

Womens' Empowerment in Postcolonial and Literature

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Abstract - Feminists may disagree on the root reasons of women's subordination, but this is a universal feature of all dominance hierarchies in interpersonal relationships. Simone de Beauvoir claims that males place women in inferior roles because they see women as distinct from themselves (Beauvior 22). Women are a subservient sex class ruled by patriarchy, as Kate Millet's theory of subordination demonstrates (Millet 25). Patriarchy is the second major issue that it highlights. In depth exploration accompanied with reference and citation displays to be found in the MLA Handbooks We are making use of the eighth expansion. All the female protagonists in these works challenge the limiting effects of religion, culture, and society, but they do not follow the same paths as their western counterparts. They like to go their own separate paths. All of these books have female heroines who are strong and courageous enough to challenge the constraining effects of religion, society, and culture, but who reject the solutions proposed by their western counterparts. They like to go their own separate paths. The literary representation of women predates the written word. The emergence of women authors, however, has brought about dramatic shifts in this depiction. The male-dominated culture that developed these stereotypes portrayed women either as vamps or as self-sacrificing angels who would give up all for their loved ones. According to the findings of this research, the depictions of women in works of literature are a crucial component of their overall composition. Also, the depictions of women are the primary means through which the writers in question express their worldviews and societal ideals to their readers. Most of the writers' ideas are conveyed via their characters.

Keywords - Feminism, colonialism, postcolonialism, gender, Patriarchy

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INTRODUCTION

Women are subordinated because of feelings of barrenness, prejudice, and stifled self-esteem and confidence. Subordination of women, therefore, refers to a state in which males have the upper hand in a power dynamic in which women play a subservient role. Feminists may disagree on the root reasons of women's subordination, but this is a universal feature of all dominance hierarchies in interpersonal relationships. Simone de Beauvoir claims that males place women in inferior roles because they see women as distinct from themselves (Beauvior 22). Women are a subservient sex class ruled by patriarchy, as Kate Millet's theory of subordination demonstrates (Millet 25). Patriarchy is the second major issue that it highlights. Women's subjugation and male dominance go hand in hand with patriarchy. The patriarchal idea places an emphasis on the social construction of gender roles rather than inherent biological disparities between the sexes. Within a patriarchal culture, women are consistently and systematically treated as second-class citizens. They are subjected to prejudice, neglect, humiliation, exploitation, repression, and violence at home, in the workplace, and in the wider community on a daily

basis. Most feminists believe that gender is a social and political creation that stems from traditional notions of what is masculine and feminine. Gender inequality is the starting point for this branch of political science and international relations. The world's power structure is patriarchal, and as a result, women are routinely shut out of crucial decision-making processes. Gender disparity in politics and society must be eradicated, and women must be given the same rights as men. In addition, long-held political norms need to be reexamined, and a fresh perspective adopted.

The issue of "women in the third world" sparked the most heated debate. Some feminist post colonialists argue that ignoring the "double colonization" (of race and gender) experienced by women in imperialist contexts is an inevitable consequence of concentrating only on racial politics. This viewpoint holds that patriarchal beliefs, both domestic and foreign, are to blame for women's subjugation in the global South. Feminists argue that anti-colonial nationalism in the Third World shares post-colonial theory's severe theoretical blindness when it comes to gender inequality. Some postcolonial critics argue that western feminism's fixation on the "women of

