers till I woke and opened the window for him to climb on” (104). Therefore, feminist fairy tales refute that women are prisoners of gender roles. In “The Tale of the Skin”, the lines of the old flower woman are redemptive, “You must fly now, she whispered, alone in disguise, into some distant land where no one knows your name” (155).

Feminist reworkings assert that in literature and life, biological sex has enslaved the human being beyond imagination. Emancipation of women to create a gender-just society through feminist praxis has subverted the understanding of gender markers and gender traits. Interaction with engendered infants meant relating to them as male or female and not as a human being. Philosophers have opined that a state of mind or elevated mind is beyond gender, neither male nor female, neither transgender. This leads to the question as to why then is everything from boys and girls, male and female to the Gods and Goddesses sexed? The query, why is everything from the animal to the human to the divine sexed is interrogated in the reworked tales.

Fairy tales depict how human beings are prey to gender labels. Male or female, gay or straight, lesbian, transgender, Aromantic, Asexual, gender queer, two spirit bisexual and people who are pan sexual, a safe space for people of all identities is the need of the hour. As man and woman undergo a sea of change, increasing number of people proclaim, they aren't one or the other, but perhaps neither or may be both as expressed in the feminist fairy tales of Namjoshi. The tales suggest how non-gendered identities with unequal status as neither men nor women discuss whether the feelings and identities of all genders are static or changes over time. “Gender neutral” and “All

gender” are labelled not only in feminist revisions, but also in hospitals, conference chambers, public spaces, washrooms and more. The erosion of gender binaries in certificates, books, facebook statuses, competitive sports, courts, military, toys, aisles, private and public spaces and relationships are a result of the reworking of genders. As the stigma lessens, labels like “I have never had a gender,” “Gender isn’t me,” “Screw Gender” or “nonconformity to gender” echo blurring the boundaries of gender. In *Feminist Fables* in “A Moral Tale,” the lines, “her parents mourned her, and the neighbours were sorry, particularly for her parents, but no one was at fault. She had been warned, and she hadn’t listened” (10).

Resilience, a stable trajectory of healthy functioning after an adverse event is derived from emotional security, friendships, spiritual relationships, camaraderie and mastery motivation which results in “meaning making” in the midst of calamities at the individual, familial, social, political and cultural level. The tales advocate how structural resilience builds robust structures in society to enable people to make a living, secure good education, health care and realise their potential to construct meaning in life. Regardless of gender, individuals or embedded systems, technologies, research, genetics or epigenetics unite to succeed.

In the present-day world, biomarkers of resilience like the measure of blood pressure, stress hormones, immune functions help to connect dots between neurobiology, and the psychology of resilience and culture. “Mindful meditation” and “psychosexual interventions,” advances in neurobiology like brain imaging or watching the brain in action, genetics, and epigenetics work wonders and envisages realms beyond gender. Extended families, well-wishers, friends and communities enhance resilience by instilling hope, dignity and a harmonious environment. This fosters resilience to promote healthy family and community environment and allows individual natural protective systems to

develop and operate effectively on a level beyond gender. In the *Feminist Fables* in “The Giantess,” the giantess says, “Don’t you love us anymore? We’ll do what you want. Do you know what I want? They were silent for a bit, then one of them said, “We’ll make you, our Queen. They promised her poems, gifts, pearls, pebbles and stones. She refused, turned her back and crossed the mountains” (13).

Gender dichotomies are queried in feminist fairy tales, “Whether gender is a human invention or not, we are ‘doing gender’” says West and Zimmerman. As Judith Lorber opines, individuals enforce gender norms to construct gendered systems of dominance and power. This mapping of gender roles into the private/public dichotomy places men in the public world of politics and women in the private, domestic, political or non-political world of home. The zone of work-family allocation in the home is the institutionalisation of male-female relationships and shared gender intersection of work and gendered realities. Rita Gross questions as to “why the prisoner of gender roles remain so inescapable?” (42).

The power of gender and its impact on life has been constructed through the lens of Buddhist philosophy stating that gender identity enslaves the human being. Buddhism talks of gender as an illusion and Buddhist scriptures opine that male and female are ‘beyond gender.’ This pins Buddha’s classical teachings, the identification of self and no self and the challenges of gender roles in Western Buddhism to assess gender dynamics. Like ‘Buddhism beyond Gender,’ feminist fairy tales are a controversial call to realise that clinging to gender identity subverts enlightenment. *The Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies* calls this contribution, a controversial call to realise that clinging to gender identity subverts enlightenment, “a scholarly culmination as it does a call to arms.” Inspired by liberative teachings like settling the unsettled mind, calming the heart and refining the intellect help to traverse beyond androcentrism. The feminist fairy tales

assault the patriarchal structure that thwarted women's liberation and like the Buddhist teaching aims at the liberation of men and women. They envision a "two-sexed" model of a vital creative spiritual tradition called, 'androgynous Buddhism' in which men and women cocreate a living tradition together.

Feminist fairy tales challenge the boundaries of the rampant androcentrism and patriarchy of the academia and the world beyond. They echoed women as domesticated, their bodies challenged and subjugated with menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and childrearing which was totally demeaned by the male projection of them as sexual objects. In the feminist reworkings, men are also portrayed as imprisoned by their roles in their economic, cultural, sexual and physical sphere with fears of being feminised in a culture as in "Sans Soleil" in *The Moon Ribbon*. Men, women and the third gender have been subject to fixation and victimisation in varied and varying ways to elevate the mind, regardless of gender as the theme of feminist fairy tales.

