

A Modern World Fairytale

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ABSTRACT

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With the wake of feminism and post modernism the mental horizon of people expanded and they started looking at things from a new perspective. With this result, in the contemporary scenario “Linda Woolverton” took the challenge of presenting one of the most popular fairytales of all times-Sleeping Beauty with amendments through a psychoanalytic and feministic approach, giving it a more concrete, stable and factual purpose. The researcher has tried to focus on the old classical fairytale and its two adaptations that represent two different aspects and patterns of characterization.

The purpose of the paper is twofold. The first part deals with the classical concept and variation in its adaptation and the second part focuses on the 2014 adaptation, Maleficent, which is more realistic with its psychoanalytic and feministic approach, on the basis of human emotions like love, hatred, sympathy, greed, etc.

Key Words : fairytale, adaptation, feminism, characterization, Sleeping Beauty.

Introduction:

Fairytale- a world of magic, whimsy and optimism.

Sleeping beauty by Brothers Grimm is a classic fairytale written by Charles Perrault and Brothers Grimm, which involves a beautiful princess, a sleeping enchantment, and a handsome prince. The version collected by the Brothers Grimm was an orally transmitted version of the original literary tale published by Charles Perrault in histories ou contes du temps passé in 1697. The last animated feature from Disney was based upon their edition. First released on January 29, 1959 “Sleeping Beauty” was an animated feature in the Disney animated canon. While, Maleficent is a 2014 American epic dark fantasy film directed by Robert Stomberg. Loosely based on Charles Perrault’s original fairytale, the film is a re-imagined presentation of Walt Disney’s 1959 animated film, Sleeping Beauty, portraying the story from the point of view of the film’s antagonist, Maleficent.

The outset:

In *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) and the Brothers Grimm book, King Stefan and his queen, directly welcome their newly born daughter, Aurora. Unlike its 2014 adaptation, where Maleficent is a powerful fairy, living in the Moors- a magical forest realm bordering a corrupt human kingdom. As a young girl, she meets and falls in love with a human peasant boy named Stefan, who backstabs her for the greed of power.

Why Aurora was cursed?

In Brother Grimm's book, King Stefan has thirteen wise women in his kingdom, but he invites just twelve. Thus, the thirteenth wise woman curses the child out of anger, burning in revenge. It was the twelfth wise woman who later bestowed her gift and softened the curse. Similarly, in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), Maleficent puts a curse on the child just because she didn't get a proper invite to the christening. The plot takes a curvy slope in *Maleficent* (movie), when Maleficent awakens to find herself wingless. Anguished by Stefan's betrayal, she declares herself the queen of the Moors, forming a dark kingdom with Diaval-a raven to whom she gives a human form. He acts as her wings, her spy and confidant. Sometime later, Diaval informs Maleficent that king Stefan is hosting a christening for his newborn daughter, Aurora. Bent on revenge, Maleficent arrives uninvited and curses the infant princess. In this case she had more reason and logic behind the curse.

Maleficent mocks him when King Stefan asks for mercy, by offering an antidote: "The curse can be broken only by a true love's kiss."(Movie- *Maleficent*)

Aurora growing up in the woods:

In Brother Grimm's story, Aurora stays in the castle itself, though all the spindles were burned by the king's order. On the contrary, in Walt Disney's "*Sleeping Beauty*" and "*Maleficent*", Aurora is sent to live in the woods with the three fairies, flora, fauna and merryweather.

How the curse falls upon Aurora:

