

## CHAPTER ONE

### Exploring Moll's Character

#### The Context of the plot

Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* is a story of rise and fall of a woman Moll, who was born in Newgate prison in England. Moll comes under the care of a rich family and falls in love with the elder of two brothers in the household. At the same time, the younger brother falls in love with Moll. The first one convinces her to act like they were married in bed and persuades her to marry his younger brother. After being widowed of the younger brother she moves to attract a man who will marry her with security. She wants to be a gentlewoman from the beginning and for that she can do anything.

Moll marries a tradesman who goes bankrupt and leaves her on her own. For the third time, she makes match with a man from Virginia but that man turns to be her own half-brother. This proves a person has no control over his /her fate. Again she develops a relationship with a man from Bath. Their relationship is platonic at first but afterwards she becomes like a kept woman. Finally, she turns to a banker. She pretends to have a great fortune in order to attract him but when she realizes that he too has cheated her having himself lied about having money that he actually does not possess, they dissolve their marriage. Moll supports herself for two years, until she is reduced to poverty and, in desperation, turns to a life of crime.

Without any sign of hope, even a normal man moves to the wrong path so why not Moll, who always seeks for pleasure in her life. Growing habituated to thievery, she becomes a master criminal until she is caught and imprisoned at Newgate, where she finds her Lancashire husband, who by this point has become a famous robber. They both

avoid the death sentence. Later, she learns that her mother has left her a plantation in Virginia and that her son, by her brother is alive. Moll reunites with her son in Virginia who gives her, her mother's inheritance, a farm. Moll because she is penitent of her former life, and is transported to America, where she accumulates a fortune and lives to an old age.

Moll turns into a notorious whore from a gentlewoman. In order to have a secure life, she commits a lot of criminal acts and moves on becoming the puppet in the hands of men. Though she chooses a wrong path in gaining security of money, she has to face a lot of difficulties and obstacles in her journey. For the sake of living, time and again she abolished her intention of becoming a gentlewoman. She marries five times and each marriage leaves her alone. Her quest of becoming a gentlewoman, her quest of gaining money, her quest of becoming part of an elite group makes her a woman without heart but she never gives up hope.

*Moll Flanders* has been analyzed from different perspectives. There are some critics who have given their views about the text. Interpreting the novel, Ian Watt remarks:

Moll Flanders is full of Defoe's best-written episodes: the heroine is perhaps Defoe's most successful piece of portraiture: the theme is concerned not with a fight against nature but with something more typical of the novel, the individual's struggle against society and the plot, though rambling and confused is based on a pattern of personal relationships which is finally rounded out with a degree of unity by the restoration of

Moll to her husband and her son, and final curtain closing on a peaceful old age of penitence and prosperity. (160)

It means that the novel is about Moll the heroine's struggle against the circumstances and the society where she lives, which set odds against her at every turn. She has felt some kind of oddness in her life. She fights for her living and with her fate courageously in the society where she lives. She does not dissolve herself on that society rather she challenges the odds in saving her life in such uncertain society. She warmly struggles throughout her life for the betterment of her living.

The novel sets the unity between Moll and her husband at last, though her long lasting relation with any man is not found until the last episode. No person is born a criminal but it is the situation and social condition which makes a person criminal. Moll turns to a life of crime because she sees it as the only way to survive, and not because she is a person prone to thievery. She is betrayed by the person whom she loved deeply, who settles her relationship with his own brother without caring for her feelings, therefore she makes a clear vision not to trust and love any man from that time onward. Whatever she does is because she has no other choice. Being engaged in incestuous relationship, thievery, and notoriety and careless wife and mother she overcomes from such sinner and gets peace, penitence and safe life later.

As the daughter of a transported convict, Moll begins life at great disadvantages: she lacks the support system of family and friends which all children need, and which was particularly necessary for women, since their access to employment was limited. Without any system to protect them, the children of convicts are thrown into the world with no training in any trade and no prospects other than starvation or the same life of

crime that ended so badly for their parents. She herself was very lucky to be taken in: the parish (the area served by one church) were under no obligation to take care of penniless children who were not born there, or had no other particular claim to charity. The novel also depicts the conditions of the poor and the suffering of the immigrants. When Moll is a young girl, she is forced to go into service as a maid because she has to make a living. Maids were paid very little, but at least they were fed and clothed. She needs to get married. When she is widowed at the age of 48, she is too old to hope to marry again, and has little choice but to embark on a life of crime.

According to Karl Marx, “It was the economic forces in society that created change and thus drove history forward” (qtd in Gardener 393). He views that ideas, conceptions, and consciousness are related to material reality. So, material reality is the prime force to determine the life of people. Similarly, money controls what happens in the novel. For Watt, “the novel is an equally assiduous if less reflective example of economic individualist” (176). In this novel, everything that Moll has experienced is in order to gain money.

To Moll, money has the greatest value. The person with money is in the best position to walk away, while the person with no money, like she, is forced to take what she can get. She gets married so that she will have someone to take care of her and she does not have to worry about money. All of her husbands end up or break up because of money. There are many scenes where she is working as a prostitute. She thinks about money she is going to make. She sells herself for money. Achieving money was her only motive which she tried to attain by hook or by crook. But it is impossible for a woman

like her to build a separate identity fairly in a patriarchy society. Money controls her thoughts, emotions, and actions and serves as evidence that money is her god.

Money is more important, more moving, than love. Her mind and heart is totally controlled by money. In the hope of getting money she marries men, but when she finds her husband not having money she breaks the relation too. She even lies about her lack of money and claimed herself to be a rich woman in order to attract rich men. For her, money is everything. She thinks money makes her happier. She worships and idolizes money and will do whatever it takes to follow it. She sees people as possessions, her relationships with them as business transactions.

Although she is in love with the eldest brother, she has few qualms about taking money from him. She then accepts a bribe from him to marry his brother Robin. She does not want to lose any opportunity to be near money. For instance, in one scene at the beginning the elder brother of the house where she was living, says, she is “not in jest says he, here’s an Earnest for you: and with that he pulls out a silk purse, with a Hundred Guineas in it, and gave it to me: and I’ll give you such another says he, every year till I marry you” (22). This quote also proves that the male also offers her money for being with her. She never steals from children and from people in distress. And only when she is too old to do otherwise does she repent. The very fact that she insists on securing her inheritance shows how the possession of earthly goods has a much deeper meaning for Moll than does the acquisition of spiritual well-being. Commenting upon the novel, Max Novak asserts:

Defoe seems to have wanted Moll to affect the readers in many ways. She was to be an object lesson, a satirist upon herself and those of her tribe, an

experienced thief trying to teach her reader to guard themselves against the tricks of pick-pockets and shoplifters, a young partly innocent girl ever in danger from men, a woman cynical about love and a real woman struggling against an indifferent society. (57)

He means to say that the novel is about the rise and fall of the protagonist Moll. She is a model of her tribe. She with her determination proves that a woman can do anything for her security and living. Women who moved to London from the countryside were especially vulnerable when the city failed to provide them the honest work. This novel also shows that a person turns into a criminal if the state does not provide opportunity for an individual with better work; it also shows that when necessary a simple and innocent person also can be criminal. A person totally depends on the state but if the state does not show any fragrance of hope then people living there can do nothing except criminal works.

Similarly, Moll here suffers because of the indifferent society of her time. She migrates to a different world but everywhere she becomes a victim because of heartless people and fate. She wants love, money, and a respectful life but her fate gives her quite opposite results. All in all her beliefs or expectations turn in vain. And as a result she involves herself in robbery and prostitution which was against her ambition. She is more a character who champions humanity in her actions.

Moll's life took her in new directions throughout the novel. As a child she does whatever other tells her to do and feels better. As she grows up she starts to expect her husband to help her financially and socially. As a criminal she becomes very indifferent towards the world and does whatever she needs to survive. She goes through many

changes as she struggles to find a proper spot in life. She has many roles like an orphan, a thief, a mother, and prostitute. Reviewing the novel, William Hazlitt, argues,

How else can we comprehend that he should think there was a salutary moral lesson couched under the history of Moll Flanders: or that his romance of Roxana, or the Fortunate Mistress, who rolls in wealth and pleasure from one end of the book to the other, and is quit for a little death- bed repentance and a few lip deep professions of vanity of worldly joys, showed, in a striking point of view, the advantages of virtue, and disadvantages of the vice? It cannot be said, however, that these works have an immoral tendency. The author has contrived to neutralize the question: and made vice and virtue equally contemptible or revolting.