The rejection of the oft quoted outdated stereotypes to unleash their potential as human beings is thematised in feminist fairy tale texts. The heroes in the fairy tale texts were assertive, decisive and the genetic was the male stereotype. The leader prototype and the male stereotype was the same because leaders in the past were always men. Women on the other hand were expected to be calm, warm and docile on the one hand as domesticated; but as female leaders, appraised to be assertive, aggressive and decisive. The prerequisite of feminist fairy tales to champion every human being regardless of gender and unleash their potential as empowered fearless individuals and strong stoic human beings is envisaged. Once considered as bride price, wealth, trophies, even traded, bought, sold and bartered, many a marginalised gender were expected to hold their heads high as leaders with a difference.

Teaching and learning beyond the binary in the classrooms to advocate respect for gender identity and welcome all genders to the learning spaces and understand nonbinary experiences on different platforms is the theme of reworking the canonical fairy tales as feminist revisionist tales. Honouring students whether male or female, lesbian, gay, transsexual, bisexual, transgender, queer plus, as gender fluid, gender queer, gender nonconforming and respecting gender identity and expression in the classroom and beyond are the outcome of feminist fairy tale texts authored by women.

Gender affirming practices mentioned in feminist fairy tale texts of gynocritics, like avoiding personal questions of body parts, medical care, sexual orientation and family identity reaction to gender identity is essential to empower learners who are identified as non-binary or gender non-conforming. These tales enable gendered identities or transgenders to be part of the culture of inclusion and diversity in education to enhance creativity and confidence in the platforms of learning spaces to review feminist tales and debate on the themes of beyond gender.

Feminist fairy tale texts, ‘beyond discrimination and antidiscrimination’ and ‘beyond the rainbow,’ create proactive changes to welcome authors, readers and texts into newer spaces and these texts are a clarion call for evading discrimination of genders. They accentuate the need for pro-active intersectionality and disseminate intersectional feminism to address women’s issues. Like ‘The Intertwine Charter’ code signed initiative which discourses on intersectionality to delineate that while on the one hand people enjoy privileges, others suffer oppression and marginalisation, feminist fairy texts across cultures adopt interconnectedness and discourse on varied issues of women across the globe as different and yet similar. Intersectionality in feminist fairy tale texts propagates empowerment of women and all genders. Ruth Bottigheimer’s tales deliberate on cultural constructs and contemplate on the repercussion of women as readers and the repressive

female agency. The role of empowerment through magic and the supernatural inspires the study of role reversal to question realistic modes of femininity.

The select feminist fairy tale text, *The Bloody Chamber*, addresses the cultural transmission of gendered ideas imposed on child readers as cultural shaping. Zipes in his introduction to *Don't Bet on the Prince* explains, “[t]he contemporary fairy tales have drawn upon a rich tradition of feminist tales or tales with strong women which may not be widely known but have nevertheless provided models and the impetus to challenge dominant male discourse” (13). Texts like Lieberman’s *Some Day my Prince will Come*, Heather Lyons’s *Some Second thoughts on Sexism*, Sharon Rose’s *Myths and Fairy tales in Contemporary Women*, Monica Sijoo’s *The Great Cosmic Mother* and Jack Zipes’ *Breaking the Disney Spell* remap the nostalgia of bygone times. Thus, the select feminist fairy tale authors rewrite history by presenting an accurate account of the gendered issues of the marginalised. All the select texts strive to emancipate women all over the globe from naturalised patriarchal notions of the social, literary, cultural and patriarchal macho-world and end the debate of sophisticated praxis. The select works fight the mistreatment of demoted women and value the dignity of all genders.

Feminist fairy tales move beyond work and gender politics to avouch that while male participation is normal, female participation in the workforce is essential to have fair equitable representation, diversion and inclusion in offering diverse sets of employee skill sets and life paths for better outcomes. Regardless of sex and gender collaborating on a common platform, just like the billions of others across the globe the work takes one to realms beyond gender.

Hence these feminist texts echo the need for equality at work as in the select tales which empower each and every gendered identity to elevate the identity and integrity of all genders as vital to society. Mainstreaming of female protagonists, whether sex workers

or transgenders; and addressing their issues at levels beyond gender through surveys and therapeutic spaces with special reference to the downtrodden and socially backward, necessitates the need to emancipate all genders. Feminist fairy tales in films and art forms enable creative upliftment and emancipation through bold and brave expressions in art, design, aesthetics and literature to break barriers and move beyond gendered spaces in establishing their gender identities.

Autobiographical or first-person narratives reveal voyeurism beyond gender and review women's attempt to self-discovery and the spontaneous expression of their lives through their bodies. The feminist tales express with disgust, the impact that androcentric literature has on the psyche of women and other genders. The expression of the feminist fairy tale writers that the male canon of writing has influenced them, advocates the need to break free through female authorship and gynocriticism. The women authors are not stereotyped female icons, but female heroes who like their protagonists, resist the inferior positions of the androcentric society and envisage realms beyond gender.

The feminist fairy tales envision a realm beyond objectification of women. In the traditional texts, the image of the body is used to exploit women as in the tale of "Red Riding Hood" and many other fairy tales. The grandmother in "Red Riding Hood" is coerced to reveal her naked body through sexual imagery "what big ears you have ..." (17). The commodification of women makes women feel that they are objectified to attract the opposite sex as an object of man's pleasure. This echoes the symbolisation of a woman's body in an androcentric society. Feminist texts transform female heroes into autonomous individuals and subvert the male/female observer/observed formula as depicted in the characterisation of the select feminist fairy tale texts. The heroines deconstruct and reconstruct their world to rediscover themselves by responsively

discussing women's issues like sexuality, menstruation and childbirth to break the myths of the binaries of gender.