In Brother Grimm's story, when she is fifteen, Aurora is left behind alone in the castle. She comes to an old tower where she finds an old woman with a spindle, diligently spinning her flax. As soon as Aurora touches the spindle the evil prophesy is fulfilled. While In Disney's "*Sleeping Beauty*", Aurora, called Briar Rose by the fairies, has grown up into a beautiful young woman. On the day of her sixteenth birthday, the three fairies ask Rose to gather berries in the forest so they can prepare a surprise party for her. Rose falls in love with Prince Philip in the woods. When Rose arrives, the fairies tell her the truth about her royal heritage, and that she has been promised at birth to be married to a prince. Heartbroken, Rose leaves the room. The fairies take Aurora back to the castle that evening. Maleficent then appears, and magically lures Aurora away from the fairies and tricks the princess into touching the spinning wheel in a tower. Despite efforts to stop her by the three fairies, Aurora pricks her finger, completing the curse, and falls into a deep sleep. On the contrary, in *Maleficent*, despite her initial dislike for Aurora, Maleficent begins to care for the girl when the incompetent pixies inadvertently put her in danger. After a brief meeting with the young Aurora, Maleficent watches over her from afar. When Aurora is 15, she encounters Maleficent and, aware of being watched over, calls her "fairy godmother". Realizing she has grown fond of the princess, Maleficent attempts to revoke the curse, but she cannot. Aurora later meets Prince Philip, and the two are smitten with each other. On the day before Aurora's 16th birthday, Maleficent, hoping to avoid the curse, invites her to move to the

Moors. When the pixies inadvertently tell Aurora of her parentage and of Maleficent's true identity, a horrified Aurora runs away to her father's castle. After a brief reunion with Aurora, Stefan locks her away in her room for safety. However, she is drawn by the curse to the dungeon, where a spinning wheel pricks her finger and she falls into a sleep-like death.

Fairies- incompetent twits:

There are no fairies in the original composition of Brothers Grimm. Disney included three fairies in its 1959, adaptation as well as 2014's Maleficent. But Flora, Fauna and Merryweather are nonetheless celebrated as Aurora's saviours in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), though their haplessness is expressly stated in both the adaptations as even after more than a decade of custodial work they still don't know how to crack an egg. They are unable to sew a ballgown for Rose, the fairies resort to magic and Flora and Merryweather get into a fight over the colour, blue or pink, of the gown. . They often inadvertently put Aurora in danger. Even at the end of the movie, Flora and Merryweather resume their argument over the colour of Aurora's dress, changing it to pink and then blue as Aurora dances with Phillip. The fairies are also addressed as Thistlewit, Flittle and Knotgrass in Maleficent.

Witch or fairy godmother-treatment of character

(Wise woman/ Maleficent):

In the original Grimm story, the wise woman does not play any significant part. Rather, she is just mentioned only once when she curses the infant princess.

In the Disney version of the *Sleeping Beauty*, the witch has a bit more role to play rather than just cursing the child and disappear. She forces her bumbling demon army to find Aurora in the forest, and when they fail her, she sends Diablo to find Aurora. When she finds her and Aurora returns back to her kingdom, Maleficent appears, and magically lures Aurora away from the fairies and tricks the princess into touching the spinning wheel in a tower. She also abducts Prince Philip and take him to her castle on the Forbidden Mountain and imprisons him in the dungeon. Maleficent shows Prince Phillip that the peasant girl and the now sleeping Princess Aurora are one and the same. She plans to keep him locked away until he's an old man on the verge of death, and then release him to meet his love, who won't have aged a single day. As Phillip and the fairies make their way toward King Stefan's castle, Maleficent tries to stop him with a series of lightning bolts, and even conjuring a forest of thorns to surround the castle. Phillip thereupon throws the sword directly into Maleficent's heart, destroying her once and for all.

While similarly in the 2014 adaptation, Maleficent curses Aurora but her role does not end there. She is the antagonist and in some sorts the protagonist as well in this modernized fairy tale. King Stefan raged by Maleficent's curse, sends his armies to find and kill Maleficent, but she surrounds the Moors with an impenetrable wall of thorns. Despite her initial dislike for Aurora, Maleficent begins to care for the girl when the incompetent pixies inadvertently put her in danger. After a brief meeting with the young Aurora, Maleficent watches over her from afar. When Aurora is 15, she encounters Maleficent and, aware of being watched over, calls her "fairy godmother". Realizing she has grown fond of the princess, Maleficent attempts to revoke the curse, but she cannot. Aurora later meets Prince Philip, and the two are smitten with each other. On the day before Aurora's 16th birthday, Maleficent, hoping to avoid the curse, invites her to move to the Moors. Though when the curse falls on Aurora, Intent on saving her, Maleficent abducts Phillip

