

## **Genesis and the Missing Female Subjectivity – a Short Feminist Critique**

The Book of Genesis holds cardinal importance in setting the foundational values and imagining the world in a certain type of way. One of the narratives put forward by the Book that may be quite unsettling for a contemporary feminist is the role of women as conventionally seen and interpreted in the Book of Origin; for instance, the birth of mankind and the inter-linked role with the male patriarch. Perhaps, this discrepancy calls for a re-interpretation of the Biblical texts with a fresh lens.

The story of origin as mentioned in Genesis comes in two different versions: one where "...God created he him; male and female created he them" (1:27), and one where Eve is created out of Adam's "rib" (2:22) and "taken out of man" (2:23). The former reading appears to be more neutral as it places male and female on an equal footing, and it appears to be more inclusive as it mentions a creation of "them" as well, diminishing the stigma associated with transgender or anyone who does not fall into the male-female binary. However, Genesis 2 presents a different narrative that gives rise to the typical societal norms and leads to males seen as superiors or primary beings where women are seen as secondary, and there is no mention of "them". This gives an insight into how mainstream religion is viewed as patriarchal in nature.

In addition to that, a woman's role is always seen in relation to a man – the main protagonist – and women are not shown to have value in themselves, but only with relation to the greater purpose of supporting the patriarch and advancing his generations. Initially, this task too is seen as a burden on Eve as evidenced by Genesis 3, line 16, where "bring[-ing] forth children" is seen as something to be "sorrow[-ful]" about. This text also portrays female subjectivity and thought with a very narrow lens; for instance, viewing the relationship between Sarah and Hagar as being that of jealousy only, without any nuances present in the situation. Further, the role of Sarah is stressed upon as "a mother of nations" (17:16) where the focus is mainly on the nations that take away the spotlight from the present experience of motherhood by entailing motherhood as a means of achieving a great nation, and not as something profound in itself.

Although it can be argued that this was the order of that time and these concepts reflect traditional ideals, it must not be forgotten that these texts do carry a timeless quality within themselves, and it is because of this aspect that there should be an effort to trace female voice and subjectivity within the texts as well. For instance, it can be argued, as opposed to the conventional interpretation of the Genesis 2 origin story, that since the woman was a secondary version and created after man, she was a more refined version of humankind. There may not be much room to reconcile modern-day feminism with the Biblical portrayal of women, and this calls for novel ways of interpreting the text in order to find more on female subjectivity to add to the universalistic perspective of the Old Testament.