The feminist fairy tales are beyond being objects of the male gaze and therefore question women as objects of the male gaze. This is queried by the male centered world. The male gaze relegates women to being objects of sexual desire. Meredith Pax says, "They will use her body with their eyes. They will evaluate her market price. They will comment on her defects or compare them to those of other passers-by. They will make her feel ridiculous or grotesquely sound or hideously ugly. Above all, they will make her feel like a thing" (qtd. in Donovan's *Feminist Theory* 136-37).

The gendered issues raised by feminist fairy tales are beyond gendered issues of the cultural control of women and women's bodies. The authors champion gender to carve a niche and get hold of the space of literature to raise pertinent questions on the issues regarding the cultural control of women and their bodies. These self-professed authors rework the male constructed identity of the traditional texts and attempt to launch their identity and uniqueness in the male cannon. The writers do not present radical feminism. Naomi Wolf in *Fire with Fire* says "One of the biggest problems with feminism is that many fear that it has come to embody a rigid code of required attitudes and types of behaviour" (66).

In the feminist tales, 'beyond subversion of love' is explained. Romantic love is destabilised to blur gender roles and the heroines query the processing of feminising women according to myths and norms as in *The Bloody Chamber*. They rise above gendered and patriarchally constructed realities, undergo sacrifice and selflessness through self-realisation and assert being entrapped in the claustrophobic patriarchal set up. Their quest for identity facilitates them to affirm their individuality and break free from the manacles of a phallogocentric society. The struggles of the women characters to

achieve selfhood by dismantling feminine roles are a reassurance to celebrate feminist fairy tales.

The feminist fairy tale texts break the silence of the marginalised genders to overcome stoicism and break barriers of race, class and sex. Silence as a recurring motif is a mode of resistance. Heroines who protest male and female roles based on gender and sexuality reiterate that when the identities of women are muted, they overcome the cultural constructs of gender through acts of aggression. The need to overcome stoicism is echoed to blur gender roles and traverse gendered boundaries. Sisterhood and female bonding enable the female self to be liberated from the tenets of patriarchy. The creation of an alternative circle by women enables women to step out of their roles as sister, wife and mother and explore feminist concerns to unravel their struggles from feminist viewpoints and move away from universal suffering by recreating spaces beyond gender.

Beyond gender roles and beyond the dominions of female experience versus male experience, the feminist fairy tale versions champion that the erasure of gender roles are not to disseminate the texts as merely vehicles of feminist propaganda. The texts do not champion the vision of a matriarchal rule or patriarchal vision. All the writers who campaign marginalised genders believe that matriarchal power is as dangerous as patriarchal rule. They believe that women indoctrinated by patriarchal values need not necessarily be emancipated and that indoctrination of the two sexes and the third sex restores harmony. Matrophobia is not feminism. It is not of one's mother or motherhood but becoming one's mother.

Feminist fairy tale texts juxtapose male experience as concomitant with power and challenged the female experience of powerlessness. The feminine stereotype is the creation of patriarchy. Gynocriticism considers woman as writer. The concept of 'eternal feminine,' 'mystification of the female body'' and recreation of the female identity posit

gender by depicting female heroes who in their search for identity unfetter themselves from the handcuffs of patriarchal structures. As Rabuzzi asserted,

To internalise otherness is almost definitely to be unable to speak in the language of the self . . . not only have women been named by men, women have been defined, told exactly what they were to be, with an implicit, ‘or else’ menacing theme . . . to experience being another is to feel schizophrenically torn, that of even a clandestinely authentic ‘I’ cares to speak. (176)

This study of feminist fairy tale texts across the globe addresses gender beyond the invisible stereotypes to redefine “intersectionality as inclusion”. The mode in which “different dimensions of identity (race, gender, class and sexuality) position people differently in society and very often determine what type of discrimination or oppression they will experience in what we call a matrix of domination” (Gouws 11). Inclusion takes humanity beyond gender because all women’s problems are diverse and varied. Black women, lesbian women, white women, disabled women and straight women have different problems, and the texts depict that though stereotypes in one country are different from those in another country, the basic issue of subjugation is similar, yet different.

The texts elevate the reality of motherhood and highlight the fact that only a mother knows what ‘Motherhood’ is. Motherhood viewed on higher planes is an inspiration to think beyond. That menstruation is a biological function, not a woman thing and means different things to different people is discerned in the different versions of symbolism expressed in the characterisation of Red Riding Hood, Snow White and Rose Red. Newer feminist films and texts in this genre ought to discuss how transmen, intersex, gender queer and non-binary menstruate like the cisgender women and how even apps like ‘Clue app’ focuses on aspects like menstruation, conception, pregnancy,

and menopause. These technologies could be addressed and applied in further readings that would determine newer versions of the future feminist fairy tale texts.

