

BLACK FEMINISM MOVEMENT: AN INHERENTLY PRECIOUS ARTICULATION

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Abstract

Feminism is an artistic movement and conviction for social, economic and political equality for women. The defense of women has been there way back centuries and became a literary sub-genre. On the other hand, Black Feminism emerged and grown phenomenally as Black women are inherently valuable. They obsessively believe in that liberation is a necessity in wholesome but not as an adjunct to somebody else. Black Feminism in comparison to other groups like whites is different because Black females' oppressions based on sexism, heterosexism, classism and racism, is due to the lack of basic human rights provided to black women besides additional struggles that other groups don't necessarily experience. Therefore, Black feminism is aimed for an inclusive rather than an exclusive movement, as it is the fight on a whole range of oppressions. Black feminism does not confine to only Africa but predominantly in America where their plights are still elevated because they had to struggle with white supremacy of white woman also. Hence, the present paper lime lights on the plights and predicaments of Black females and how the whole female community forwarded a technical movement through their literary texts and philosophical thoughts. The paper also enriches how the Black women are fundamentally different from that of white women practically and theoretically.

Key Words: Feminism-female oppression-liberation-plights and predicaments-literary movement

History always embarks on portraying certain human beings who are denied from certain rights and considered to be inferior to others. The reason behind this is the question of discrimination which is an important issue way back centuries. The Black Feminism actually starts from writers like Philis Wheatley and Olaudah Eqluano. They focused much on slave narratives and Harlem Renaissance as pioneers to deal with those themes as it involves all about blacks' plights and predicaments. The legacy continued till today by promising writers like Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou and Walter Mosley, reaching high points and sparked as some of the top writers in the United States. The first novel written by Morrison is *The Bluest Eye*, published

in 1970 that created history, for rich story telling besides unveiling the plights and predicaments of blacks under white hegemony inordinately.

Women have been subjected to oppression for centuries in the patriarchal society. Aristotle distinguishes women on account of "a certain lack of qualities." St Thomas Aquinas calls woman an "imperfect man". Philosophers like St Thomas Aquinas, Rousseau, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Sartre have also considered women morally inferior. Feminism emerged as an organized movement for women's rights and interests, and the political, economic and social equality of sexes in the male-dominated society. Feminist criticism is concerned with "woman as the producer of textual meanings with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women." It is an attempt to revalue the literature of the past from a gender perspective. Feminist criticism is regarded as deconstructive in spirit and method in as much as it aims at a revisionist reading of literary history and typology. Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) has provided the theoretical foundation for feminist criticism by pointing out the basic imbalance between the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Man as viewed as 'One', while woman, the 'Other'. One is not born a woman, but rather becomes a woman.

The phrase 'Womanism' was conceived by Alice Walker who defined it in her book (womanist prose form) *In search of her Mother's gardens* in 1983. She connects the phrase to feminism by spelling it, a womanist as per her consciousness is serious having a huge thirst for practical understanding and responsibility, integration and fidelity, her enumeration of the preferences for music and dance and folk. The Oxford Companion of African American literature observes,

"Womanism or Feminism is generally understood to address the triple impact of sex, race, and class on black women and to compensate for the traditional shortcomings of feminist and African American liberation discourse that have routinely excluded the peculiar needs of African-American women." (Maggie Gale House, Web)

Black Women are a very vital and pressing part throughout the history and women contribution for uplift of Black society stayed Phenomenal. This particular aspect has its own reason behind. Though, the suffering was equal on part of black woman and men, yet, they demonstrated their potential and benevolence through literature: making the contrast between how men and women see their world differently. Black women have raised their voices equally with black men to establish themselves in male dominated and white dominated society as well. Anna Julia Cooper, in *The Norton Anthology* expressed,

"Women do not want to have themselves spoken for by black men. So they have produced a literature of their own. Today more black women writers than ever before have access to publishing and they are taking advantage of that." (Vivian M. May)

The quest for a Womanist self-definition has motivated the black woman to undertake an exploration of her historical Identity. They have a question that when a woman has a pint, and man a quart, why can't she be given full freedom to put down her pint? That the men are afraid of giving women their full rights for they will grow too much because of their abilities.