the third world" and its focus on their "differences" are colonial. Anywhere western feminists gather, indigenous women are expected to demonstrate what they term "differentiation." Western women's voyeuristic obsession with the vibrant exoticism of local women serve no purpose. Because of their awareness of cultural differences, western feminists are in the privileged position of paving the way to freedom for their "unfortunate sisters." As a key postcolonial challenge to mainstream Western feminism, "Under the eyes of the west: feminist scholarship and colonial discourse" (originally published in 1982) is widely cited and discussed. According to postcolonial feminist writer Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "the third world woman" is a useful analytic term because of the double meanings it has. First, because of its ethnocentric myopia, which overlooks the vast socioeconomic distinctions among "real" women in the Third World; and second, because the composite "Othering" of the "Third World Woman" becomes a self-consolidating project for Western feminism (Gandhi's 85-86). By doing so, western feminists created a "double colonization," whose primary purpose was to compare and contrast the political maturity of Western feminists with that of women in the developing countries. It's common knowledge that portraying women in the West as "educated," "modern," "in control" of their bodies and "sexualities," and "free" (Mohanty 200) helps facilitate and privilege the self-representation of Western women as "ignorant," "poor," "uneducated," tradition-bound," domesticated," family-oriented," and victimized" (Mohanty 200).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Misri, D. (2014) argues in her book *Beyond Partition* that 1947 was the beginning of a history of politicized antagonism between groups and regions with different conceptions of "India" and the political-military Indian state. Using a wide range of sources, including literature, history, performance, and visual art, she examines the gendered scripts underlying the violence that has its roots in competing conceptions of what "India" is and how it is expressed, ultimately concluding that cultural expressions do not merely follow violence but determine its very contours. *Beyond Partition* is an ambitious and interdisciplinary look at how depictions of violence are colored by notions of caste, identity, and class, and how these conceptions in turn inform our views of violence and of India.

Islam, Mohammad Shafiqul & Islam, Rama. (2019) History shows that patriarchal civilizations marginalize women and treat them as second-class citizens. While males in these civilizations have all the power, women are often relegated to the background and silenced by patriarchal practices, while making equal or even greater contributions to the growth of the country. For many in postcolonial India, women are little more than "objects" or "others." Anita Desai is one of the most influential authors of Indo-Anglo literature of the twentieth century, and she advocates a feminist

worldview that encourages women to stand up against patriarchal tyranny. Most of her books focus on modern India's middle-class women as they fight against patriarchal norms. Desai is distinct from other feminists in her belief that one may find redemption through introspection and drive. This article is an exploration the manners in which women in Desai's well-known books *Clear Light of Day* and *Fire on the Mountain* endure silence while simultaneously searching for liberation. This article focuses on two of her main characters, Bimla and Nanda Kaul, who fight against patriarchy in order to achieve their goals of independence, autonomy, and respect.

Chaudhuri, Maitrayee. (2012) *The History of Indian Feminism and How It Was Told* This study provides a broad overview of feminism in India while also raising important theoretical questions. It contends that postcolonial theory ignores the fact that non-Western societies frequently place great value on what is considered "marginal" in Western societies. Postcolonial studies, which are textually focused, fail to consider the past examination of the limits and potentials of social institutions and individual agency. Keeping this in mind, this study traces the evolution of feminism in India from the country's colonial past through its nationalist and gender struggles, to its independent state's initiative in development, to the transformed context of globalization, and finally to the country's current state, where marginalized communities are asserting themselves while a "global middle class" is rising, with paradoxical effects on feminism.

Shameem, Musarrat. (2021) This essay examines a fictitious South Asian woman in diasporic space and argues that it is important to see her from the perspective of her race, culture, and history in order to comprehend the difficulty she has in forging an identity within the host society. This work makes use of postcolonial feminist philosophy as its theoretical foundation. This article's central argument is on Rakhi, the protagonist of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's book *Queen of Dreams*, and her maturation as a South Asian American within the dominant culture in the United States. At the novel's conclusion, she is able to reconcile her disjointed self by seeing herself as a postcolonial subject.

Ball, Anna. (2012) The first comprehensive look at gender awareness in Palestinian art, *Palestinian Literature and Film in Postcolonial Feminist Perspective* fills this need. Ball uses concepts from postcolonial feminist theory to analyze a wide variety of literary and cinematic works by prominent Palestinian artists such as Michel Khleifi, Liana Badr, Annemarie Jacir, Elia Suleiman, Mona Hatoum, and Suheir Hammad, uncovering a previously unknown trajectory in gender-consciousness in the Palestinian imagination at the turn of the twentieth century. This book examines how gender-aware narratives change our perspective on Palestine's postcolonial struggle and how these works reverberate with broader concerns of power, identity, country,

resistance, and self-representation in the Palestinian imagination. Ball aims to push the multidisciplinary study of Palestine in important new directions by working at the intersection of postcolonial, feminist, and cultural inquiry.