(328-29)

Hazlitt here means that the novel depicts the momentary pleasure of Moll from beginning to the end of the book. And at last she regrets when she loses her youth and morality. The book also shows the advantage and disadvantage of virtue and vice. He says that the author has used or thinks that a poor woman in a patriarchal society is beyond vice and virtue.

Defoe wants to bring some moral understanding in this novel. He wants to make his readers aware of immoral acts. Vice and virtue are two parts of our life. But the able man is that who can remove vice from him and gets entangled with virtue. Moll always seeks for worldly pleasure and wealth. She feels remorse at the last for her improper deeds and repents. Every human being comes to face his/ her doing in his/her life. Likewise, she faces a lot of difficulties for her being immoral. Her life of crime is

constantly colored by her good humor, compassion and sense of loyalty. She is clearly a character with a disorganized sense of morality.

Moll's disordered sense of morality is a theme throughout the novel. She often comes up with moral excuses for her immoral actions. She is in fact a justly immoral character. There are several other cases when Moll creates her own moral reasoning to make her immoral actions seem moral. The most glaring of these instances is when she steals several valuable items from a young girl who is walking home by herself. She makes herself believe that she was right in robbing the little girl because she would teach the girl's parents a lesson. In a way, she is just making an excuse for her immoral action.

### **Marriage in *Moll Flanders***

Marriage is a socially or ritually known blending or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and responsibilities between them. Individuals may marry for several reasons, comprising legal, social, emotional, financial, spiritual and religious purposes. The protagonist's marriage is for money in a sense that Moll deeply tries to dig her dreams of being gentlewoman and for her being gentlewoman is to earn money. For her it is a way to make money and get out of debt. It was like a utopia in the Eighteenth century England as most of the women were dependent to a great degree on men as they had no social status and financial power. She continuously struggles for her existence.

Moll eventually comes to understand marriage as an arrangement of financial survival. One of the ways she can do this is by exercising her beauty and sexuality to reel the men in. As she grows older she becomes more in need of a man to secure her an ample household and a means of living. She rushes into marriages without completely



learning about her spouse's intentions or background. She was more focused on how much money the man has than the man himself. A marriage to a draper and a marriage to an estate owner in Ireland who was a fraud failed because of the issue of money. Her desire to be a gentlewoman cannot be met if she does not marry in a higher social class; thus, she marries and remarries multiple times with no other purpose than to fulfill her physical and financial desires. In achieving her dream she marries five men, gives birth to many children, becomes a prostitute, thief and transported felon and many more.

Throughout Moll's marriages, she never expresses how much she loves her husband. She only discusses about their current financial situation. The most obvious evidence of marrying without love is when she and her husband both lied about their fortunes. She expected her husband to be rich, and her husband expected her to be rich. The couple then realizes that there is nothing else in the relationship that would make them stay together, and as a result, they break up. Her series of relationships with men highlights the common problems that led many women of the period to make living with their bodies, and her behavior indicates how readily extramarital sex was acceptable in the late seventeenth century, the period following Charles' I is restoration to the English throne in 1660 is known as the most amoral period in the history of England. Extramarital liaisons became a way of life and public entertainment.

Lack of option and support was the principal force driving women to this profession. Women did have opportunities to work, but jobs that were legal did not pay well. It is morally wrong for a woman to lose her virginity before she gets married. That's why; Moll shortly married Robin to hide the fact that she had a relationship with his brother Robert. To save her virtue, she marries multiple men and travels to different

parts of the world. This proves how women disguised themselves to cover their past events. Virginia Woolf proclaims:

The advocates of women's rights would hardly care, perhaps to claim Moll Flanders and Roxana among their patron saints; and yet it is clear that Defoe not only intended to speak some very modern doctrines upon the subject, but placed them in circumstances where their peculiar hardships are displayed in such a way as to elicit our sympathy. Courage, said Moll Flanders, was what women needed, and power to "stand their ground". (341)

Woolf here means that Defoe has placed or has given circumstances as a major theme in the novel. It is her fate which leads her to a life of hardships. She is also a character of sympathy. According to Woolf, a woman needs power and courage to build her confidence and pride in a society. Defoe places his characters on adversities. Only through facing a series of life-changing, character building, and truly immoral events, Moll was able to apologize for her mischievousness, calm herself within society, and pass into a new life of both financial and divine wealth and restoration. Despite the flaw in her behavior, we feel very sorry for her.

Even marriage was of no guarantee of security. Unwanted children could be given to country families to be taken care of, along with a sum of money. However, these children were often neglected. Many of Moll's children quietly disappear, presumably fallen prey to illness. Perhaps because of the high rates of child mortality, some mothers guarded against becoming too attached to their children. Other familial ties were less strong also: people married for money rather than for love. Her early life through her

middle age is one long string of men. First, she falls in love with someone she could not marry, then she marries someone whom she does not love, then she becomes someone's mistress... and so on. Regarding the text, Alan Dugald Mckillop states:

Moll is a victim of society, showing the workings of economic and social compulsion; unfortunate adventures, showing the workings of chance and random circumstance; a cool exponent of self-interest, systematically trying to figure the profit and loss in business, love, and crime. Though an outcast from the middle class, she carries many of its standards with her.

(346)

Mckillop summarizes the whole story in these lines. It is true that Moll is an object of the society and she gives an accurate vision of the crime, punishment, and prostitution that are taking place during eighteenth century Europe. She uses her faculties to provide for herself. Her masculine characteristics like her intelligence, practical proficiency, self-support and boldness of conventional feminine roles and habits set her apart from women of her time. The novel presents a strong and bright female protagonist, exposing the female heroine as a sensible being facing the hindrances of an unstable and biased society.

The novel contains patriarchal prejudices and features, but these flaws only serve to reinforce the difficulty of the challenge women face in overcoming the secondary position they hold in society. In regards to Moll having sex with her own brother, it is her circumstance because she truly did not know her husband was of her own flesh and blood. She is the product of a Puritan society who turns to worldly zeal. She is a tradeswoman, always ready to lure up an account, to enter in profit or loss. She with no

resources but her needle constantly seeks enough wealth or a well-to-do enough husband to free herself from the risk of poverty.

It is clear that Moll achieves her desires of being a gentlewoman, yet her identity is constantly changing throughout the novel. She is affected by every person and experiences. One can raise the question whether or not her decisions were right ones. She is different from a woman in traditional norms. She comes as a rebel against the social norms. She is developing a different life for women to live.

This study is quite different from above reviews as this research highlights the protagonist Moll's quest for secure life. Moll is frequently changing her role to achieve her identity. At first, she works as a servant to earn money. Next, being the lover of a man from a rich family, marrying a tradesman and a farmer are all part of her desire to have a respectable life ahead. It is not she who betrayed Robert but it is he who forces her to marry his younger brother Robin. It is the man who turns to be bankrupt and leaves her alone. It is the circumstances that make her brother, her husband. There is not any mistake of her but of the man, the circumstances and the eighteenth century England. After being failure in all these cases, she turns to be a whore. There she earns little money but she was not satisfied with that money.

Even being whore she does not think that her mission of being a gentlewoman, being part of the middle class succeed so, she engages herself in robbery. She claims herself as best in thievery art. She earns money, leads a respectable life ahead, becomes part of the middle class, and has a perfect life partner with a secure life.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Feminism: An Overview of Female

#### What Do Feminists Say?

The feminist movement is the result of the women's movement of the 1960's. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, John Stuart's *The Subjection of Women*, Marry Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of Rights of Women* and many others diagnose the problem of women's inequality and solutions of it. These texts have contributed a lot to introduce the concept of feminist.

Feminist theory, which emerged from feminists movements, aims to understand the nature of gender, inequality by examining women's social roles. Feminists examine the experiences from all races, classes and cultures, including African-American, Asian-American, and Lesbian and third world subjects. Feminist criticism is all about deconstructing the essentialised images of gender and sex while taking pride in cultural and gender diversity. Feminism is a collection of movements and ideas aimed at defining, inaugurating, and protecting equal political, economic, and social rights for women. Feminist critics have employed humor to analyze male dominated ways of seeing. Feminist critics believe that the entire cultural spectrum is dominated by patriarchal value. The woman is subjected by male. The male dominates the woman and gives her a marginal, ordinary and unimportant role.

French feminism talked about two different forms of feminism and they are materialist and psychoanalytic feminism. Materialist feminism deals with the economic and social subjugation of the women whereas psychoanalytic feminism discusses psychological experience of women. In this regard, Tyson says about Simon de Beauvoir as,

In the patriarchal society, Beauvoir observes men are considered essential subjects while women are considered contingent beings. Men can act upon the world, change it, give it meaning, while women have meaning only in relation to men. Thus, women are defined not just in terms of their difference from men, but in terms of their inadequacy in comparison to men. The word woman, therefore, has the same implications as the word other. A woman is not a person in her own right. She is man's other: she is less than a man: she is a kind of alien in a man's world: she is not a fully developed human being the way a man is. (qtd in Tyson 96)

In patriarchy society, women are taken as the other. Woman is considered as the weak sex and an object. She does not have her own identity. She gets identity in relation to men.