and infiltrates Stefan's castle to have him kiss Aurora and break the curse, but Philip's kiss fails. Now this is the twist in the story, like in the *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) Maleficent abducts Prince Philip but her purpose and intentions are completely opposite. Maleficent apologizes to Aurora and swears no harm will come to her, kissing her forehead and breaking the spell, Maleficent's motherly concern for Aurora constituting true love. Aurora forgives Maleficent and they attempt to leave the castle, but Maleficent is trapped in an iron net and attacked by Stefan and his guards. Stefan beats and taunts Maleficent, but before he can kill her, her wings, freed from his chamber by Aurora, fly back to her and reattach itself. Maleficent overpowers Stefan and carries him onto a tower, but cannot bring herself to kill him. Stefan attempts once more to kill her but they both plummet off the tower. Maleficent eventually breaks away, allowing Stefan to fall to his death. Soon after, Aurora is crowned queen of the human and fairy realms by Maleficent, unifying the two kingdoms, with Phillip at her side. Maleficent returns to her role as protector over the kingdoms.

Aurora- Generic/ Individualistic:

In the original Brothers Grimm story, Aurora is,

“Lovely, modest, sweet, and kind and clever, that no

One who saw her could help loving her.”(Page-2, line-29, 30)

She does not do anything worth having the entire story after her name. She wanders alone in the castle and the curse falls on her as it has been prophesized earlier. After Prince Philip wakes her up from her long sleep they get married and live happily ever after. Whereas, in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), Aurora is portrayed as a generic character who when lives in the forest with the three fairies. She grows up to be a beautiful and kind young woman. In the forest, Rose's (Aurora) beautiful singing voice attracts the attention of Prince Phillip, now a handsome young man. They instantly fall in love, unaware of being betrothed years ago. Rose asks Phillip to come to her cottage that evening to meet her family. When Rose arrives, the fairies tell her the truth about her royal heritage, and that she has been promised at birth to be married to a prince. Heartbroken, Rose leaves the room. The fairies take Aurora back to the castle that evening. Despite efforts to stop her by the three fairies, Aurora pricks her finger, completing the curse, and falls into a deep sleep. The rest of the story is similar to the original Brothers Grimm story. The facts change in *Maleficent*, where Aurora is a young woman who knows that a woman has been watching over her from a distance. She is too real and earthy to be generic. When she meets her she calls her “fairy godmother” and without realising she creates a place in the heart of Maleficent. Aurora later meets Prince Philip, and the two are smitten with each other. She is excited to live in the moors, but when she is told about her own reality and Maleficent's curse she is heartbroken and experiences genuine emotional conflict. When Maleficent apologizes to Aurora and swears no harm will come to her, kissing her forehead and breaking the spell, Maleficent's motherly concern for Aurora constituting true love. Aurora forgives Maleficent and they attempt to leave the castle.

Feministic approach to Maleficent:

In classic Disney universe females are either: (a) young princess; (b) inactive mothers; or, (c) evil. But in the modern adaption the protagonist of the story is a fairy turned to villain and back to a fairy. Many feminist writers claim that women have been mistreated in the fairytales when it comes to the matter of importance. They are either the inactive princesses in a problem (a damsel in distress) who need a hero to help them out

or they are a trivial character like a mother, sister, wife, etc. Like in *Sleeping Beauty*, Aurora's mother, is just referred to as "the queen", she does not have any individuality of her own. In the entire script, she is mentioned as "King Stefan and his queen..." The third category of women character in a fairytale is widely acclaimed, the witch or an evil step mother in most cases. The difference between the active and inactive female characters is that a good hearted, kind, loving character is inactive. While the active character is evil, creates distress only to attain or remain in power. In the original Brothers Grimm story, the wise women gift her, beauty and song, but no one gifts her intelligence, or bravery. Probably, they wanted to show that a girl should be just pretty to look at and know how to sing, dance and keep her family happy. She is a mere object in the whole story. Even her own father's kingdom is ruled by Philips as he is coronated the king at the end, in the original Brothers Grimm story as well as in the 1959 animated film.

"The sleeping beauty figure, as featured in the most popular versions of the classic fairytales, is the archetype passive heroine. Falling into the death like state of a long, deep sleep, she lacks all agency and simple lies still waiting until she wakes." – An animation film critique.

