

Postcolonial Feminism: A Dissent to Double Colonisation

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ABSTRACT

Feminism in literature is essentially concerned with the position and representation of women in society. Feminist writings are of crucial interests to the postcolonial writers. **A Vindication of Rights of Women** (1792) is a pioneering text in the history of feminist thought. Wollstonecraft asserts that there is no fundamental difference between men and women except for their social environment. This social environment plays a vital role in shaping personalities. In the recent discourses on 'Feminism' and feminist ideologies women writers' especially, the third world or postcolonial female finds it difficult to associate her place and condition in conformity with the Western feminist ideology. The present paper focuses on the 'Double Colonisation' of the Third world women and their desire to unburden this process. They are desirous to subvert the theory of female's inferiority to male, according to Said's **Orientalism**.

Keywords: Orientalism, Postcolonial Feminism, inferior, Double Colonisation

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The most important issue of postcolonial writings are to explore the status and condition of women in Third world countries. The term 'Double Colonisation' which was introduced by Holst- Peterson and Rutherford(1988) has become one of the important motifs led forward by the postcolonial feminists to highlight the Double colonised condition of women. It refers to the ways in which women have simultaneously experienced the oppression of Colonialism and Patriarchy. She has to resist the colonial power as a colonial subject as well as the patriarchy, simply because of being a woman. Postcolonial and feminist theorists state that women are oppressed by both, patriarchy and the colonial power and that this is an on-going process in many once colonised countries even after they have achieved independence. The emergence of postcolonial feminism is a response to gendered history of colonialism. When the countries which were once colonised ruled by the colonisers according to their belief and culture taking colonial subjects as inferior to them. After independence these countries have associated themselves with their ethnicity and cultural identity, similarly postcolonial feminists talks about the unique identity of women in third world countries. Post colonialism offers a frame work for challenging and contesting the fixity of gender, race and culture. It directs attention towards intersectional factors as socially produced through historical, socio-economic and political processes of colonialism and imperialism. It challenges the unity notion of culture and contest images and representations of the essentialised cultural 'other'. Edward Said in his *Orientalism* defines the 'orient' as countries of east of the Mediterranean i.e. the oldest colonies of the Europeans extending from India to the far East. According to Said's *Orientalism* the study of the orient, is ultimately a political vision that promotes binary opposition between the familiar West and the strange East, the inferior 'other' he says " Orientalism is a western style for dominating, restricting, and having authority over the orient" (Said 78). The postcolonial feminists believe that 'third world women' also suffer at the hands of Western feminists from the colonizer's countries and they misrepresent women of once colonised countries. Western feminism imposes silence on their racial, cultural, social, and political specifications and in doing so they act as a potential oppressor of their 'sisters'.

Western feminists analyse women as a socially constituted homogenous groups across races, classes and cultures. Being a female is not only about gender as it also reflects their positions as material subjects specific to their history and culture. This clearly exemplifies that women's experiences are not just influenced and affected by their gender but also by the precise context of the historical situations that they live in, since these experiences and influences will vary across time and space, and cultures, it is impossible to speak of all women as having common experiences just because of their biological similarity. They might share some common turmoil based on gender but the problems related to specific regional or geographical location cannot be ignored. The Western feminist approach as benevolent sisters who must support the oppressed, exploited and harassed women of once colonised nation is not acceptable to postcolonial feminists. Postcolonial feminism speaks about the plurality of women. It is important to understand they are a heterogeneous groups differentiated by socio economic, cultural and locational characteristics. The misrepresentation and limiting the cultural ethos of the third world women are questioned by postcolonial feminists. They lay stress on the need for giving a fresh and new perspective to the experiences and condition of women in third world countries.

Western feminists tend usually towards a complete and homogenous notion of women's identity. They evaluate the condition of women according to their perspective and represent women of the third world countries as meek, docile and marginalised. Postcolonial feminist abhor this tendency of universalizing and homogeneity of women across globe. Mohanty, who is a famous postcolonial feminist is the portrayals of postcolonial women primarily as ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition bound, domesticated, family oriented and victimized. Women writers in postcolonial countries are not interested in competing with their male counterparts rather in endeavouring to resolve the issues by reclaiming their positions and trying to redefine a new perspective of women hood. They demand for equal right and autonomous authority of their selves. They do not take motherhood or any responsibilities as constrictive rather prefer to come to terms with their cultural values.

The prime objective of the postcolonial feminist is to make differences regarding women's lives visible and recognizable in the eyes of Western feminists in non-oppressive ways. They are trying to create a world where differences are not detested, instead entertained and enjoyed. To make space to thrive being immune to hierarchical structures of class, race sexual and gender power. Postcolonial feminism provides corrective measures to mainstream feminism. Postcolonial feminist scholarship is now exploring the fluidity of these identities and their new construction within hybrid cultural spaces. They demand a stand for their essence of 'being', which was completely persecuted in the social milieu during and after independence of their nations. Thus their approach is to observe, describe, and take an objective and realistic view of women's condition in their social set up. They subvert the theory of being a 'subaltern' and claim that they have voice of their own.

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