Myths are created by men to dominate women and to create negative images about women. Beauvoir even argues that "marriage trapped and stunted women's intellectual growth and freedom" (qtd in Tyson 97). That means, after marriage their thinking capacity decreases as husband do not allow them to think. All the decisions are made by men. Women do not have freedom to think as well. They are trapped in household activities. Before marriage they obey their father and after marriage their husbands control them. All the time, they have to suppress their desires and try to be a good wife and a good daughter. Such concepts are hindering women in exploring their position in the society they live. Beauvoir in her *The Second Sex*, writes that "one is not born a woman: rather, one becomes a woman" (qtd in Barry125). They from birth are taught

how to live like a woman. Thus they turn to be woman. They are made to think that they are females and cannot do the things the males do.

The main reason for women's suppression is 'she' herself. Women are not able to recognize the domination over them. They surrender immediately to the flattery of a man. They are pleased, if any man describes their beauty. Male glorifies the beauty of women by comparing her with abstract things. Due to these flatteries female's intellectuality, is swept away. And there is no history of women's suppression. We cannot get any historical record of women's suffering in the early period. In this point too Beauvoir points that "They have been, in a sense, "written out" of the history, not considered a topic worth covering" (qtd in Tyson 97). They are not given any importance to be included in the topic as well.

Women's work in their house is very daring and difficult but such jobs are not given priority. All other jobs are paid but not the domestic works of women. Their works do not count in the eyes of the people but it is believed the duty of women is to look after their family. Comparing men's work outside the house and females work inside the home, the women work a lot without rest but their work are considered as valueless. In this regard, Christine Delphy, a materialist feminist offers a noteworthy statement as,

In the patriarchy women do the domestic labor at home that men don't want to do, and their work day is twenty-four hours long. So when you add it all up, women work longer hours than men, though women's work in home is not recognized as a real labor deserving of pay (.....) She argues that all relationships between men and women are based on power:

patriarchal men want to keep all of it; nonpatriarchal women want power to be equally distributed. (qtd in Tyson 98)

Delphy in the above statement urges to give equal treatment for men and women in their job. They are not to be discriminated. Within the household works, female are being cut off from outside world and their interests are thus narrowed. Gradually they become incapable of taking serious decisions. Woman should have power in her hand in order to get her position and that power for her is money. One has to struggle for money to make one's living. It links back to the theory of 'survival of the fittest,' where each individual must fight for living.

Women cannot revolt against patriarchal domination by being part of it, she should move out of it to resist it. For Helene Cixous a radical feminist, "Women will not learn to resist patriarchal thinking by becoming part of the patriarchal power structure" (qtd in Tyson 100). Woman must write herself, about women and bring women to writing.

Women have learned what patriarchal men have trained them. The speeches have been masculine, the stories masculine, and the thoughts centered on masculine perceptions and perspectives. So women could not explore their creativity and intellectual skill within the patriarchal structure. Woman must put herself into the text. In art and literature even, men have shaped the identities of women to such a degree that women have come to believe themselves as they have been defined by men. In order to find their identity, woman first should separate herself from man's ideas and try to find out their own way.

For Cixous, women themselves have power of energy. Women can obtain her self by creating her language. Women need a new Feminine language and such language she calls *écriture feminine*. This type of writing attacks patriarchal modes of thinking and



writing and eradicates binary thinking. It suggests that there is a great need for an alternative form of language. Luce Irigaray observes,

Woman must represent all that exists outside that subject and its truth. She is material, improper, indeterminate, incapable of conscious mastery, without self-identity, in-different, formless and multiple. Nevertheless, as matter, she is the mirror, the specular scene upon which reason operates, providing reason with material for its concepts while yet remaining outside rational identity. (qtd in Ryan 102)

This point states that women want the same thing as men do. Women are considered as the reflection of men. The power is in man's hand. He sees woman whatever the way he wants to. Women are the objects to be looked and used by men. Irigaray views that "patriarchy is a man's world: men invent the rules of the game, they play it only with one another, and women are merely to be found among the prizes" (qtd in Tyson 102).

Patriarchy is invented by men, they make the rules and women are victim of those rules. Patriarchy compelled women to play the role of submissive women within the domestic sphere. One of the striking views that Irigaray delivers is that she calls her notion as 'woman's language womanspeak'. For her,

Female sexual pleasure is "far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined" And so is womanspeak more diversified, more multiple in its meanings, more complex, and more subtle than patriarchal language....when a woman dares speak in her own way," 'she' off in all directions leaving 'him' (the

patriarchal man) unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. (qtd in Tyson 102)

She says that woman can speak a lot of things, and it is very difficult to find the exact meaning of what they say. There are a number of hidden meanings in them. Women have multiple sexual pleasures in her body. Women have inner talents within them which are hidden and need to be brought out.

Kate Millett, Germaine Greer, Mary Ellmann's write are politically in the sense that they want to express the injustice of men. Although Simon De Beauvoir points out "unlike blacks, women are not a minority, and unlike the proletariat, women are not the product of the history" (qtd in Selden 138). Elaine Showalter examines the British female novelists and reconstructs the literary history of women and divided it into three phases. They are the feminine phase, feminist phase and female phase, as Showalter states,

The feminine stage of women's writing involves a prolonged phase of imitating the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition and internalizing its standards of art; the feminist stage involves the advocacy of minority rights and values; and female stage is the phase of self-discovery and search for identity. (qtd in Hawthorn 115)

The feminine phase is the age of imitation; Female writers imitate the male's writing. The feminist phase is the phase of objection. They reject the male's concept and develop their own view. And female phase is more radical. They reject both imitation and protest. In the female phase, woman begins to explore her self. Showalter also coined a new term that is Gynocriticism which means to identify the female images in male's writing. Woman needs to find out her position in the text produced by men. She means that to

collect her self, woman has to identify herself, develop her own image instead of running towards man's dream. She should not go on fulfilling the desires of men rather she should create her own dreams.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* raises the voice against the patriarchal society. She here suggests women not to read the sentimental novels which give false notion of beauty. She comments,

Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings, and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which led them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. (qtd in Adams 398)

The novels, according to Wollstonecraft, give false impression that women should be delicate and beautiful. The novels present female as a weak character whereas male as a brave and active. Such novels give bad impact upon females. Such novels make women sentimental and emotional. Women from such novel learn to marry a brave and prosperous man. They think that their main role is to satisfy the male's desires. Thus, they remain passive and cannot make good decision. They cannot exercise their rationality but are in trapped in the narrow area due to the impact of the novel. Avoiding such novels, women should move ahead.

Naomi Woolf, a post-feminist is attempting to make feminism striking. She views that women are failing to realize their power and their success. She criticizes what she calls "victim feminism" (qtd in Green and LeBihan 257). That means, she criticizes seeing women all the time as a weak, frail, powerless etc. In the books also women are

presented in a very light way. She even argues that “Unless you’re damaged, you cannot be a real feminist or even a real woman” (qtd in Green and LeBihan 257). To be a feminist, one should be victimized too. The real feminists are the ones who had better known the world and the sufferings of woman by their own sight.

Most of the feminists are not negative towards males but hate patriarchal norms and values. Modleski also opines that “we have to avoid the theories of male power that frequently works to efface female subjectivity” (qtd in Green and LeBihan 258). Male theories present a falsified image of the female in their texts. One has to avoid the theories that obstruct female subjectivity.

### **Virginia Woolf’s Idea of the Female**

Virginia Woolf, the twentieth century writer in her *A Room of her Own* (1928), explains the prejudice that literary women have had to face through ages. Woolf is often seen as an influential landmark in terms of female emancipation. She laments on how women are imprisoned within their domestic premises and are obstructed in their creativity. Woolf in her speech (based on the essay entitled “Professions for Women”) in 1931, describes her own experience of writing,

When I came to know her better I called her after the heroine of a famous poem, The Angel in the House. It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her...you may not know what I mean by the Angel in the House. I will describe her as...She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed

herself daily. If there was a chicken, she took the leg: if there was a draught she sat in it-in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. (Woolf 128)

Women are considered as the Angel of the house and they are supposed to be sympathetic, charming, unselfish, sacrificing and pure. The Angel of the house does not write or do anything creative. For her, the Angel of the house should be killed in order to be creative. Woolf notes that women have been kept away from writing because of their poverty, and financial freedom will bring women the freedom to write. Here, her main argument is that the women do not have money and room of their own. She argues that the patriarchal society restricts the women's creativity. She hopes to achieve a balance between male and female. Her wish is that if women are given equal social and economic status then they can freely develop their inner talents. Therefore, women have to develop their separate sector of art and literature to express their emotions.

