UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF FEMINISM IN ISLAMIC AND WEST AFRICAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The terms in the conference title –Islamic feminisms, boundaries, politics capture key– concerns of this moment in the history of Islamic feminism. The pluralizing of Islamic feminism can be read either as announcing or suggesting the need to consider the notion of multiple Islamic feminisms. Literature as the mirror of social change and custom is the focal point from which one can gather the sociology of the culture and learn about women’s place within it. The common African ambience after colonial impact is seen in the Negritude Movement, a rallying cry that spurred the masses to awaken to the value of their own native culture and to break free of the psychological and physical shackles of colonial power. The current study is a comparative analysis of the feminism in some Islamic and Western African Literature.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘feminism’ was derived from the Latin word ‘Femina’ meaning ‘woman’ and was first used with regard to the issues of equality and Women’s Rights Movement. Ever since antiquity, there have been women fighting to free their half of the total population of the world from male oppression. Feminism is neither a fad nor a logical extension of the civil rights movement, but the protest against the legal, economic and social restrictions on the basic rights of women which have existed throughout history and in all civilizations. Naturally, the principles of feminism have been articulated long ago.

The concept of Feminist Literary Criticism came out as one of the crucial developments in literary studies. The term Feminism is derived from French term “feminist” which was used regularly in English for a belief in and advocacy of equal rights for women based on the idea of the equality of the sexes. Its studies have been broad and varied from the mid19th century until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

There are three waves of Feminist Literary Criticism, which are described as “Waves Model”:

- “First Wave” feminism: In the 1830s, the main issues were abolition of slavery and women’s rights. 1848 – Women’s Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls, NY. 1920 – the 19th Amendment guaranteed women the right to vote.
- “Second Wave” feminism: Feminism waned between the two world wars, to be "revived" in the late 1960's and early 1970's as "Second Wave" feminism. In this second wave, feminists pushed
beyond the early quest for political rights to fight for greater equality across the board, e.g., in
education, the workplace, and at home.

- "Third Wave" feminism: More recent transformations of feminism have resulted in a "Third
  Wave". It began in the early 1990s. Third Wave feminists often criticize Second Wave feminism
for its lack of attention to the differences among men and women due to race, ethnicity, class,
nationality, and emphasize "identity" as a site of gender struggle.

2. UNDERSTANDING FEMINISM

The word 'feminism' can't be clarified by a solitary expression or definition. It has emotional
understandings as per its fittingness and pertinence. It's been said that today there are the same number
of meanings of feminism as there are feminists. Every meaning of feminism is administered by numerous
components including one's own convictions, history and culture. Essentially, Julie Rivkin and Michael
Ryan in "Feminist Paradigms" compose and legitimize the idea of the present methodology towards
'feminism' as a talk which is striking:

On the off chance that the understudy of writing in the mid 1970s was moved to inquire
as to for what reason is there not a feminist analysis, the understudy of abstract
hypothesis in the late 1990s likely could be moved to move the accentuation and ask
however for what valid reason is there not a feminist analysis? The disappointments of
expansion can likewise be interpreted as the agonies of advancement, and if the tone of
feminist analysis has lost the celebratory solidarity of its initial days, it has picked up a
truly necessary multifaceted nature of investigation. (527)

It is essential to make reference to that numerous female activists abstain from labeling themselves as
feminists while underestimating all the political and social accomplishments of the developments started
by feminism. Culler questions "is this the passing of feminism or the triumph of feminism, when
standards it battled for abandon saying?" (Culler 17) Most unquestionably, this ought to be viewed as a
triumph of this hypothetical talk. The torments and inconveniences and allegations and contentions have
been come about into a little freed world for women to live in. In the abstract and hypothetical world, the
commitment of women was disregarded and debilitated while men's encounters were considered as
generally accepted fact. The various feminisms and their development can be viewed as the need of the
time and spot they have a place with. The female composing existed however it was not assessed or
evaluated with lively intrigue.

In Feminist Writings from Ancient Times to the Modern World: A Global Sourcebook and History,
Wayne shockingly, with the confirmations of verifiable records, abstract reports and archeological circles,
says that "Enheduanna", "evaluated 2350 BCE", is the primary recognizable female writer ever. She was
a writer as well as a cleric in the sanctuaries of Ur and Uruk, two Mesopotamian urban areas situated
close to the Tigris and Euphrates waterways in what is referred to today as Iraq. The sonnet Inanna 2000
years before the Bible speaks to the destiny of a goddess who addresses sexual talk. These confirmations
are verified in the University of Pennsylvania Museum which says the principal at any point composed
content in Sumerian language was finished by a woman, Enheduanna.
This shows female composing existed yet basic investigation of such writing or possibly acknowledgment of the equivalent wound up wrong. Such examinations done by feminist faultfinders legitimize their torment, enduring and uneasiness through their words. By considering the status of women in writing and crafted by women writers, feminist pundits have produced a portion of the realities in conventional ways to deal with writing with numerous huge hypotheses. One may discover women’s distance from the artistic standard and the reason might be the way that the abstract works of male creators reflect predominantly a male perspective on life which isn't really women’s experience yet considered as general certainties.

