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Understanding Sisterhood in the Postcolonial-Feminist Interface

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Abstract

Postcolonial Feminism arose as a response to Western Mainstream Feminism. The unheard voice and whispers of lives lived and lost within four-foot rooms and of those neglected based on race, religion, creed, class, and colour deserve their space and are expressed through the postcolonial-feminist interface. Postcolonial Feminism is about the colonised women whom higher-class women or men put down; gender specificity fades in the light of the problems discussed by these women. Postcolonial Feminism has never operated as a separate entity from postcolonialism; rather, it has directly inspired the forms of postcolonial politics. Where its feminist focus is foregrounded, it comprises non-Western feminism, which negotiates the political demands of nationalism, socialist Feminism, liberalism, and eco-feminism, alongside the social challenges of everyday patriarchy. This research article focuses on the necessity of universal sisterhood in the postcolonial era, where women of all races, colours and creeds come together and fight as one. This article also analyses the double standard of Feminism as depicted in bell hooks' essay "Feminist Politics: Where We Stand". The lives of Third World women are also scrutinised to prove that not all women's stories are the same, and hence, different platforms are needed for such discourses to be developed and flourish. Postcolonial Feminism will be the guide to bring back mainstream Feminism to its focus and thus to accomplish the real vision.

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Postcolonial literature has been in rage for the past few decades. Postcolonial studies speak about times that test the basis of humanity. It is the field of emotions and lives suppressed and oppressed. Postcolonial Feminism, the new branch of this vast sector, is a response to the Western mainstream Feminism. Here we get to listen to the unheard voice, the whispers of lives lived and lost within four-foot rooms. The voices of those neglected based on race, religion, creed, class and colour shout louder here. These stories of remarkable women who fought battles far more reaching than that of the white supremacist patriarchal society deserve their own space in the halls of literature. Postcolonial Feminism provides them this space and gives them a ground to stand and shout out to the deaf world.

Postcolonial studies are always concerned about the coloniser and the colonised, and what the future will hold for the oppressed. Similarly, Postcolonial Feminism is about the colonised women whom higher-class women or men put down; gender specificity fades in the light of the problems discussed by these women. When Feminism began and flourished, it fought for women's equal rights, but the question still lingers whether the group constitutes all women or women of a certain colour. Regardless, Postcolonial Feminism is the way of exploring these women's lives and fighting for their rights.

Women, in general, have been recognised as storytellers since ancient times. The world of writing was solely a man's place, which dismissed and degraded women's writing as frivolous. Women writers in any sector of the world were not accepted as writers, and their works were not given the credit they deserved; they were always forced to stand apart from the literary canon. Women are the colonies of the world of literature. All this changed with the advent of Feminism, from where we see the emergence and acceptance of strong female writers. On the contrary, there exists reluctance to accept certain women writers and activists like Nalini Jameela and the nun Lucy Kalappura. Postcolonial Feminism deals with identity formation and the power to stand before the discriminating powers. It is paramount to understand that Postcolonial Feminism is not a separate field of postcolonial studies but an extension of it. Robert J. C. Young discusses this particular issue in his book titled *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Young lays down serious issues that affect the female society. The main issue of the first two waves of Feminism was its failure to speak loudly about these issues.

Domestic problems were discussed and opposed, but the energy was not like fighting for equal working rights as men. This was mainly because these feminists, who with tea and cakes and delicate voices fought for equal rights, were a major part of this domestic violence. bell hooks, in her essay "Feminist Politics: Where We Stand", talks about this double standard of Feminism. She slams the white feminists, saying that the same women who took to the streets in the morning fighting for justice, when they return home, abuse their fellow women

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working as servants. The utopian Feminism cannot be achieved without universal sisterhood, and universal sisterhood can only be possible if women of all races, colours, and creeds unite and fight as one. Postcolonial Feminism paves the way for universal sisterhood by providing a platform for the discriminated.

Postcolonial literature provides the stage for Feminism to bring out the condition of these ordinary, normal lives of women in a specific society, thinking about their position in a secular way and then establishing a relation to broader issues of postcolonialism, giving it a powerful boost in importance. By doing this, postcolonial Feminism, as Young notes in his work, throws light on the issues that these women are still facing: “it will highlight the degree to which women are still working against a colonial legacy that was itself powerfully patriarchal-institutional, economic, political and ideological” (Young 203). Feminism negates low-power relationships, and postcolonial Feminism negates the oppressive status of the oppressed. Feminism is for all. Hence, the oppressed women also need a much larger stage to speak out. Postcolonial Feminism calls for equity and equal open doors for all women. This field sets out to inquire why women are treated as inferior and why they are refused certain rights which other females generally enjoy.