Woolf's father, Sir Leslie Stephen believed that only boys of the family should be sent to school. Because her father did not believe in investing in the education of his daughters, Woolf was left without the experience of formal schooling. In this essay, she invented a fictional character, Judith, Shakespeare's sister, to illustrate how women are trapped within the doors of the house even though they have the same gifts like that of Shakespeare. Like Woolf, Judith stays at home while William goes off to school.

Shakespeare establishes himself while Judith is trapped by the confines of the expectations of women. She kills herself and her creativity remains unexpressed. Woolf claims that any woman born with a great skill would certainly have gone cracked, shot

herself, or ended her days in some cottage outside the village. If only she had found the means to create, argues Woolf, she would have reached the same heights as her brother. The figure of Judith is generated as an example of the tragic fate of a highly intellectual woman confined within patriarchal walls.

Woolf blames the society for spending less money and room for her. Society is the main obstacle for woman in creating her 'self' for Woolf. She talks about the problems of women who should write by sitting in the common room. She examines the difficulties that female writers and intellectuals face because men hold disproportionate legal and economic power. Women need exercise for their creativity. History has to create space for the woman writer within the patriarchal culture. For her, the freedom of women's mind cannot be locked. Women should write in their own style and form. Woolf focuses on woman development independent of man. Feminism is not only about finding the "room of one's own"; the main purpose of this movement is to create a world free of discrimination and prejudices for the 'self' of the women.

### **Gender Roles and the Female Self**

Traditional women mean those who have acquired the norms and the values created by patriarchy. Traditional gender roles view men as a strong, rational and protective whereas female as weak, irrational and submissive. Aristotle declared that "the female is female by the virtue of certain lack of qualities" (qtd in Selden 134). Aristotle views that women are unable to lead the good life since they could not make their own decisions, nor could they choose an action for its own sake; therefore they were unable to practice the virtues and St Thomas Aquinas believed that "woman is an imperfect man" (qtd in Selden134). Thomas Aquinas asserts that the inferiority of women lies not just in

bodily strength but in force of intellect. He argues that perfection can mean two different things: first, that a being has all the parts and powers it ought to have; and second, that its parts and powers are greater than those of another being. Such gender roles are used to justify biases. It is still prevalent today, for example excluding women in decision making.

In pre-Mendelian days “men regarded their sperm as the active seeds which give form to the waiting ovum which lacks identity till it receive the male’s impress” (qtd in Selden 134). This means that female lacks the identity. It is the male who gives or provides identity to them. For Aristotle, ‘A woman is an ‘unfinished man’. In reproduction woman is passive and receptive whilst man is productive: “for the child inherits only the male characteristics” (qtd in Gardener 116). He views that a child’s characteristics fully depends on male sperm and the woman only gives birth. In his term the man provides the form and the woman adds substance. The mother simply supplies raw material to her offspring.

Most of the Bible's teachings about women are based upon the groundwork laid in Genesis. God created the woman as an "assistant" for man. However, being an ‘assistant’ does not imply that the woman was inferior or meek. God created both men and women in His own image, But Adam and Eve, disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. God gave each of them punishments before ejecting them from the Garden: The punishments on both Adam and Eve were clearly enacted by God Himself; God did not condense women to an inferior status, nor did He command men to rule severely over their wives. However, in the course of history, it has sometimes been thought that God's punishment of Eve was harsher and led to the suppression of women.

In contrast, John Locke, a British empiricist, opined that “the subjugation of women to men was man-made therefore could be altered” (qtd in Gardener 266). One of the best examples where the women are being excluded is found in modern medicine, where the testing of drugs is only on male subjects. Women are not given chance to test the drugs. So, most of the women are victimized by having such drugs. Next, even today, there is a trend to lessen the contribution of female writers. Similarly, an owner can pay fewer wages to woman for performing the same works as a man. Traditionally, women without children are considered as unfulfilled or failure women. Patriarchal ideology restricts women’s creativity if not create obstacles.

Traditionally, women are considered to be feminine by birth and men are by birth masculine. But these categories are developed by society. The gender role constructed in a society is formed in such a way that it makes hierarchy between male and female. So woman are narrowed within private circle and have no approach to public and sociopolitical sphere. In the fairy tales and stories of the past, women are presented as a very coward and weak character. They need a preserver and that role is always played by men. In some fairy tales, women are represented in negative role too like witches, whores, bitches etc. There is also the culture of saying good girl and bad girl in past. Those who obey the patriarchal rules are ‘good girl’ but those who deny the traditional rules are ‘bad girl’. They are also termed as Madonna and whore or bitch.

According to the patriarchal tradition, men marry the simple girls but they sleep with bad girls. Men do not marry the bad girls because they think that such girl does not require or do not deserve better and prestigious life. The woman who satisfies her husband and cares for the family’s prestige is considered as the ‘angel’ of the house. The



woman is not given chance to marry again but man can enjoy that right. The man who sleeps with many women is called a 'stud' and the woman who sleeps with a number of men is called a 'slut'. Hence here too we can find discrimination because men are given the positive word while women are given the negative term.

If Foucault's idea is applied here that the truth depends on who controls the discourse, man controls the woman and discourse. Robin Lakoff believes that "women's language is actually inferior, since it contains patterns of 'weakness' and 'uncertainty', focuses on the 'trivial', the frivolous, the unserious and stresses personal emotional responses" (qtd in Selden 137), but the radical feminists discard it.

### **Identity, Self and Subjectivity**

Subjectivity is the condition of being the quality of possessing perspectives, experiences, feelings, beliefs and desire to a person. It takes place in a person's mind rather than in the external world. It exists only within the experiencer's mind. As a subject is a person, similarly subjectivity refers to how a person's own uniqueness influences his/her perceptions. It means how a person's judgment is shaped by personal opinions and feelings. Subject experiences all the phenomena that makes up and produces subjectivity. Subject, through the passage of time, and our relation to space, constantly generates transformation in terms of our subjective relation to the world. Though the boundaries of societies and their cultures are indefinable and uninformed, the subjectivity inherent in each one can be recognized as distinct from others. Subjectivity is shaped by the economy, political institutions, communities, as well as the natural world. It is a human self, which is positioned in the world and it experiences itself and its world. It is the possession of the sense of identity, sense of oneself and sense of being.

Identity is at the center of life. It is the entry in the manners of society. Each person has opportunity to create his or her identity. Popular person have their own unique identity to be identifiable. It is also said that people create their own identity which determines their position. Identity may be defined as the distinctive characteristic belonging to any given individual. Identity may be formed through one's biographical experiences, values and beliefs.

“Being” means a state of existence or having life or consciousness. Existence of a person is never fixed and determinate. It is rather always shifting. It is the way of existing in certain time and space in relation to other beings. The core of being is the self, where all the mental and moral attributes belong. The person's self is one's normal and individual state of body or mind, not influenced by others. A human being is a biological organism of flesh and blood. He/she has to acquire certain things in order to be something. A person acquires languages, skills and many more. A person embodies the structure of things, events, rights and obligations. The self of the person is identified in relation to the others. The being is known in relation to the totality of beings. Without other beings, the self is not known. Identity thus is the process of how we describe ourselves, and how one gives to oneself, or in general, human beings give to us. Formation of identity is within a social unit.

One of the popular sayings is ‘knowing yourself ‘as the beginning of all wisdom, which means, to gain wisdom we must endeavor to know more than just the physical beings, One should learn to live as the spiritual and mental beings as well. Present man has achieved quite a lot. One lives in a world today where technology allows us to

discover about anything. Out of all that we have learned, there is another journey that waits for which is the expedition of the self.

Many people accomplish what they or others considered to be miracles in their own lives. For example, a shy girl who could hardly talk to anyone becomes confident, outgoing and self-assured, a person afraid of living alone can love being alone. Self-exploration hence means solving the inner mystery and searching for inner beasts. One feels fear finding one's inner beasts. The philosophy of self describes essential qualities that constitute a person's uniqueness or essential being. The 'self' can be considered that being which is the source of consciousness; the agent responsible for an individual's thoughts and actions. The self is not static and finite. The psychology of 'self' is the study of either the cognitive and affective representation of one's identity. Self-support is necessary to acquire our 'self'. It is the ability to maintain oneself without dependency on others.