COLONIALISM, POSTCOLONIALISM AND FEMINISM

- **Colonialism**

The phrases "colonialism" and "postcolonialism" will be used often throughout this lesson. To clarify, "colonialism" is the strategy of maintaining colonies in order to ensure their continued dependence on the colonial powers, who then exploit these countries for their material and economic resources. It's also a metaphor for colonial existence in general. Apart from the obvious (geographic) effects, colonization also entrenched racism. Feminism after colonialism (historical) and the collapse of ancient cultures (cultural). Postcolonial theory, therefore, has its roots in the history of colonialism. "The appropriation of their experience and struggles" (Mohanty 49) is what feminist academics mean when they use this word.

- **Postcolonialism:**

Discourse on Postcolonialism Postcolonial discourse is the voice of those who have been colonized or subjugated. Since questions are still being asked and new information is still being added inside this discursive space, it will continue to exist even after the colonists have gone. Postcolonialism constantly struggles against several oppressions. Depending on context, postcolonialism may mean:

- Both the worldwide circumstances following the independence of these colonies and the situations in former colonial societies are described at length. Since this is largely a literary and discursive use, it is more abstract.
- It characterizes the aforementioned circumstances as a field of study.

By adopting this definition, postcoloniality is separated from specific geographical locations and periods of colonial rule, and is instead linked to a certain mode of thought. Discourse is any kind of argumentation or discussion, whether written or spoken. Postcolonial theory is the critical analysis of all forms of colonial writing. With the release of *Orientalism*, Edward Said, one of the most renowned and well-known researchers affiliated with postcolonial studies, sparked a discussion about postcolonialism. Other works by African, Caribbean, and Indian authors and social theorists, such as *The Empire Writes Back*, have also made crucial contributions to the development of postcolonialism. Because of these authors and thinkers, postcolonial studies are now firmly established in academic institutions worldwide. Their input is detailed further on in this chapter. It is imperative to recognize that postcolonial discourse is

multidisciplinary, including fields as diverse as history, literature, science, economics, and politics. Postcolonialism is summed up by Ania Loomba (1998) as a new critical language resulting from advances in the social sciences, literature, linguistic studies, and discourses in the many means of communication.

- **Women's Colonization and Subjugation in Postcolonial Feminism**

Postcolonial feminism is a subdivision of sexism that emerged in reaction to Western-centric equal rights and the subsequent colonialization of women's lives. Postcolonial feminism is an attempt to explain the ongoing political, economic, and cultural repercussions of colonialism on women who are not white and Western. Postcolonial feminism is a criticism of mainstream feminism that arisen in the 1980s, pointing out the universalizing tendencies of mainstream feminism and arguing that women in non-Western nations are underrepresented in these discourses.

For postcolonial feminists, the subordination of women throughout history has similarities with colonialism. Although there are many cultural, social, and economic distinctions between women, western feminists stressed their universality and unity in order to promote the idea that all women should be treated equally to men. They didn't look into the gray areas between civilizations. It was widely held that the colonized peoples were barbaric barbarians who needed to be tamed by the superior Europeans and Americans who ruled them. Postcolonial feminists fought to get their own voices heard and rejected the concept of the universality and commonality of women's lives, which was mostly based on the universalization of western women's experiences. Instead of seeing gender as a binary,

Theory

Postcolonial equal rights is a relatively new school of thought that emerged largely from the work of postcolonial theorists who analyze the effects of colonial and imperial relations on various cultures throughout the nineteenth century. This school of feminism encourages thinking broadly about the many forms of coercion that may be found in every culture.

Originally conceived as a response to problems within Western feminism and postcolonial theory, postcolonial feminism has developed into a robust analytical framework for understanding both phenomena. Postcolonial feminist theorists are absorbed in examining why postcolonial theory does not address concerns of gender, as opposed to mainstream postcolonial theory, which focuses on the lasting effects of colonialism on the contemporary economic and political structures of nations. Since the scope of feminism philosophy is restricted, postcolonial feminism also strives to provide light on the propensity of Western feminist thinking to apply its claims to women throughout the

globe. Consequently, postcolonial feminism makes an effort to address criticisms leveled against postcolonial theory and Western feminism. Within postcolonial feminist theory, the notion of colonization covers a number of diverse locations, including the acquisition of land and various types of social, discursive, political, and economic servitude.