Beyond gender and redefinition of motherhood in *Other Mothers* edited by Ellen Bayuk Rosenman and Claudia C Klave explore motherhood beyond the maternal ideal. The longing for motherhood and parenting by lesbian and gay couples was articulated in literature. Feminine subjects by gynocritics on issues of the domestic sphere, household chores, experience of gestation, giving birth, woman-woman relationships, sisterhood, the feminine mode of experience or subjectivity in thinking, dominance of woman's language, the glorification of women's feeling and valuing the world ought to be envisioned in feminist fairy tales. The importance of networking and lobbying to raise gender awareness and gender sensitisation to rework multi-dimensional roles played by women and the third gender endeavoured to reframe sociological gender biases and internalised patriarchal values to question all steeplechases that limit gender. Thus, the theme of sexism, sexist attitudes and sexual harassment as in the feminist fairy tale is interrogated.

Feminist fairy tales echo the core of matricentric or of maternal feminism. The theme of 'missing mother' or the struggles of motherhood in the feminist fairy tale texts is addressed through maternal feminism which seeks to mend the cracks of women as a philosophy that upholds and elevates the act of mothering as an esteemed and vital contribution to collective well-being. Central to maternal feminism is the understanding of early childhood development put forward by neuroscience research about the profound emotional and psychological development of the brain's plasticity of a dense network of neural connections, which are influenced by a child's experiences and interactions to create emotional resilience. Secure attachment fostered by consistent, affectionate maternal presence regulates emotions, forms healthy relationships, and navigates the

complexities that are possible through mothering. These themes are addressed in the feminist fairy tales in a positive light unlike in the fairy tales.

Mothers are instrumental in children learning to regulate emotions, cope with stress and maintain resilience throughout life by nurturing cognitive and emotional development. This interaction forms the bedrock on which future resilience and mental health is founded. Maternal feminism supports mothers and caregivers and advocates for societal and policy changes that recognise and facilitate the critical work mothers do in shaping the future of society through their influence. Creating environments that support mothers and recognising that mothering is foundational, is vital to a healthy, thriving society. This is depicted through the outreach of comprehending feminist fairy tales and can be disseminated through newer reworkings.

Maternal feminism challenges and prioritises motherhood in the feminist tales and opines that motherhood feminism is about choice, flexibility, and valuing different contributions equally. It acknowledges that the work of raising emotionally healthy children is critical to the future of society just as any other career achievement. Balancing career and motherhood are a struggle along with societal pressures to grapple with the internal desire to be present for children. Through an understanding of maternal feminism or matricentric feminism, the researcher discerns these ideologies in the fairy tale and feminist fairy tale texts as socially relevant. This champions the need for varied supportive policies, flexible work arrangements, and cultural shifts to honour the value of mothering. Maternal feminism is not about relegating women to the home or diminishing the value of their professional achievements but broadening one's understanding of value and success and acknowledging that the well-being of children and effective mothering lays the groundwork for the future of society.

Feminist fairy tales address the issues of mothering and motherhood, unlike in the fairy tales that present stereotypes of stepmothers and presents orphans as victimised and helpless. The struggle to balance career and motherhood symbolises a broader societal failure to identify, recognise and accommodate the dual roles women fulfil by balancing work with quality time in mothering. Navigating societal pressures that value and reward professional achievement over personal fulfilment and societal contribution through nurturing future generations, is addressed in life and literature as socially relevant in the concept of matricentric feminism as in the genre and in the reality of day to day life experiences.

Feminist praxis and systemic change of policies to support work-life balance and societal shifts in the attitudes that value the work of mothering as real work is foundational to the well-being and prosperity of the future of society. For maternal feminism to move from imagined concepts to lived reality, robust support from both strategists and societal structures to value the multifaceted contributions of women is essential. The journey toward embracing maternal feminism challenges deeply ingrained societal norms as maternal feminism is not just a theory; but a call to action to understand this concept of fairy tales and the feminist reworkings of fairy tales. Mothers need a mother- centred or matricentric mode of feminism for their identity and work as mothers. Andrea O'Reilly stated, "A mother must put on her oxygen mask first, in order to be able to help her children - I see this instruction on airplanes as an appropriate metaphor for feminist mothering. Mothers who are empowered are able to better care for and protect their children" (53). The select texts celebrate maternal bonding to honour motherhood and contribute to an emotionally resilient society for future generations.

Sojourner Truth aptly states:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud- puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man – when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most of all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (1)

Sexism questions gender cues about how individuals ought to behave to each other in social interactions and addresses the need to end gender dominance. *The Bloody Chamber* queries gender power, body image, body shaming and self-esteem. *Feminist Fables* interrogate homosexuality and question the concept of marriage as to who marries whom and when. 'Marrying up and marrying down- the marriage ingredient 'and the acceptance of remaining single, celebrating equality of power in married and lesbian couples, cohabiting couples or living together couples are discussed and critiqued. 'Beyond gender' questions role transitions and introspects on the theme of responsibility and the blame of motherhood as in *The Moon Ribbon and Other Stories*. The situations and contexts in the texts comprehend the issues of the marginalised in the context of desire and pleasure, AIDS, abortion, contraceptives, paid and unpaid work and addresses issues of puberty, menstruation, menarche, menopause, post menopause, sexism and ageing of marginalised genders.

Virgina Hamilton in "More about *Her Stories*" recalls, "When I was a child, I heard stories told by women. My mother told me the first tale I remember hearing. I didn't know it was a whimsy, a playful fancy, made up on the spot to comfort me." She

recollects the sound of her mother's voice as she busied herself with the household chores. She remembers her mother's shining dark eyes and her lips which kept a smile for her all through the day. Mother was so gentle and the "crystal-clear quality of her voice was always the same" and "of being happy who she was and where she was" (106). The stories told by Hamilton's mother about the family and the women of the family were women who always offered comfort "in parlours and kitchen spaces." They were tales that were "gentle reminders about nature's power, about ourselves in the world, where we came from, and who we were" (109).