For Socrates, the goal of philosophy was to 'know thyself' which means giving yourself the opportunity to check yourself and learn your personal strengths and what you are good at in life, but also learning and recognizing what your flaws and short-comings are. To understand one's 'self' is to understand other humans as well. The most important thing is that one needs to know about oneself. What one wants determines what one does with life. The distress is that one never seems to know sufficiently what exactly one wants, which is what gives growth to repentances. Therefore, knowing oneself is all about finding out what one really wants in life. Personal identity is the individual characteristics arising from personality by which a person is known.

David Hume, an empiricist, states that man has two kinds of perceptions and they are ideas and impressions. He visions “that there is no ‘I’ or unalterable ego. He believes that there is no innate and underlying personal identity ‘I’. He says, “There is no I or unalterable ego” (qtd in Gardener 273). ‘I’ is the construct of our experiences. Like Buddha, he opines that that there is nothing which is mine. Thus, everything changes in course of time. Personal identity does not exist, in the same way, as other usual objects, and in a sense, could be said not to exist at all. He defines the identity of a person as nothing more than the totality of that person’s perceptions; this package makes up the identity of that person. We never can say our self at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. They are in a perpetual flux and movement.

Richard Rorty in the *Contingency of Selfhood* believes that “fear of extinction is an unhelpful phrase. There is no such thing as fear of inexistence as such” (168). There is not a single truth, certainty and human self. For him, human self is changeable and susceptible. It is changeable in course of time. Rorty asserts that human self is not the product of necessity but of contingency. He averts that the human self is subjugated to spatio-temporal location. It means self is always fluctuating and becoming. He means there is no single truth, self and reality rather they are always fleeting. Human beings go on inventing the self.

Freud similarly exposed the separated personality of human beings. For him, the human being is controlled by id, ego and superego. He argues that the human ‘self’ is privately guided by the pleasure principle, fantasy and irrational impulses. For him, human self is not lucid, smooth and coherent. He equals human being as the sinner

whereas public self is dominated by conscious and reality principle. He differentiates between public and private self of human beings. He views that desire may be something bad that the society may not accept so such desires can be repressed. Superego, the moral principle controls id. So there is a conflict between id and superego. And that eventually is balanced by 'ego'. He means to say that human beings are actually guided by id but they fear society's rules. Therefore, they try to suppress their desires in order to be well acceptable in the society.

From the above feminists, Security can only be obtained through their identity in society, quest for upgrading our material prosperity, work without fear and with satisfaction, using talents without others interference and be independent. In order to have a secure life, image should be created in society. Most feminists have said that earning money is best way to survive, which is also applied in the novel. It is true that without money women are lacking behind. Even the female writers are lacking behind due to lack of money given to them to create their space. To work with satisfaction means that the work one does, must give pleasure otherwise the work cannot be enjoyed. The talents which are hidden within them should be brought to create their identity. In a forced environment, no one can upgrade one's talents. One should have thoughts, or goals in life.

### **Picaresque: a Genre of Novel**

Picaresque novel is a popular subgenre of prose fiction originating in Spain which is sometimes satirical, realistic and often humorous. Unlike the idealistic knight hero, the pizaro is a cynical and amoral roguish hero of low social class who live by his wits than by honorable work in a corrupt society. The pizaro wanders and has adventures among

people from all social classes and professions, often escaping punishment for his own lying, cheating, and stealing. The hero is a casteless outsider who feels inwardly uncontrolled by prevailing social codes and morals, and he adapts them outwardly only when it serves his own ends. A picaresque narrative is usually written in first person as an autobiographical account. The main character is often of low character or social class. There is no plot. The story is told in a series of loosely connected adventures or episodes. His/ her circumstances may change but rarely the result in a change of heart. The picaresque story is told with a plainness of language or realism. Satire might sometimes be a prominent element. The behavior of a picaresque hero or heroine turns to be criminal.

The picaresque novels present the hero as adventurous, challenging and bold from negative way too. The hero sometime does not look like a hero but he/she is doing those adventurous jobs for the positive purpose. Satire and realism are the basic elements of such novels. The characters are in the real situations, they suffer, struggle and also make their identity as the hero. The hero negative jobs also use for proving their heroism.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Moll and her Secured Life

#### *Moll Flanders* as a Picaresque Novel

Usually written in a first-person narrative, relating the adventures of a rogue or low-born adventurer Moll drifts from place to place and from one social milieu to another in her effort to survive. It is about the life and times of a young woman with an unconquerable spirit. She is a woman who is compelled, from earliest childhood; to make her own way of living in 17th-century England. It relates the shady details of her everyday experiences in autobiographical form. It is told from her perspective; all her adventures seem too realistic and believable. Her drive is unavoidable quest for security in complex commercial society. Born in Newgate, left with no resources but her needle, she constantly seeks enough wealth or a wealthy enough husband to free herself from the threat of poverty and the temptations of crime.

*Moll Flanders* is a historical novel which provides an accurate look into eighteenth century Europe through the criminal life and prostitution of Moll. It reflects the economic lifestyles of society in the eighteenth century. She could be a criminal who commits crimes as a way of survival. She becomes skilled in theft, she slips away easily into prostitution as a way to make money. As a child, she is content to doing what anyone tells her to do and feels blessed just to be living in the parsonage. As a wife and mother, she starts to become needier and expects her husband to help her financially and socially, as well as emotionally.

The novel is a picaresque novel in a sense that it is told by Moll herself of her own life in an honest straight forward terms. The information we get about the book's plot,

characters and ideas comes from that one person Moll. All her adventures seem too realistic and believable. She is a carefree character who roams here and there surviving by her wits. She does not care about her immoral activities. Circumstances and situations are changing but she never changes. She changes only when she is caught.

### **Role of Money**

Moll's story concerns with the practical needs and obstacles faced by women with no social stability or financial security. Christine Delphy also assumes that a woman needs money and a good status to form social security. Moll begins life with a great effort. For her, the security is money. She thinks if she earns more money, then she feels secure. Therefore, she learns the difference between materialism and morality. She knows that she has to survive anyway. In order to survive and be the part of the society, she never realizes her follies. She faces a lot of problems, which are firmly rooted in the contemporary society.

Moll is a very demanding woman. She wants the best life and that lead her to a life of crime. She turns as the worshipper of wealth, success and power. She chooses a life full of luxury, and lust or just lives a normal life with someone who really cares for her. She could earn a living from sewing but she wants to do more than earning to live. She is anxious to climb the social ladder. Crime is the only way in which she can obtain wealth and thus a degree of respectability and supremacy. She ignores marital vows to secure her economic status.

Moll is one sided because all her concerns are on economics. Being a poor woman, she demands something more from life. Poor women could hardly make an honest living because there was almost nothing they could do, that's why stealing and



prostitution were the occupations open for women in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. She wants a respectable life, and her respectable life only can be secured from money. She is a woman whose principles are grounded on materialism. She says her art of robbery in a very simple way as “I took this opportunity to search him to a Nicety: I took a Periwig, and silver fringed Gloves, his Sword, and fine Snuff-box” (220). She wants to be a gentlewoman, but she does not have any means to be, so she decides to marry for money and live a life of crime. She is always aware of the value of her personal possessions and conscious of how to exploit and use her husband to the best advantage. She believes that all matters in life are directed towards the achievement of wealth. She is willing to do anything to be a part of the elite society of England.

Moll sees her actions as devil’s work, but she cannot stop from thieving. For example, as she says, “I was young in the business, and did not know how to manage, otherwise than as devil put things into my head; and indeed he was seldom backward to me.”(189). This statement proves that, for Moll the devil which is in her heart has power on her. It was not her hand but the devil instructs her on doing so. She constantly seeks a new wealthy enough husband to free herself from the hazard of poverty and the lures of crime. She carefully prepares and dresses so well that people would get a very good impression of her, that’s why she’s so successful. Even though materialism for her is so important she constantly seeks it for moral purposes. She has an ambition and she does everything for the sake of that ambition. Greed drives her until she becomes the richest thief in London.

Moll’s marriages to the men were also only for money, but not for love. She offers herself to the wealthy men to obtain money and security. Her marriage to the draper

enables her to achieve a degree of bourgeois status but of course this is short lived and she finds that in her social situation, capitalist values favor men. In this regard, she says that “marriages were here the consequences of politick Schemes for forming interests, and carrying on business, and that love had no share or but very little in the matter” (61). It means that love has not any special value; rather the important fact is money. Moll learns this lesson early and it is the guiding force for her throughout the rest of her life. The legal identity of unmarried women under 21 was subsumed into that of the father; when a woman married, her legal identity was entrusted to her husband. Only a widow had the legal identity of her husband. This is why, she stresses her status as respectable widow- it means she has certain rights and the legal ability to trade. However, as she finds out, she still can't compete on an equal stability with men because she has to rely on male bankers.