When explaining why western feminism is failing to make positive change for the third-world ladies, Audre Lorde uses the metaphor of "the master's tools" and "the master's house" from her seminal essay, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." According to Lorde, western feminist writing ignored and even opposed celebrating women's uniqueness. Lorde argues that women should celebrate their diversity and utilize them as building blocks to form communities in which they may help and be helped by one another.

- **Postcolonial feminist defining features**

The cultural criticism of global hegemonic forces gave rise to postcolonialism. The standard bearers for this kind of cultural critique are the scholarly writings of authors from formerly colonial nations in the third world. These works emphasized the continuous fight back against colonialism. They began researching historical and contemporary cultural practices with a focus on how colonialism and oppression had affected their communities. In a nutshell, the term "postcolonial studies" is used to describe the ever-expanding corpus of varying and often competing interpretations of the oppressed people's cultural output, whether that be their works or their debates. Similar to feminist scholarship, it challenges the current order. It is more of a theoretical and cultural stance than a specific field of study or set of procedures.

The idea that women are "already constituted and coherent groups with identical interests and desires regardless of class, ethnicity, or radical location" is problematic, according to third-world feminists. It is not possible to generalize about gender roles, sexual orientation, or patriarchy across cultures, as Mohanty argues (Mohanty 52). Many newly independent nations in the 20th century continued the practice of excluding and marginalizing women from national culture. Cultural factors may contribute to the persistence of racial, gendered, and socioeconomic biases.

European women fought for the equality of local women in the colonies of Africa and India. It's questionable whether or not their efforts helped indigenous women. The primary tenet of postcolonial theory was established in the works of Chandra Mohanty and Hazel Carby (*White Women Listen!*). They criticized western feminism for failing to account for cultural variations among women. What is considered progressive for women in the West is not automatically the best for women in other parts of the world. The notion that women in the rest of the world

need to be saved by Western feminism met with strong opposition.

- **Heterogeneity, Plurality and Presence**

Western feminists examine women as a racially, economically, and culturally homogenous group because of the way society has constructed them. Women, however, are not just historical actors, but historical subjects. This indicates that the unique historical settings in which women find themselves have a role in shaping their experiences, in addition to their gender. Since they will differ throughout time and society, it becomes meaningless to generalize about women's experiences, difficulties, or characteristics. The image of women as 'sisters in struggle' may end up presenting third country women as helpless, exploited and sexually harassed, and in desperate need of rescue, just as a sexist approach may characterize women as weak and emotional.

- **Double Colonization of Women**

Among postcolonial works, the treatment of women in non-Western civilizations stands out as the most pressing concern. In describing the relationship between patriarchy and imperialism, as well as the position of women, the phrase "Double Colonization" was coined by Holst-Peterson and Rutherford (1988) and has since been widely used. Patriarchy and imperialism are two sides of the same dominant coin. White women's symbolic and practical roles in the imperial system are dissected in postcolonial feminist literature. Women in colonial countries face double discrimination because of their ethnicity and gender. It examines the issues facing women in postcolonial cultures from the perspectives of members of disadvantaged groups, such as indigenous minorities and women with a history of continuous persecution.

JOURNEY THROUGH THE CENTURIES: WOMEN IN LITERATURE

There is no literature that predates the representation of women in literature. Since ancient times, people have been fascinated with and discussing women's representations in literature. Both eastern and western mythologies have traditionally relegated women to supporting roles. In many mythical and folkloric traditions around the globe, women are treated more like sexual objects than actual people. As a result, they had a hazy understanding of their rights and no clear picture of what freedom meant to them. Women's portrayals in classical and medieval literature are often caricatured, and the resulting picture is often retrograde. They may all be angelic beings or evil incarnate. Many people blamed them for the deaths and destruction that resulted from terrible conflicts. Sometimes the Goddesses would use their abilities to exact vengeance on someone. Though women's actual participation was restricted, on many

occasions, heavenly beings like as Goddesses and angels arose, giving female characters immense strength. During the Renaissance period (about 14th to 16th centuries), many negative stereotypes about women were dispelled and replaced with more favorable ones.