Long past instances of partialities and vicious comments against women, innumerable social and cultural writings were conquered, which eventually prompted the development of women’s rights in the late sixties and gained action in the mid-seventies of the twentieth century in the West. That was the point of change for the female world as a whole, where activists went on to think about issues of sex, sexual orientation and most importantly, dialect, that is, the way society was used to think about them in a patriarchal light, in abstract and social tasks.

Postcolonialism negates relationships that abuse the other, and in the same way, women activists started to question the substandard status of women and began to demand amelioration in their social position. In short, the word liberation of women as a powerful endeavour aims to change the nature of sexual orientation imbalance, sex legislative issues, relationships, and control and power abuse. “Since the time women started questioning their subordinate status, it has continuously fractured, divided and developed; it at present does not imply a single and coherent trajectory of thought”. This valid argument by Fiona Tolan in her work in *Literary Theory and Criticism* indicates the change in the course of the existing Feminism. Feminism came with the advent of the eradication of racism in the West, and women, in truth, only got what men wanted to give them. They did not achieve anything that was theirs by right in their early days. With black men working and earning equal to the whites, it became a necessity for the patriarchal society to allow the white women to work.

However, what is the position of the women of colour or other races? They remained the same. Chandra Mohanty in her work titled “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” say that:

“the western feminist writing discursively colonises the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/representing

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a composite, singular “third world woman”- an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but carries with it the authorising signature of western humanist discourse” (Mohanty 334-335)

Feminism was not for them. Many feminist, though, led double lives, as said in the earlier part of the article; hence, there was a desperate need for a separate space, a space not dominated by prejudices, but a clean slate to talk about their own pain and to speak out for the first time. Thus became the beginning of Postcolonial Feminism. A place only for women who have been colonised for centuries in their own home, in their soil, whose voices were always silenced. These women were denied the right to speak time after time, whose voices were so hoarse because of their lack of use. Postcolonial Feminism provides these women with a place to speak out to tell their stories and, for once, to show the world their side of their lives and to express their pain and feelings of suffocation. It is important to make the distinction that Western Feminism was, most importantly, a white treatise. Only then will the importance of the need for Postcolonial Feminism be understood fully. Western Feminism was ethnocentric and never gave space for the exploration of the distinctive experiences of women of postcolonial nations. Postcolonial Feminism objects to the renderings of postcolonial women as uneducated, domesticated, victims, ignorant, not value-oriented and so on.

Postcolonial markings are on both men and women. However, it is of concern that women have suffered two colonisations, the first was as a colonised and the second was by the male-controlled society. The women of West constructed these women as the other to her. The main aim of postcolonial feminists is to distinguish between the lives of these women and those of Western feminists. Postcolonial Feminism discusses a world where differences are not frowned upon but are accepted, and a space is created for such differences to flourish. Feminism is not about breaking families, and in the same way, postcolonial Feminism celebrates the differences between one family and another.

On the horizon of postcolonial feminist writers, there are extraordinary women writers whose stories speak about things hidden from the world for so long or, in truth that the world has refused to hear for so long. Feminism proved this, and postcolonial Feminism aims to prove that not all women's stories are the same. Hence, different platforms are needed to develop and flourish such discourses. Postcolonial Feminism has brilliant writers in Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, Chimamanda Adichie, Alice Walker, Mahasweta Devi, Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Mohanty, and so much more. These women writers brought out the much-needed clarity in feminist writings and formed the space for a new narrative called Postcolonial Feminism with their writings.

Postcolonial Feminism as a new narrative aims at justifying the reason for the new space that belongs to both Feminism and postcolonialism. This narrative holds the stories of those women who were forever denied their space in history, whose voices were silenced and whose lives had no value to others. They became the other in the hands of their own gender, hence their lives were under the façade of Western Feminism. Postcolonial Feminism was

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created for women's domestic space, a space often overlooked by almost all writers. However, this domestic space has a distinctive role in the life of almost all human beings.

Simply put, Postcolonial Feminism, as the new narrative, has set out to provide the stage for the domesticated voices and stories and correct the faults of mainstream Feminism. This brand new narrative is much needed in mainstream Feminism today because it appears Feminism has quite lost its way and its real vision. Postcolonial Feminism, with a newer perspective of including women of all sects of society, irrespective of their individual identity, should bring back Feminism to its focus.

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