There were successful women traders in the eighteenth century but society made it very difficult for them - capitalism was essentially a masculine dream. Moll turns to a different market and trades herself, initially by marrying for money and ultimately in prostitution. This can be seen in the line, "I told him I must Housewife the money he had lent me or else should not able to pay him again. He told me, he had not lent me money but given to me and he thought I had merited it from him by giving him my company as entirely as I had done" (106). This means she gives her time and body to obtain the money. Men also offer her money for spending time with her.

In conclusion, Moll is the victim of her circumstances, of the society. If she chooses an honest work like being a good wife and mother from the beginning, maybe everything would have been different. Her life is full of errors and mistakes. She never

really thinks that she is degrading her life herself instead she often uses senseless excuses. Her morality is based on what she has and what she needs. Her religion and morality are essentially emotional. Her life is full of surprises; it is a journey of self-discovery where she learns that a life of crime never leads to a complete state of happiness in one's life. She does receive economic freedom and liberation from prison at the end, but the fact that she continues to believe that wealth holds the key to her freedom proves that she never completely frees herself from the capitalistic principles.

### **Moll's Existence**

The novel recounts the voyage of a lusty and strong-willed woman who is compelled, from the earliest childhood to make her own way. An eighteenth century novel relating the life and survival of a strong-willed Moll, a woman who, abandoned as an infant, finds her way to self-sufficiency, in a world then dominated by men. She is intelligent and inventive for securing her own survival in order to exist in the situation. She goes on ruining herself. She becomes vulnerable to the seductions of men who flatter her with material goods she desires. She wants to get rid of the feeling of existential loneliness deep-rooted in her childhood, and carries this anxiety well into her adulthood. She wants to create her own root by earning her own living.

Various misfortunes and calamities lead her through marriages, whoredom, and thievery as Moll attempts to find her place in the world. She learns the lessons that will support her on her voyage, through the value of money, quick-wittedness, and a sense of her own sexuality. She also shows her sexual power in various steps. While lying in bed with her fourth husband she says, "The governance of our virtue was broken, and I exchanged the place of friend for that un-musical harsh sounding Title of Whore" (110).

This means that she violates the relation of friend and has sex with the man whom she called friend. To exist in her own, she uses her body. Moll's sexuality traps many men with her.

Defoe digs deeply into issues of feminine powerlessness before the law, the difficulties of securing stable occupation, and various reproductive issues such as adoption, abortion, yet he maintains a consistent character of Moll as an extremely strong, adaptive, and tough female character. Even in her trial she has collected spirits on her as she says, "I expected, and had more courage for my trial, than indeed I thought" (279). Moll's courage is very strong in the novel. She even in the mouth of death has collected the spirits and took it lightly. Though her struggles are not legal but we have to praise her for her endurance.

The most fascinating side of Moll throughout is her own sense of dignity and importance, especially in her own past. Her search for job, worthy man, and money is frequently shown in the novel. She is a woman of inspiration for those who only get confined within household works. Her main motive is to get money and for that she can do anything her life takes. She disobeys the society's rules which are fixed for the then women. She thinks that she has to survive even though the world is not certain. She often moves from one place to another (like Bath, Virginia, London, Lancashire etc.), leaving her children in care of nurses, hiding her real identity (who actually is a whore and thief) and finally fighting to be released from jail are some of the struggles she did to prove her existence.

Moll really loved the elder brother of the house but she was rejected by him and he wants her to marry his younger brother whom she did not love. The conversation of Moll to the elder brother proves her true love for him as,

Can you transfer my affection? Can you bid me cease loving you, and bid me love him? Is it in my power to think you make such a change at demand? No sir said I, depend upon it tis impossible and whatever change of your side may be, I will ever be true; and had much rather, since it is come that unhappy length, be your whore than your brother's wife. (33)

Her love for the man is pure and from heart but she is not loved by that man whole heartedly. She actually wants to be his whore rather than marrying his brother. It shows her deep and true love. The adolescent is bewildered, passive object in the center of family dispute; her position is sooner established as the elder brother's mistress. So, she from that time never believes in love and marriages. After her first heart break, she is totally aware of that society but she feels that she has to do something in order to move her life forward. Without any firm relations and marriages however Moll manages to live her life.

### **Moll's Personality**

Moll's most prominent characteristics are her cleverness, vigor, and willpower to survive. She is a trickster. She is willing to sacrifice moral values in order to succeed. She is ruining her morality to become a gentlewoman. It is only to obtain money. She transcends the moral values which are shaped for women in eighteenth the century England like coyness, straight forwardness, etc. She is so clever that she even dresses like a man to rob with the help of her governess as "she laid a new contrivance for my going

abroad, and this was to dress me up in Men cloths and so put me into a new kind of practice” (209). She goes on doing everything to inaugurate her identity. Moll’s development of a personality unfolds in two main phases. In the first phase, she becomes sophisticated in the ways of the world and her eagerness leads her life into the life of vice. The later phase shows her as a penitent Moll, reformed of her wickedness.

She is an excellent actress, and can take on different characters as easily as changing her clothes. Although she marries for money several times, she is capable of deep affection, and devotes a great deal of time, money, and effort in saving her Lancashire husband. Her affection for her children is not terribly strong; however, there are some thing she refuses to do, such as having abortions or being a street walker. She is a very alert woman and never reveals more about herself than necessary. She develops the knowledge, and the safety needed for the quiet and settled life, she has always sought and assumes the role of a gentlewoman. She finds security in her own independence and self-sufficiency.

Moll is a good looking woman. She is a bit arrogant about beauty. She feels proud of her beauty since childhood as she says, “I was now 10 years old, and began to look a little Womanish, for I was mighty grave and humble; and very mannerly and as I had often heard the ladies say I was pretty, and would be a very handsome woman” (8). The power of woman is beauty. And Moll possesses that power. She can flatter a man with her beauty. She is a polygamist. She likes to be involved with the men.

For her, if marriage does not work, then another option is to become a mistress and if all these fail, become a prostitute. She needs money to explore the self, so by involving into prostitution she earns money. Next, she is a criminal. She loves her job,

her art of robbery and says herself as famous thief as “I had made my name as famous as any thief of my sort ever had been at Newgate and in the Old-Bayly” (257). When every hope turns to be dark, she turns to be criminal. She is not bad by birth. It is that she is a woman caught in a society in which women can’t really help themselves. Stealing is one of the very few ways she can hang on to what she has left. Her greed is the main focus of the novel. She has an all-consuming desire to become a gentlewoman but it is impossible for her because of class division. In this sense, her desire throughout her life leads her into one or other misadventures. She often severs her primal bonds with children in order to meet her greed for money.

As the woman’s problem is a serious problem in the novel, Moll as the main character is highlighted. The heroine contrasts with the perception of the female roles of the period. She has unusual characteristics, her rebelliousness, unconventional feminine roles and mores set her apart from the women of her time. She thinks that she can do everything, and has belief in her capacity. This is shown in the statement of Moll as, “First, I was apparently handsomer than any of them. Secondly, I was better shaped and Thirdly, I sung better by which I mean, I had a better voice” (12). She wants to be and do better and she chooses her own way without concerning the so called female’s role.

For her, the rule is to be broken but not to be followed, so, she time and again tries to abolish the female values. The rules and myths which are created for female should be broken and new rules are to be made. Similarly, She here breaks these rules which set females far from their ‘self’. She actively chooses her dependency using men as tools to strengthen her opportunities. She disapproves men’s stereotype in patriarchal culture. She wants to be gentlewoman, not a slave. Determined and adjustable, she dominates every

situation. She depends on men for security, but no more than necessity. She actively chooses her dependency, using men as tools, to further her opportunities for self-reliance.