Many excellent works of literature were written during the period when depictions of women became more nuanced and realistic. They still didn't get much done except serving as the giant heroes' inspirations, guides, and drivers of action. But now they had emotions, thoughts, and reactions, and all for the better. The picture of the Virgin Mary, who has been held up as a paragon of femininity for centuries, is emblematic of the morality and beauty of feminine depictions. Despite this, depictions of women in literature were becoming more realistic as they were given more human qualities. When compared to women of earlier eras, these characters tended to be more open and sexual.

WOMENS' EMPOWERMENT IN POSTCOLONIAL AND THIRD-WORLD FICTION

The term "Empowerment of Women" is used often in the current climate; however, its meaning might differ significantly according on the situation. But what does that word imply, and how does it help women in their daily lives when they encounter adversity? Improving women's spiritual, political, social, or economic power as individuals entails giving them more options when it comes to things like marriage, parenthood, and paid work. Women's empowerment aids their efforts to combat patriarchal thought and male dominance. A self-empowered woman is one who has the confidence to make her own life decisions, knows what she wants out of life, and is able to set her sights on the steps she has to take to get there.

CONCLUSION

Any feminist philosophy must be set within its cultural context. Feminists in India and elsewhere in the developing world stress this point often. The argument against universalizing the experience of oppression for women across cultures was pioneered by Chandra Mohanty and Rachel Carby. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak believes that politics may be a colonial force in one context while existing in another. It is possible to appropriately conceptualize double colonization as a result of imperial and patriarchal systems. The identity of feminist authors and their relationship to masculine culture is captured without reference to race or class in Kamala Das's work on the condition of Indian women. Many Indian women authors decipher gender roles in their works, providing a window into Indian feminism.

Feminist critiques of established structures and customs highlight the pervasiveness of the issue at hand. There is widespread awareness and lively discussion on the issues of sexism, misogyny, exclusion, harassment, abuse, and violence against women. The institutional structures and practices

deeply ingrained in Indian culture and history are major sources of these abuses. There are many different shifts occurring at the moment, and the primary emphasis is on making them the norm. However, women's lack of agency is plain to see. Men throughout the world rank women as either subordinate or superior to themselves depending on the context. The advancement of humanity and its destiny are dependent on achieving gender parity. It requires effort and persistence.

In developing nations, traditional feminist thought that attributes all women's ills to discrimination on the basis of their gender has not taken root. Western feminism has had a hard time connecting with women from the global South due to cultural differences and the multifaceted nature of the issues they face. Postcolonial feminism, which developed in response to Western feminism, expanded the scope of the feminist movement to include discussions of issues faced by women in the global South. Simply said, postcolonial feminism is an ideology that rejects all kinds of oppression, including racism, patriarchy, and gender inequality. Gender inequality, which Western feminists have brought up repeatedly over the years, is not the root of women's concerns. Women's issues might seem quite different depending on where you live. India's significance here stems from its status as the conceptual cradle of postcolonial thought. Women in modern-day India have a very different status than they do in the West. Women in India, where rape and violence against women are pervasive, cannot have had the same experiences as women in the West, where they have more freedom to make choices without the input of males and enjoy generally superior living circumstances. Women's groups in India are fighting for equality and justice, and their efforts are not without significance. Women continue to fight sexism and inequality and look for ways to overcome it, despite the many obstacles they face in today's society. It is simpler for women to achieve strength and fight against patriarchy when they gather together regardless of religion, color, or identity. Since India was a catalyst in the development of postcolonial feminism, it continues to have a significant position in the minds of postcolonial women everywhere.

According to the findings of this research, the depictions of women in works of literature are a crucial component of their overall composition. Also, the depictions of women are the primary means through which the writers in question express their worldviews and societal ideals to their readers. Most of the writers' ideas are conveyed via their characters. They achieve this goal "by the very characters they choose to write about, the thoughts and feelings they give them, and the behavior and motive they attribute to them." (Allen 17) Committed authors like Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, and Arundhati Roy. One thing that binds them together is that they come from a long line of authors who have considered societal issues in their work. The plight of the poor and those oppressed by elitist

institutions is at the forefront of their minds when discussing matters of social and national significance. Obviously, they have to take into account the plight of Indian women, who are often the targets of the extreme patriarchy that is so typical of India. These women authors provide a voice to India's marginalized women thanks to their feminine sensibilities and experiences as traumatized women. This is achieved by evoking a wide range of stereotypes about women via the many female characters they create.

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