3. ISLAMIC FEMINISM

The early long periods of 1990s saw the rise of another feminist talk called Islamic Feminism, which separated from destroying the male developed religious translation, challenge the bogus presumptions the West connected with Islam. The year 1978 can be viewed as a defining moment in the historical backdrop of post-provincial just as Islamic Feminism. With the distribution of Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) an entirely different time of Eastern examinations started. Said utilized the term 'Orientalism' to feature west’s portrayal of the East as its inverse or as an upset mirror.

As per Said, West feminized East and credited characteristics that it normally connected with women: lethargic, lecherous, silly and even hazardous. Aside from the East, West depicted Muslim men all in all as in reverse and boorish and Muslim women as casualties of their bullheadedness and barbarity. What's more, previously having introduced them as detached players West included that these exploited people need deliverers for example Westerners to free and liberate them. GayatriSpivak totals it up as "white men sparing dark colored women from darker men" (Spivak, 1999, p.287).

As such, westerners sparing oriental women from oriental men and through this contention the West additionally supported its quality in the East. The socio-social sexual orientation jobs based on their physical properties had bound and confined women from achieving learning and training in antiquated occasions.

They had been encouraged fundamental abilities like caring for harvests, gathering kindling, bringing water, making sustenance, washing, cooking, bearing kids, dealing with them and looking for the solidarity to do this with energy like the workers without compensation. It was and in certain parts still is a typical comprehension among people alike that women are rationally frail, physically delicate and iconoclastic, genuinely trick and monetarily subject to men, his insight and on his pay. The mental molding came about into a feeling of feeling of inadequacy wherein training itself can be viewed as controlled talk among individuals.

Orientalism called forward much discussion and exchange, re-arousing the East to challenge the manner in which it was seen and spoken to by the West.
History and Definitions

Islamic Feminism was propounded by educated people, for the most part women, over the globe who called for jihad (autonomous thinking), re-examination of the holy sources, for example, Sunnah (saying and deeds of Prophet Muhammad (Peace arrive) and fiqh (statute), and furthermore worried on tafsir (the elucidation of the Quran). The Islamic feminists trust that the sexual orientation libertarian voice of the Quran has been pushed aside in the male centric adaptation of the religion and could be recovered just through a rehashing. They are firm in their conviction that the Quran does not make any refinement among people and gives them equivalent rights. Dr Margot Badran, a specialist on Middle East and Islamic investigations, characterizes Islamic Feminism as a:

…discourse and practice that derives its understanding and mandate from the Qur'an, seeking rights and justice within the framework of gender equality for women and men in the totality of their existence. Islamic feminism explicates the idea of gender equality as part and parcel of the Quranic notion of equality of all Insan (human beings) and calls for the implementation of gender equality in the state, civil institutions and everyday life. It rejects the notion of a public/private dichotomy (by the way, absent in early Islamic jurisprudence, or fiqh) conceptualising a holistic umma in which Quranic ideals are operative in all space (Badran, 2009, p. 242).

The term Islamic Feminism was begat in the mid 1990s by Shahla Sherkat (b.1956) and other Iranian feminists who composed for a women’s magazine called Zanaan. The term quickly picked up notoriety worldwide especially in Islamic nations, for example, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Indonesia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Yemen. In the year 1991, Nilufer Gole, a famous Turkish French humanist, utilized the term Islamic Feminism in her book The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling. Dr. Mai Yamani, a Saudi Arabian anthropologist and writer, utilized the term in her book Feminism and Islam (1996).

Islamic feminism, in any case, is portrayed by extraordinary assorted variety in all specific circumstances. Many talk, in this way, of Islamic feminism or of numerous appearances of Islamic feminism. A few, including the Islamic feminists themselves, have contended that it has turned out to be too mainstream to even consider describing the activism of neighborhood women who are excessively politically charged. As an interpretative undertaking, it centers around the reinterpretation of the Qur'an and on considering man centric society to be incongruent with the Islamic idea of confidence in God (tawhid). Amina Wadud, Omaira Abou Bakr, Rifaat Hassan and Asma Barlas are significant models. Islamic feminists are utilizing the idea of ijtihad to build up understandings of the Qur'an that draw out the libertarian sexual orientation motivation of the Qur'an.

These new translations, along these lines, comprise the reason for requesting full sex equity inside Islamic law in contemporary states in the Muslim world. The venture catches "the possibility of Islam without man centric society", which ensures women equivalent lawful and social rights to men. The African-American researcher Amina Wadud in her book Koran and Women: Rereading Sacred Texts attests the correspondence of women with men at the season of creation and as far as religious devotion or taqwa, as a structure for testing sexual orientation jobs, for example, result of culture, rather than religion. Says Amina Wadud-
The content is quiet. It needs translation, and has in every case verifiably and at present been exposed to elucidation. We influence it to represent us by asking of it. In the event that we are limited, we will find a restricted reaction or solution. On the off chance that we are open, it will open us to much more noteworthy conceivable outcomes (…)

4. AFRICAN AND WESTERN FEMINISMS

Anne Tibbie in African-English Literature properly sees that reasoning quickly, of West Africa as an independent artistic unit—which obviously it isn't, however cross-flows with East and South Africa are not solid, we may state that this segment of the landmass started its generation of a composed writing most recent of the three. At the point when as late as the 1940s, West Africa awoke, the quantity of its writers rapidly developed. Particularly so was the situation in Nigeria, notwithstanding the at least hundred indigenous dialects there. The aggregate of artists, writers, and playwrights in West Africa overall immediately surpassed those in the South or East.