Alice Walker emphasizes that a woman is committed to survival within the framework of her entire people, including male. "She is no separatist, "except for health." A womanist is a black

feminist or feminist of color.” She argues. The Concept of Feminism is manifested by Alice Walker in *search of our Mother’s Gardens* as,

“Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is good for one – outrageous, audacious, courageous and wilful behavior. A womanist is also "responsible, in charge, serious." She can walk to Canada and take others with her. She loves, she is committed, she is a Universalist by temperament. (Nellie McKey)

Black women occupied a distinctive place amongst all. It is so interesting to speak that there is something distinct inside them that establish them different from other people. Unlike men and unlike white women. They are capable of approaching conflicts; they don’t have intimacy though. Women theologians also use black women’s experiences as a source of black women’s literature. Articles on female slave narratives, imaginative literature by black women, works of black women in academic disciplines, testimonies of black church and autobiographies are the authoritative sources for womanist theologians. Delores Williams précises in her foundational essay about the use of literature in womanist theology. Black feminism states that, racism, class oppression, and sexism are intricately mixed together. Black women encountered similar struggles as white women; however, they were witnessed to face concerns of diversity besides inequality on top priority.

It is an ardent fact that in the recent years womanism has emerged with a new ideology as a Political/social movement that was developed out of black women's reactions of discontentment. The sufferings of women are so high that this Feminist Movement found place as one along with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Feminism is one of the foundation texts that really worked as Revolutionary Force, and has an argument for black women’s liberation in African American society. Weathers disposes her belief that theory of women's liberation must be treated as a strategy for deliberate liaison with the whole revolutionary movement that consists of men, women and children. But she elevates that, we women should start this thing rolling and says,

“All women suffer oppression, even white women and especially Indian, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Oriental and Black American women whose oppression is tripled by any of the above-mentioned. But we do have females' oppression in common. This means that we can begin to talk to other women with this common factor and start building links with them and thereby build and transform the revolutionary force we are now beginning to amass.”(Mary Ann Weathers. Journal)

Black women were the fore lookers of freedom and identity and began initializing theory and establishing a new movement which brought in to a combination of issues and predicaments they were facing that included sexism, classism and racism. With a strong opposition to these inequalities. The black woman is irrevocably in demand of female definition and a complete recognition as a citizen, companion. She wants to be confidant, not a matriarchal villain or a step stool baby-maker. Her role advocates the complementary recognition of man and woman, not the competitive recognition of same.

Thus, a womanist is a "black feminist" who is highly inventive, adventurous, accountable, momentous, and conventionally capable. Dedicated to the continuous existence and

completeness of her entire community, she admires the essence, attitude, the Folk and herself. Hence, the phrase feminism expresses African-American feminist consciousness which is intensely embedded in the heart of the black community. As for as the phrase feminism is concern which is a concept created by Alice Walker within a critical methodological framework and is considered as a justice seeking movement to have liberty from heinous approaches of misery and conflicts towards a promising future.

Feminism, according to Morrison, is rudimentary and her novels are the embodiment of commitment to womanist policies. Morrison and other Afro American writers took steps to inherent Feminist ideas for survival and wholeness of self after Alice Walker. The concept of “Feminism” has been made unleashing in the novels of Toni Morrison. Through her writings, Morrison strictly defended marked shifts in politics and culture with in African American society that evidenced injurious to the collective progress of the community at large. As a feminist Toni Morrison has projected African American consciousness in specific contradictions in the social order. Woman’s universality is always appreciable because she loves men and women, sexually and non-sexually. She finds herself everywhere in dance, music, the spirit, food and in her vicinity. She fights and struggles and she takes care of herself having nothing to do with others. Being a womanist, she is always committed to live happily with her family and wholeness of entire people, with no gender discrimination. She does not differ with males except for health.

“Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender.” (Alice Walker New York Times)

This feminist concept of walker provides great support for the works done by womanist theologians. The novel *sula* by Toni Morrison, who deserves to be on the top listed womanist theologians, focuses on feminist attributes corresponding to various situations. A Noble prize winner, African American author, Toni Morrison has explored the experience and roles of black women in a racist and male dominated society in this book *Sula*. In the center of her complex and multi-layered narratives is the unique cultural inheritance of African-Americans. Morrison has been a member of both the National Council on the Arts and the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

According to Morrison, a degree to which a woman can fully express herself sexually is an indication of her ability to develop a positive self-image. However, women have been conditioned to believe that their relationship with men is superior to any other relationship and they should be submissive to them in all regards and stages of life. Hence, they are conditioned to believe that they are required to act as inferior non-thinkers. Morrison demonstrates through *Sula*, the difficulty women have in finding a relationship in which they can explore all aspects of their self.

Many black women writers like Harriet Jacobs and Harriet E Wilson were obsessed with a white image of virtue by the other women writers who were trying to assert their womanhood. Ironically, in their attempt to prove that, they possessed those same virtues that distinguished the cult of true womanhood. They adopted the literary consciousness of white women writers. Thus, the black women proved their worth and the humanitarian zeal they possessed enable them to transcend the boundaries of caste and class and meaningfully contribute to the great humanistic tradition of world literature.

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