The theme of beyond gender is an inquiry into the hardships women are subjected to as they grapple with female disorders, agoraphobia, neurasthenia, anorexia and hysteria. The context of gendered violence and the remedy of gender rehabilitation and gender therapy are addressed as in *The Bloody Chamber* where the mother is the rescuer. Feminist fairy tales question the adages appended to men and women in texts like *Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus* by John Gray and challenge gender myths. The feminist fairy tale texts as in Namjoshi's *Feminist Fables*, questions the never married women, persons of opposite sex sharing living quarters, divorce, separation, childless couples, choice couples and remarriage, 'The motherhood mystique' as in *Her Stories*, *Sweeping Beauties*, *Kissing the Witch*, *Feminist Fables*, *The Bloody Chamber* and *The Moon Ribbon* challenge gendered identities at the socio structural level to sharpen gender relations and gender boundaries. The comprehension of the 'Beauty Myth' and associating women with beauty queries like cosmetic surgery, breast upliftment and enlargement and women getting into shape are discerned in subtle contexts in the fairy tale and feminist fairy tale texts.

Deconstructing gender in feminist tales by breaking the stereotypes of gender and reimagining fairy tales for the next generation envisages gender parity and an egalitarian

society. Briefing children on concerns like gender pay gap, reproductive rights, sexual harassment, disrupting gender norms are evident in Carter's feminist fairy tales. All the marginalised genders in general and women in particular ought to empower themselves and society. Power feminism in Paolo Bacigalup and feminist perspectives on power, in Amy Allen redefined gender roles just as in a study of *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert N. Munisch. The themes of sexuality in the select texts by the select authors challenge the experiences of the second sex and third sex and all marginalised genders. The texts by the male writers who subvert the male presentation of the female body are fixated. The characters of feminist fairy tales are fortified to echo the feminist and female representations of a woman's body.

The feminist fairy tales depict how the issues of adjustment and reconciliation are lubricants that create a rapport to respect the sentiments of all genders. The recent pandemic that crafted human beings into techno beings accentuates the necessity to move beyond gender. The ever-changing concerns of gender inclusion to enhance the vision of equality of all genders through gender reforms are pivotal to break the barriers and shackles of subjugation. Themes like scopophilia, homoaesthetic, and gender disciplinary issues challenge gender stereotypes. Women and the third gender are not mere consumers or appendages to men but productive contributors in the light of gender implications. It is pivotal to transmit these texts and address the need to relate gender concerns in the classrooms, to look at problematic and challenging circumstances like the pandemic through a gendered lens and comprehend gender in a techno-scientific age. The Myth of Conjugal Domesticity in Sianne Ngai's *Ugly Feelings* contest gendered ideologies and battle gender dominance as in feminist reworkings.

Feminist fairy tales viewed in the light of intersectional feminism, is "a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate

each other.” This was another prologue to a social movement. The term, coined in 1989 by African American legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, identifies how people experience intersecting layers of oppression due to race, sexuality, class, ethnicity and gender as they accost “lived experiences.” That, “All inequality is not created equal,” (68) is an intersectional approach to depict how people’s social identities overlap, creating compounding experiences of discrimination. As Crenshaw addresses inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status, he opines that what is omitted is “how some people are subject to all of these, and the experience is not just the sum of its parts” (72).

Feminism as in the feminist fairy tales redefines that on the basis of gender, one needn’t be a man to be treated with equal respect. The feminist fairy tales depict how, intersectional exclusions include not just black women or women of colour, but people with disabilities, immigrants, queer, indigenous people and those affected by disasters. The voices of all the individuals fighting for gender justice, battling gender inequalities, combating gender violence, experiencing overlapping and concurrent forms of marginalisation need to be championed.

Feminist fairy tales address the concerns of all forms of perception of disempowerment. The contexts of the deep inequities of discrimination that intersect with oppression serves as a framework through which inclusive, robust movements that solve overlapping forms of discrimination are built. Intersectional feminism through an intersectional feminist lens matters today as it enables viewing the issues of women of diverse communities battling interconnected issues. Solidarity and sisterhood is depicted in the select texts to question gendered power structures through critical action in building a gender-just society. “If you see inequality as a ‘them’ problem or ‘unfortunate other’ problem, that is a problem,” says Crenshaw (33). Feminist fairy tales ought to look at how

these inequalities can be annihilated because as Fannie Lou Hammer stated “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free” (121).

Feminist fairy tales look beyond and harp on how gendered equity for all can be attained by giving equal value to the lives of men, women and all genders in an impartial manner. Every gendered identity in the feminist fairy tale is reworked to narrow gender gaps and this celebrates the achievements of all genders. This bridges different socio-economic classes across feminist territories and cultures to overcome different gender-based constraints. That sexual division of labour exists in every culture and is not the result of biological programming is echoed in the select feminist fairy tale texts.

Texts like *Feminist Fables* critique biological determinism and commodification of women. The tales reflect on how biology determines gender status and women’s status in society and treat women as sex symbols. The tales of *Sweeping Beauties* depict private-public dichotomy. They reiterate that sex is biological, and that gender is an artifact, a societal act and political tool which can be socially engineered and politically constructed unlike sex. The feminist fairy tales of Hamilton juxtapose male and female characters to critique society to overthrow gender dominance.