West African fiction, as could be found in progress of well known Nigerian writers like Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Laureate, Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, T.M.Aluko, Amos Tutuola, J.P.Clarke, Flora Nwapa and others, offers to the local peruse and untouchable to edify him, the most enthusiastic articulation of social encounter amid the pilgrim time frame and the effect of outsider culture on the African mind and the local's longing to control his very own predetermination in a sovereign state. The development of abstract creation in Africa is attributed to critical authentic occasions like the landing of white man with his way of life, new confidence and new 'isms'.

The delineation of socio, political and social change in Africa has made the novel increasingly reasonable and very contemporaneous. Chinua Achebe, James Ngugi and others have attempted to examine African experience and the idea of change in African culture presented to the invasions of the West. African writers are delicate to the overarching states of life in Africa and have skillfully performed the recorded occasions to follow the development of African awareness. Achebe as a recorder worried about the authentic change endeavors to remake the Igbo society in his initial three books Things Fall Apart, No Longer At Ease and The Arrow of God. In these books, there is a specific requesting of occasions to uncover a disastrous example to record the impacts of expansionism and the awful outcomes of African experience with Europe.

Virginia Woolf, in her article, cites the historical backdrop of England Professor Trevelyan, who takes note of that women are "bolted up, beaten and tossed over the room, with no curse on the open effect" and that marriage isn’t"deal" individual warmth ". Yet, of family avarice, "marriage is frequently completed" while one or the two gatherings were in the support. "Every one of these practices were regular in around 1470 and were made for open endorsement, so Similarly, the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her article composing, we should all be feminists (2014), summons a comparable treatment of women in his nation, in other words of a youthful assaulted in a Nigerian college ..

It is angry that "the reaction of numerous youthful Nigerians, the two people, has gone something like this: 'Indeed, assault isn't right, however what a young woman does in a stay with four youngsters". He
laments that "Nigerians have grown up considering women naturally liable" and "trusting that men will consider men wild creatures without restraint is by one way or another adequate." Adichie, as ChielozonaEze, is a piece of third era African writers who "trust that sexual orientation uniformity in most African social orders has not yet emerged," since numerous African women are as yet esteemed through conventional social objectives.

African epic of the nineteenth and twentieth century has commonly delineated the male centric culture ruled by male. Women in the general public are consigned to an auxiliary spot. Forthcoming Katherine in her disputable article Women without Men:

The Feminist Novel in Africa urges women to stand up for themselves and shape their very own fate. The feminist writers of Africa depict women not just as taking dynamic and imparted jobs to men yet additionally as finding their very own predetermination . . . predetermination with retribution.

That as people with rights, wants and poise additionally focuses on that under the watchful eye of applying the new laws that advance equity among people, even young women were given over to marriage before leaving the belly of their moms in pre-birth chambers, as pursues, "if my better half brings forth a young woman, it's yours." These three settings of abuse of women, all identified with the rooms, a perplexing image speaking to the individual and the three shocking open responses are comparative, yet they don't reveal to us anything critical about the room that is definitely not a human spot. In any case, I might want to call attention to that, through these instances of women abuse in connection to the corridor, these writers are battling for positive change in the lives of women.

African epic rising up out of the fundamental pressure between the idea of dish African solidarity and national personality vouches for the writers' conviction that 'fiction has an imperative social duty', and the greater part of the material of the account comprises 'graphing their own social reality'. It manages the accuracy and the situation of the minimized woman attempting to support herself and her non-substance status and dissatisfactions eclipsing her reality or more all the gagged voice-a casualty of everlasting debasement and mortification battling hard to be heard however this with the propensity of the run of the mill African custom and culture.

5. CONCLUSION

Furthermore, genuine African feminism, unlike Western feminism, is a common fight of women alongside men against foreign exploitation, the acknowledgement of certain iniquities in traditional societies, women's financial self-reliance, and the focus on women's issues, such as their lack of choice in marriage, the oppression of barren women, genital mutilations, and the look for possible avenues of choice for women. While the first and second 416 Differentiating African and Western Feminisms through Room Symbolism generations of African women writers were cautious with the term 'feminism' because of its Western baggage, the third generation to which Adichie belongs conceive feminism differently. As ChielozonaEze shows, they "conceive of their feminism not in opposition to the West, but in relation to it [and sometimes independently from it]. They understand feminism as a moral issue that
transcends cultural differences precisely, because it seeks to enhance the dignity of individuals without disrupting community cohesion” [3, ch 2], that is very dear to African people.

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