In *Maleficent*, breaking the stereotype we see a powerful, young, kind and active female character. It's about a fairy that lives in the moors and falls in love with a young boy, Stefan, who betrays her. She is not a villain, but a victim of her circumstances; she curses Aurora only to avenge Stefan. She has more reason to be angry than Disney's former *Maleficent*'s ego. Her motherly love is reflected as soon as she sees the baby in the forest. *Maleficent* represents a modern world woman who is smart, capable and independent. She grows fond of the little girl over the years, and tries to protect her from the curse. Though when she fails in the attempt, after Prince Philip is tossed out for failing to rouse Aurora, *Maleficent* offers a tearful, sorrowful maternal peck on the forehead to her slumbering goddaughter and, the curse breaks. Her genuine motherly love broke the curse. Even when King Stefan tries to kill her in the end, she is unable to bring herself to kill him. It is a natural reflection of female character-frailty. We even see an emotional turmoil, and sense in our "sleeping beauty." Aurora is smart and sensibility, she knows she is being watched over from a distance by a lady. When she is told of her royal patronage, we see a general conflict of thoughts in her mind. She forgives *Maleficent* after she wakes up from the sleep because she knows how she took care of her in the past fifteen years. She even frees *Maleficent*'s wings to help her escape. She has depth and character that the former sleeping beauty lacks. And unlike all other versions of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Maleficent* declares Aurora, the Queen with Philips by her side, destroying the patriarchal lineage of the throne.

Maleficent- a realistic/ psychoanalytic review:

In the beginning, Narrator Janet McTeer announces she is going to tell "an old story anew." And she is pretty right; *Maleficent* stands out of all former Disney movies. While at some points *Maleficent* shows us new sides to the story, at others it also takes us to a previously unimaginable version. It claims to be a deeper look at the story behind Disney's *Sleeping Beauty*; showing a more sympathetic, nuanced version of the classic tale. There are lot of amazing plot twists. We start the story with a young *Maleficent* that is not an evil witch but a fairy of the moors. She is beautiful and kind. It is Stefan's betrayal that makes her the evil witch. She is angry and bent on revenge she curses Aurora. But we see her good side overpowering her when she silently takes care of her in the forest. She shares a friendly bond with Diaval or Diablo as in the previous movie and we see it is a genuine and mutual feeling. She grows fond of Aurora over the years, and even tries to revoke the curse. We see a motherly love and concern in the so called antagonist of the story. She does not remain stagnant, rather grows with the story. The protagonist of the story, Aurora also reflects a mature outlook when she leaves her home in the forest, the boy she fell in love with to know who she is.

We can almost see a reflection of young Maleficent in Aurora; she is smart, kind and strong. She has an opinion of her own and takes her own decisions. We see emotional depth and turmoil in both the leading characters and it is changing with the course of the story as the circumstances change. We see that Philip's kiss does not wake up Aurora, another twist in the plot. A boy whom you met only once cannot be your true love; it is the most pure form of love that breaks the curse- a motherly peck on the cheeks. A lesson needed to be understood. King Stefan also portrays the character of a person who is not a blue blood. He is a peasant boy who is too ambitious; his greed to become the king makes him deceive Maleficent. He tries to kill her and in the attempt dies his own death. King Stefan suffers because of his own deeds; he is not a pitiable father whose infant daughter is cursed for no reason as in the former versions.

Maleficent is a logical, well woven story with strong characters and in depth study of human emotions and passions.

Conclusion:

With the change in time, we need to change the way we think and way we perceive things. The current generation has its own ideas that may be a lot different from the previous generations. The easy access to information and technology, their mental horizons have expanded. They are bold enough to raise questions on things they do not understand or deny to accept anything just because it is the way things have been happening over a period of time. A modern adaptation to fairytales like Maleficent will revive the same old culture of storytelling with a twist of more logical scenarios where they can connect themselves. It will be a delight not only for the children but also the adults that remember all these childhood memories. And more importantly because we do not want to idealise passive women character like the Sleeping Beauty but a strong hero like "Maleficent."

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