Feminist fairy tale texts imperceptibly map gender outcomes, strategies and knowledge building in academics, organisations and communities to develop a self-gendered tool that equips communities to track changes in the gendered framework. These texts endeavour to build consensus among readers across identity groups to offer workplace democracy through literature as thumbprints of history. The varied versions and tales of transformation and shape shifting of *Cinderella*, *Red Riding Hood*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Princess and the Pea* and more are magical stories. They are not microscopes, but mirrors. Whether Cinderella is ungracious or not, whether the goose girl is innocent or not, whether Rumpelstilkin or the Snow White versions are childlike

and human, it is the rags to riches or riches to rags story where lost patrimony is recovered, it is the issue of gender roles that harp on imparting gendered messages of sexism and gender to children.

Feminist fairy tales comprehend the theme of 'love beyond gender' as emotional and cognitive. The feminist fairy tale texts picture emotions soaring beyond gender and depict education as a tool of social change so that all marginalised genders along with women build a positive change. Women are at odds with the androcentric dissension and ought to redefine gender ethics and gender auditing and understand that (CEDAW) the Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women was to uniformly distribute power relations and critique androcentric bias under the rubrics of gender theories. In this context, feminist fairy tales critique viewing the world from a male prism and mock gender neutrality and gender bias to contest gendered themes by overthrowing stereotypes. Gender blindness is done away with, to authorize all genders to bridge the existing gender gaps.

Beyond the Cultural Milieu, Feminist fairy tales resonate the experience of women of different cultures as different and despite studies on intersectionality and despite the cultural milieu being different, woman as a producer of meaning mirror feminist criticism and feminist politics to celebrate the subversion of female identity. An analysis of "sexual difference" in the form of a cross-culturally singular monolithic, leads to the construction of a similarly reductive homogeneous notion of what is called "Third World difference" that "apparently oppresses most if not all women in these countries. It is in the production of this Third World difference that Western Feminisms appropriate and colonise the constitutive complexities that characterise the lives of women in these countries (Mohanty 19). Beyond cultural accoutrements, Disney's *Cinderella* (1950) created a hapless Cinderella. The Disney version of *Snow White* is sentimental, and the

dwarves are cute and adorable. Like fairy tales and feminist fairy tales, they trace the dreams of emancipation and envision the infinite vision through potent magic.

Articulation of gender concerns inverted the images of women in texts that succumbed to the fancies of men. Stereotyped images of women in literature were subject to sexual and textual harassments. Victimised women characters decoded these images in literature effectively to create feminist awareness in readers. The myth of the self-sacrificing woman was overthrown. Feminist ideologies and feminist power politics expose how women in power exploit less fortunate women and indoctrinate society with androcentric norms.

Feminist fairy tales raise gender concerns, which include an understanding of masculinity and men's bodies and also femininity and female bodies. The masculine characterisation where male stereotypes and female stereotypes are deconstructed and reconstructed and the theme of differentiation in the traditional and feminist texts as passive and active masculinities in texts and films are critiqued. Gender and fantasy in the subverted texts explore gender ideologies in the reworked texts by using fantastical plots and fictional make-believe elements to empower the weaker sex.

Re-envisioning the strength of all genders through feminist fairy tale texts ought to empower all genders in primary and secondary classrooms to explore gender performance or performativity of gender as vital. They question male archetypes which promote harmful, deconstructing male perspectives. The reversal of hegemonic masculinity critiques that fairy tale texts need not be sexist. It pooh-poohs gender myths in post genderism. Queering 'happily ever after' and 'unhappily ever after' is discussed and the tales question the so-called morals expressed in the traditional tales to expose heteronormality to champion the marginalised.

The celebration of gender discourse by deconstructing gender and sexuality celebrates men, women and all genders as equal and inclusive. This is done by equilibrating the construction of women based on the objectification, repudiation and devaluation of femininity and the subordination of feminine identity by subverting gender. Women writing through their bodies and *écriture féminine* were crafted in the feminist tales. Interrogating hegemonic masculinity as a product of dominant social discourse is expatiated and performative heroes and heroines are surveyed through the subversion of gender norms in the literary texts.

Gender harmony is envisaged in the reworkings. As Simone de Beauvoir specified, “Her soul was only nourishing, never creative . . . he remained doomed to immanence incarnating only the static aspect of society, closed in upon itself” (*The Second Sex* 105). Woman must elevate herself into a woman of substance and take the reins to champion gender harmony on the planet by overthrowing male gendered, male constituted and male dominated discourse that Lacan called phallogocentric; and feminist discourse which eulogised the works of women as equal to men through *écriture féminine* and welcoming more works on the third gender by moving towards readings beyond gender. Feminist fairy tales in their descriptions of gender roles in the tales and characters include equality of gender in lifestyle, social ethos, cultural themes and socialisation. Sexual division of labour is not a result of biological programming or biological sex. The bread winner versus the homemaker raised issues pleading for reintegration of humanity and destruction of gender stratification by violence and encouraging sexual freedom. It created a global community by echoing the power of the matriarchal community to create a holistic ethnic community of gender harmony.

Beyond gender games, the purpose of the fellowship of men and women, women among women, women among different and all genders and the theme of compatibility

are deliberated in feminist fairy tales. Though dichotomy has been discussed in these tales and though thinking beyond men being totally different from women challenge gender entitlement, the subject of discourse is the development of new competencies and mutual attention towards gendered relationships to attain gender harmony. Articulation of silenced and sacrificial heroines in these reworked fairy tales break gender stereotypes and liberate female protagonists by moving beyond gender to empower society.