Men give promises to provide economic security and genuine affection for Moll but they give her only repression. For example, the elder brother Robert forces his body upon her, his flattery and declaration of love traps her. As she said, "I was not myself; to have such gentleman talk to me of being love with me, and of being such a charming creature as he told me I was" (16). Moll had never been fortunate to have economic and emotional security of a male. So, she leaps at the opportunity provided by Robert. She adds,

He held me fast, and kissed me, till he was almost out of breath, and sitting down, says, dear Betty I am in Love with you. His words I must confess fired my blood; all my spirits flew about my heart, and put me into disorder enough, which he might easily have seen in my face: He repeated it afterwards several times. (15)

Moll, being a simple teenage girl has no power to say No to him. Robert's flattery overcast her sense of motive and encourages her boiling desire to fill her purse. Robert offers her money in exchange for sexual intercourse. For example, "We had not sat long, but he got up, and stopping my very breath with kisses, threw me upon the bed again" (18). Robert distorts Moll's perception of love. She confuses between emotional and physical love. It is also agreeable that her vanity is the main cause. Her simplicity, confusion and need for economic security play a significant role in her immoral behavior. Like in the Eden garden Eve is flattered by the offering of the serpent, she is being flattered by the Robert's so called love. Defoe indicates that she is hurt because she fails



to safeguard herself from the mischiefs of men's aims. Her failure to resist the elder brother causes her to lose an opportunity of becoming a gentlewoman. Next, the Irishman thinks that she has money so he tries to impress her. Later she figures it out and it becomes a disaster for both of them.

Moll struggles against the confines of femininity and does not rest up until she was able to create a space for her. Most women of her time although believed that the women could be gentlewomen only through marriage and through men. She tries to transcend female dependence on men. Her definition of a gentlewoman is "I understood by being gentlewoman, was to be able to work for myself" (7). In each her marriage ends, she experiences fear and panic of poverty and destruction. So she turns to be a thief and continues to hold on to it. It is only as a thief; she discovers her 'self' and finds security in her own independence. She does not find any security in her role as a mother and wife. She finally stands on her own feet, persisting without any support from man and marriage again. She develops stealing into as an art form. At last, she becomes a dominant figure and demonstrates autonomy and control, her and her husband's fate.

At the end of the novel, she took the role of husband, the masculine, the leader, the seeker. She lastly accepts her fourth husband Jemmy and becomes the producer of wealth and security. Lastly, she gets the safety needed for her that she had always wished for. She assumes the role of a gentlewoman. As a gentlewoman she has authority or power over money. It is money which provides her empowerment. She achieved the appropriation of man's power and earned the title of gentlewoman. So, this woman is a female hero with her own 'self' being a different 'being'.

Viewing the novel deeply it seems to be that Moll is a radical feminist. For a radical feminist, patriarchy is the system of power which organizes the society into a complex relationship showing male's sovereignty. The novel presents a strong and intelligent female protagonist, portraying the female heroine as a rational being facing the obstacles of an imbalanced society. She deconstructs the role of a female which was established for the females of that period. Shyness, tolerance, understanding are the weapons of the female but she breaks such ornaments of the females. In other words, she overthrows the patriarchy by opposing the conventional gender roles. She cries over her dismal circumstances but she never attempts to commit suicide. She even did not have a least hope and any help from anyone in some cases but she cannot imagine of dying.

### **Being and Becoming in *Moll Flanders***

Being is the existence of the living beings, whereas becoming means the process to be something. Every living being exists in his/her own way but the main focus is how he/she exists, what is his/her progress in the life. Human beings are thrown in the world for no definite reason; it is ourselves who have to create meaning with the things in it. Women have to secure their future. Social position and wealth are dominant factors for survival but Moll has neither of them and her life is a struggle to achieve them. She lies because of the lack of funds. She gives money priority because of her mother who left her in a poor condition as she says "Had this been the custom in our country, I had not been left poor desolate girl without friends, without cloths, without help or helper in the world, as was my fate and by which, I was not only exposed to very great distress" (1). She blames her mother and the circumstances for being irresponsible for her. If she

had anyone to guide her, her life could be different. She believes that because of lack of friends and family she had little support which sent her to a path of prostitution and theft.

If a man who could live with her long, not run away, or not make bad business decisions, she might never have fallen into a life of wickedness. So, she looks up to the people who have money and strives to become a gentlewoman. The irony is that she blames her mother but she does the same herself. She sets her child up for failure just as her mother had done to her. She also like her mother does not take care of her children rather handed her children to others. Without no-one to care and growing alone with struggles makes her self dependent and self-reliance.

Moll is the character in the novel who is suffering a lot on her way. She is a dramatic human character that in this difficult world did what she needed to do to survive. In order to survive, she faces a number of sorrows and difficulties. She struggles for a piece of bread. In each and every marriage she finds herself unlucky. It is also true that she cries, blames her fate and circumstances many times but she does not give up her living. She is considered as a hero in this case, who tries to find a flower in a thorny environment. Her greediness in becoming something can be seen in one scene that is when she was called by her fifth husband in London to marry him; there she leaves her child in the care of a nurse and moves to secure her life forward. She becomes mistress, wife, thief, and prostitute in her voyage for exploring her self and making her life. Each time she feels hardships and that obstacle teaches her to handle herself, and to minimize her dependence on others.

Moll needs good luck and good moral actions in order to survive in the eighteenth century England. She cannot survive only on good looks. She wants to live as a

gentlewoman, but she needs money to have a wealthy husband. For example, "If a young woman have beauty, birth, breeding wit, sense, manners, modesty, and all these to an extreme :yet if she have not money, She's nobody, she had as good want them all, for nothing but money now recommends a woman: the men play the game all into their own hands" (14). Thus, woman must have money to marry also. A woman's opportunity for marrying was greatly dependent upon how much wealth she could bring to her marriage. Moll, time and again, wants to collect money for marriage. Money is the thing that makes woman agreeable to a man. So, she loses out from bad decisions and bad lucks. She allows her vanity to weaken. She sleeps with the elder brother for his promise of money.

The quest of social mobility is a major theme in the novel. Moll is born in a low social status; she tries to find different means of becoming part of the upper class society. Her marriage to different men is to switch social classes but none of the marriages are successful in advancing her to the upper class. At last, she resorts to stealing to become wealthy and find herself in the upper class. She is clever and preserving, always alert to opportunity and survives and becomes rich although after a life of fraught with difficulty.

### **Moll's Repentance, Revolution and Acceptance**

Moll is penitent for her past doings. But her repentance is very doubtful in the novel. Her repentance seems unsure. She only seems to repent when faced with extremes. For example, when she is in the trial for her robbery she says, "I was now that for the first time I felt any signs of repentance; I now began to look back upon my past life with abhorrence and having a kind of view into another side of time" (281). She tells this is the first time; she is repenting and begins to look at her past deeds. A person should be penitent of his/her follies so that one can move ahead. Moll believes that she has fully

repented for all sins from her past life. She confesses more than once that and though she does make attempts of repentance, they are not carried with a whole heart as,

Then I repented heartily of all my life past but that repentance yielded me no satisfaction, no peace, no not in the least, because, as I said to myself, it was repenting after the power of further sinning was taken away: I seemed not to mourn that I had committed such crimes, and for fact, as it was an Offence against God and my Neighbor. (268)

She does not feel a shamed of her offenses, but feels shame because she has been caught. Moll from the first episodes speaks of repentance. She at last separates herself from the life of crime, just as her mother did. At last, after being caught, she was remorseful. She tries to make it appear that she is a changed woman when she sees Jemmy, her Lancashire husband. Her repenting in the face of death and her repenting after being financially secure can be seen in the novel.

It was only when the Enlightenment came that and people began to conceive of human beings as a private individuals, with liberty to think. Then people begin to think for themselves and to express their ideas. It means power came in their hand. The eighteenth century novel *Moll Flanders* also projects the feature of Enlightenment. The main character Moll uses her power being indifferent towards the society where she lives, abolishing the so called female's values and succeeds at last.

The whole book is told by an old Moll looking back on her life. The novel is about female self, a revolutionary female who revolts against society in every step. The main character is revolting in this novel. Actually her needs are extraordinary. She wants to raise her economic status anyhow. Being a good wife, lover and mother does not give her

satisfaction rather creates obstruction in her life, so she tries to revolt and form a new life in a different way. Forming life in a totally new way is also exploring the herself. She used her body and mind to get what she wants. Her way of revolt is in the form of stealing and having sex.

Moll is a funny and witty character. Her young beauty helps her to attract men but ends up only hurting her because men use her as a prostitute. She wants to find a man with money but finds only deceitful men. Her revolt is against the circumstances and society which places woman in difficult situation. Her revolt is against the marriage which always traps women. Her revolt is against the men who flatter the women but in reality they themselves are cowardly people. Only by being different towards them (men, society, marriage and circumstances) she achieves security at last. Her art of thievery helps her to achieve her dreams and the title of a gentlewoman.

Moll has courage to accept any situation like when she knows that she is in relationship with her own brother and she says to her brother as “I’m your sister and you own Brother, and that we are both children of our mother now alive” (97). Courage and acceptance is very necessary. She accepts the reality and tells her brother the fact of them being in an incestuous relation. She contributes to her transformation as a rebellious female in the society as can be seen when she frees herself from the burdensome incestuous family. The law that places husbands in control of their wives forces her to leave her husband. She later learns that marriage reduces her and leads to further oppression.