Feminist fairy tales are not vehicles of feminist propaganda. The postmodernist feminist fairy tale writers do not champion the vision of a matriarchal rule or matriarchal vision. Matrophobia is expressed not as feminism or motherhood in the feminist tales, but as becoming one's mother. All the select writers believe that matriarchal power is as dangerous as patriarchal rule and consider that women indoctrinated by patriarchy and patriarchal values or matriarchy and matriarchal norms need not necessarily be emancipated. A blend of the indoctrination of the two sexes restores harmony. The interrogation of female experience versus male experience associated male experience with power and the female experience with powerlessness in the canonical tales. This is reworked in the feminist reworkings by redefining the feminine stereotype as the creation of patriarchy and celebrates the theme of beyond gender.

The feminist fairy tales can be viewed in a post gendered light as they move beyond Butlerian gender studies to debate about a politicised engagement with heterogeneous, intersectional identities and movements. They question how gender, identity, power and sexuality are theorised in the context of post genderism which arose from the erosion of the cultural, psychological and social roles of gender. The feminist fairy tales interrogate varied gender theories and praxis across shifting socio-cultural, socio-economic and geo-political contexts. The post gender future is one in which technology and technological innovation will efface the biological, the sociological and

psychological role of a post- gender future where bodies will no longer be circumscribed by gendered traits.

Insights on the concepts of post gender, neurotechnology, biotechnology, assisted reproductive feminisms, masculinism, androgyny, metrosexual, techno sexual, sexual dimorphism, cyborg feminism, body modification, morphological freedom, techno progressivism, humanism, posthumanism, transhumanist philosophy, gender neutrality, futurism, fluid gender identities and medicalisation of gender reveal that gender is in a techno-scientific age. Where same sex love was once a taboo, sodomy was a capital punishment and crime, though not restricted between men; tales in this context ought to empower all genders.

Situating sexuality in electronically programmed spaces, feminist fairy tale texts can be reworked keeping in mind newer gender realms like electronically mediated sex being virtual and the need to be made available electronically and digitally in newer versions. Sexting, cybersex, phone sex, digi-sexuality, mediated intimacy, tech-expertise, sexpertise, Technology Mediated Interaction TMSI and sex toys which are virtual realities of the post gender age, and newer technologies which establish emotional connections and connectivity can be authored in a feminist and gendered light. These spaces and emotions that overtake personal intimacy, love, innocence, compatibility, physical rapport and emotive bonding will take over and mankind will be lost in oblivion about the epochs of the small joys of togetherness that our ancestors delighted in the past. These subjects of debate in feminist fairy tales could be the subject of tales for future generations to understand the theme of beyond gender.

Feminist fairy tales have created an impact of seeing 'beyond gender' in children and adults to negate fairy gendered pink and blue toys and 'Barbies' for girls and 'Hot wheels' for boys through the introduction of gender- neutral, non-stereotyped concepts on

themes beyond gender in fairy toys and fairy films. Feminist music in feminist fairy tale films has unbound women through feminist aesthetics. Feminist fairy tales might also echo themes like Donna Jeanne Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* which views the cyborg as a rejection of rigid boundaries separating human and animal, human and machine. The figure of the cyborg used by Haraway to urge feminism to move beyond the limitations of traditional genetics, feminism and politics as a milestone in feminist post humanist posthuman theory could be echoed in feminist fairy tales.

Postgender theorists believe in the emancipation of genders through technological transgression and in this context, the acceptance of the third gender emancipation is emphasised. Post gender society highlights the acceptability of all genders. So, like the *Feminist Manifesto*, feminist fairy tales must re-image a world beyond gender or without gender and step out of the maze of dualism in which feminism is enmeshed. Donna Haraway, the post gender theorist believes in the emancipation of genders through technology through the theme of fluid gender identities, variance medicalisation, pornography, electronically mediated sex, unisex toys, use of teledildonics to transport the human to a world beyond gender. At an age where technology will wipe out sexist thoughts and dyadic gender roles because there is a male and female in every human being, feminist fairy tales become even more relevant.

The concepts of post genderism, neurotechnology, assisted reproductive feminism, metrosexual, techno-sexual; transhumanist philosophy, post humanism, cyborg feminism, sexual dimorphism, morphological freedom, Panopticon, surveillance and progressivism are themes that can be used in feminist fairy tale films and feminist fairy tale texts. "The Left Hand of Darkness" by Ursula. K. Le Guin is yet another text that reads as a feminist reworking because it talks about the irrelevance of gender. Therefore, post gender society has to accept women's ability in air, water, in sea as a success story.

Like “A Door in the Ocean” tells of a humanoid race that has only one sex, Namjoshi echoes the superiority of each and every gendered identity. Steven Spielberg’s “Extra Terrestrial” and “Splice” by Vincenzo Natali is of a couple who attempts to introduce human DNA in the work of splicing animal genes. In a framework, where the human race must evolve beyond gender, feminist fairy tales become all the more germane and pertinent in the modern times. Gender auditing as a diagnostic tool to address the special needs of women’s issues in a quest for transcendence towards self- actualisation, is the purpose of these tales. The feminist fairy tale authors project the need for self-realisation and self-actualisation of women and share an altruist vision of working towards the best interest of one’s own gender and all other genders.

Altruism, in ethics as a theory of conduct that regards the good of others as the end of moral action depicts how these tales are empowering and non-sexist. Coined in the 19th century by Auguste Comte, the founder of Positivism, and adopted as a convenient antithesis to egoism, it depicts that though feminism seems selfish, women also seem to be wired to cooperate with all genders to address with good intention the need to reverse gender roles to end injustice meted to the marginalised. Thus the feminist fairy tales are altruist tales that envisages gender harmony to engage in discourses of feminist philosophies like the philosophies of Anne Brooks to move towards a postfeminist, posthuman, post gendered world where technology is over taking the human to realms beyond feminist posthumanism.

The reintegration of humanity is an attempt to break gendered issues and genres to bring together men and women to work towards a similar gendered cause. Gayle Rubin’s take on the integration of men and women is that “Men and Women” are of course different, as day and night, earth and sky, yin and yang, life and death. In fact, from the standpoint of Nature, men, women and all the gendered identities are closer than either is

to anything else, and this is relevant in the select tales. “Beyond Gender” is indeed food for thought, introspection into insight, to explore newer arenas for reflection to debate for the futurities beyond the boundaries of time, space and horizons. The select feminist fairy tales are an invitation to move beyond self-actualisation to articulate a shared vision to look at gender, not in black and white, but in rich hues and shades of vibrant colours with creative and critical forms of expression to move beyond gender studies in order to destabilise the very concept of gender. All the select texts depict how transformations are a substratum of charm, litany, innocence, beauty, magnetism and veracity.

The best fairy tales are supposedly universal. The gift of words and wonder is magic. It does not matter when or why they were written. The fairy tales of yore beguiled, entranced and enthralled the child and adult reader into realms of fantasy. Similarly, these feminist tales bewitchingly entice and enrapture the reader by transporting him to enchanting imaginary worlds of empowerment and narrate how the human heart, mind and soul evolve to envision dominions beyond gender. The grandeur of the sweeping castles, magnificence of bejewelled dresses, exotic adventures of princes, quiet and docile princesses who were part of the escapades of heroes are reinvented by the select writers as a clarion call to address the issues of marginalisation, space, agency, feminism and gender to enhance the new discourse of the thought and theory of the pedagogy and aesthetics in fairy tales.

The researcher comprehends that fairy tales and feminist reworkings ought to be studied with an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary vision from the point of view of the application of theories, anthropology, psychoanalysis and discourses on masculinity studies, feminist studies, queer studies and gender studies. Male stereotypes propagated by fairy tales across cultures ought to delve into the patriarchal jurisdictions of male

stereotyping. The portrayal of sexual abuse in fairy tales has been reworked in feminist fairy tales and this could be taken up by male studies and gender studies.

The cultural valorisation of hegemonic masculinity has a strong correlation with the portrayal of the damaging and violent ways of being a man. The theme of protecting the politics of the institution of family was the reason why the handsome hero and the father figure were given a pride of place in the canonical fairy tale texts. Bruno Bettelheim suggests that the ‘evil’ alter-father figure in fairy tales is often personified as inogres, monsters or dragons, which are outside the family unit. By changing ‘bad’ into ‘good’ fathers, the fairy tales eclipse the risk that fatherhood will be interpreted as threatening the stability of the family and thus society (*The Uses of Enchantment* 114).

Though fairy tales since time immemorial have boosted the confidence of children, what problematises this endeavour is gender specificity. Fairy tales are told to children as part of psychological value education and as delights of childhood fantasies which are part of what Freud called the ‘id’ and Lacan calls the ‘imaginary order’ to accept the yoke of the ‘super ego’ or the ‘symbolic order’ through them. Psychologists such as Freud and Jung have attended mostly to myths; but folktales are also a potent source of psychological insights to gender studies.

Feminist fairy tales could also be a source of strength in solidification of the stoicism of young girls. Spreading the message of gender parity since childhood about an unrestricted egalitarian society would be an eye opener to young girls and boys in obliterating conflicts of gender stereotypes to create the synchronisation of gender justice and gender concord. In the article “Spreading Myths about Fairy tales: A Critical Commentary on Robert Bly’s *Iron John*,” Zipes dismantled the former author’s phallogocentric attitude, pointing out several contradictions in his arguments (3-19). Masculinity is projected as an elusive status and not just biological maleness. These

ideologies could be reworked from the feminist and gendered point of view by subverting the long standing suffering of women to disseminate gender ethics through the codes of impartiality, righteousness and integrity for collective societal welfare.

An insight into the reworking of children's literature from the point of view of gender and sexuality to interrogate male authored and female authored texts in a positive light by focusing on education of gender through inverted tales can contribute to a more enlightened generation that understands the significance of gender roles in the context of skills needed by both sexes to move towards a gender just egalitarian society. The theme of addressing gender from the point of view of the 'New Woman' theory, with unleashing the feminine mystique, addressing gender pluralism, juxtaposing femininities and masculinities and comprehension of gender theories from multi-disciplinary perspectives is indispensable, as humanity is at the crossroads of a post human, post gendered world where technology is taking over the actuality of the existence of the humanoid. The need of the hour is to intellectually and pragmatically efface all differences and welcome the harmonious peaceful coexistence among all genders. The theme of 'beyond gender' and blurring the boundaries of gender by deposing gender roles and gender stereotypes adds to the charm of the Feminist Fairy Tale as tales of altruistic feminist philosophy. A 'genre beyond gender' thus emerges as a scholastic, collective, ethnic and moral identity and as a point of reference in the academic, societal, cultural and literary milieu.