Moll emerging into man-dominated, materialistic society as an orphan from the lowest social class courageously rebels against her birth and eventually manages to achieve the self-designated identity of a gentlewoman.

### **Moll's Changing Subject**

Moll is the subject and her identity changes in course of time. Her attempts at creating identity gradually rise and decrease. At the beginning, she was a sober and innocent girl who even does not know what actually a gentlewoman means. For her, the gentlewoman means someone able to work for herself, to be rich and great. Her idea of gentlewoman goes on changing as, she says, "I did not understand anything of that: but I answered, I am sure they call her Madam, and she does not go to Service nor do House-work, and therefore I insisted that she was a Gentlewoman, and I would be such a Gentlewoman as that" (7). Later, she views the gentlewoman does not go to service and does the household work. She feels proud when Mr. Mayor's daughters call her little gentlewoman.

After the death of the good old nurse, Moll again was in a bad condition with no one to take care of her. At that condition, she feels, "I knew not what to do, for I was, as it were turned out of doors to the wide world and which was still worse" (10). Her identity thus changes from little gentlewoman to poor gentlewoman. Her fate again catches up as she was sent to a house of a generous Mistress where she was willing to be a servant. There she learned to speak French and learned to sing and dance by imitating the other ladies.

By having advantage of education, she thinks herself as a gentlewoman. Her identity is that she is the part of the family. She is identified as 'Mrs. Betty' there in the

family. She was too simple when she entered in that family. She says, “I had the character too of a very sober, modest, and virtuous young woman, and such I had always been: neither had I yet any occasion to think of anything else, or know what temptation to Wickedness meant” (13). She views that she is a girl of good character but her vanity is the cause of her ruin. There she is loved by two sons, where she had relationship with one brother and marries the next. Her identity once becomes that of a whore of one brother and the wife of the next. After five years of her marriage, her identity changes. She becomes a widow of the younger brother.

She seeks material prosperity to get unique identity and for that she marries a tradesman. She gains the title of a gentlewoman with him but after some years, that identity goes away from her. Circumstances block her way of being a gentlewoman when she marries a man from Virginia as he turns to be her own brother. Her identity turns to be that of ‘kept woman’ in Bath, and she had three children without marriage. Now, her role changes, she turns to be a deceiver. She cheated a man of having money which she did not possess.

Moll later marries a banker in order to upgrade her identity as a gentlewoman but that also does not last long. She becomes desperate and moves to be a thief. Her identity gradually develops as a master of thievery. She was an exceptionally successful thief because of the precautions she took. She never revealed more about herself than absolutely necessary, protecting herself from incriminating witnesses. She was given the name ‘Moll Flanders’ when she came into the Newgate prison after being caught. To achieve the title of a gentlewoman, she did a lot of mischiefs and succeeded at last. All she deed was to have her own identity.



To get that title was not easy for her, but because of her hard labor, and willing to be something, she achieved her dream. She has to move from one place to another, lie about her past deeds and activities, had to escape from being caught off, while searching her identity. Without parents and without any firm identity, she however manages to secure her own identity. One can get her identity only after we hear her entire story. Defoe by not defining his main female character plainly, he was showing how much a female in those times really was a product of her environment and circumstance. Might be Defoe ultimately wants to delay revealing Moll's identity until one gets a full description of her lifestyle. Only then can the reader define who she truly is.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Moll's Shift to Subject

Defoe's *Moll Flanders* deliberately foregrounds the problems faced by the female. It is about a woman that not only tells on hard times but is a strong self-asserted woman that uses any possible tricks to survive. To survive she has to define one's existence first. Daring to survive in the difficult situation shows that Moll wants to live anyhow. She is in between good and bad aspects of society. In order to choose good aspects, she comes to move towards the bad aspects. She is not bad from the beginning. She gradually changes her behavior. Every person goes through transformations. A person tries to meet basic needs but when one cannot get what one wants, one has to deal with unpleasant situations in life. One may be attacked by negative thoughts and want to do that. Similarly, she in course of time deals with losses of money, relationships and proper health. So it is not shocking news that she changes.

Moll's journey of life starts with sorrows. She is raised by a good foster mother. She has no home of her own, neither her mother. She is sober and virtuous when first entering the Colchester family but becomes cynical towards love and cognizant of the importance of money after the elder brother's seduction. She has to marry the younger brother of the house. He provides her with normal family life for which she has no love. Her unwillingness to marry the man whom she does not love leads to a great tragedy. The man dies and she has to abandon her child and move to a continent. This proves that the forced relation does not make a good ending. She regards marriage as a guarantee for secure life. A woman always wants a protecting husband who can provide her love, happiness, security and money. So, she marries a tradesman but unfortunately he

becomes bankrupt and leaves her. His financial indiscretions sink them into poverty. She is deprived of happy a family life with him too. Her seeking of happiness and identity halt here also.

After that, she marries her own brother without knowing his reality. Circumstances play a vital role here. They are in relationship without knowing their birth and were totally ignorant about the fact. They unknowingly engaged in an incestuous relationship. Circumstances mocked at them. It is also said that the things that is to happen, will happen anyhow and there is no control over them. While several of her marriages are tragic or unfortunate due to circumstances.

After this hopelessness and disastrous situation, Moll wants changes. She has lost all the expectation upon which she had always hoped. She is inclined to seek economic security. She scorns at any sincerity of love. Upto now, she is actually depending on man, following patriarchal norms but later she wants to reform her own self by not depending on others and rather searching her own hidden talents. After the third marriage to her own brother, she realizes that depending on others does not give her any satisfaction rather it traps her in her journey. So, she goes on searching her capacities. She takes advantage of her beauty and begins attracting man that is, she turns to be a whore. From the job of prostitution she earns money to keep herself alive. She unshamededly offers herself to wealthy men to obtain money and security. She avoids a poor marriage.

The fourth husband also commits to his wife leaving Moll in a desperate situation. This proves that men want a beautiful woman as a mistress but when they are in difficult situation, they run towards their own wives. Later, she is not satisfied with her job Earning little amount and filling her belly was not sufficient for her. She wants to

preserve money so turns to thievery. The root cause behind her turning towards robbery is also due to society and men. Society cannot provide her any better job and men cannot fulfill their vows of protecting their wives from miseries. Men themselves are creating problems. Men here are shown as cowards. They are afraid of accepting the situations. When a man cannot provide a woman with economic security, love and happiness, she has to make herself by earning. Similar is the case of Moll. She roams from one place to another and survives by her wits.

Moll transcends each and every limit to make money. She wants to prove herself as a gentlewoman by earning a lot of money so, she does not care whoever she has robbed, whether that is a little kid or a poor person. Earning and making money is finding the security.

Moll at last succeeds in transforming herself as a gentlewoman. It is also true that though the path she chooses is not good but her hard labor, courage, activeness, cleverness are worth praising. She can tackle each and every difficulty that no man in the novel can do. There are various examples of that. In the last episode, Jemmy has dropped his hope of being released from the prison but it is she, who never loses any hope. She later accepts him and provides him financial security which is the role of man in patriarchy. The traditional norms say that a man should work outside and the woman should stay inside the house and look after the children. That is not applied over here, rather, it is quite the opposite. Next, the elder brother is afraid to let others know he has been keeping her as mistress. She becomes his mistress understanding that he intends to marry her when he comes into his inheritance. He scares of letting others know about their relationship. He does not have the courage to accept the truth. Rather he submits his

love to his brother Robin. This proves that he can give his love to others but cannot face the truth.

At Virginia, when Moll knew that she is in incestuous relationship with her brother, she anyhow dares to fight against circumstances. She thinks that if she buries the reality, she will become a prisoner of her own emotions and will be psychologically ill if she remains with him. She tries to hide it with her so called brother-husband, because she knows that her brother does not have bravery to accept the fact. He cannot tolerate the fact when he hears it. A man of Bath enjoys having sex relation with her. He is considered the most coward because he comes closer to her, when his wife becomes insane. But when he feels the need of his wife, he later re-united with her.

Defoe being a male unfolding the woman's plight in a first person female narration is a challenge for him. Defoe presents a headstrong, independent woman while challenging inequalities of the patriarchal system. A woman must need courage to live alone, to face challenges and situations, to prove herself. The novel presents a daring female character who can cross the limits. Moll has masculine characteristics like boldness, cleverness, bravery, etc.

She finds the security of her own at last. Earning money of her own, having power to rule others (at last she controls the plantation and her husband Jemmy), reaching in the middle class and becoming a gentlewoman, achieving the means to survive ultimately escort Moll to find security.

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