Name

Instructor Name

Subject

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Essay

In postcolonial literature, a woman is doubly colonized due to white colonial supremacy and secondly, due to her status as a woman in a patriarchal society. Moreover, before postcolonial feminism, feminist discourse and theories were only fixated on the experiences of western women. Postcolonial feminism talked about the trials and tribulations of a third world woman in her own culture and space, it also gave them the Narrative power of their discourse. The poem *One Continent to Another*, by Grace Nicholas, highlight the themes of forced migration, slavery, loss of man’s pride and identity issue. The essay, *Not you/Like me* by Minh-ha is selected as a critical lens to study the above themes in the poem to study the background and criticism of colonial rule concerning female identity issues and cultural erosion. These themes are studied against the critical lens of Postcolonial feminism and the issues of identity and cultural threat to an African woman in the colonial rule are discussed.

Postcolonial feminist discourse extensively talks about the issues of forced migration and its horrific impact on the African people because this forced migration started slavery in the 18th century in Africa under colonial rule. In the middle of the poem, the writer has mentioned the start of slavery and she says: "the Congo surfaced/so did Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast" (Grace, p.2). These lines point towards the forced migration of Africans from their land and through the passage of Sierra Leone, slavery started and they were forced to work under inhumane conditions for a White master. They only belonged to their native land but they had to live in other places as laborers or slaves and not as settlers. For instance, the poem, through the use of the connotation "child of the middle passage" refers to the positioning of Africa in the middle of the Asian and Pacific Ocean. The connotative meaning addresses a slave African girl who is a born slave and her birthright, freedom is taken away from her and she is forced into slavery. In her essay, Minh-ha, views the practice of forced migration and slavery as a way to exercise the colonial dominance and hegemonic control over the Africans.

The theme of identity, serves as a powerful reminder of Colonial supremacy over the African people’s lives and their land, however, this poem exclusively deals with the female identity issues. In the poem, the poet has referred to an African woman as "she" and used repetition of "her" to point to the identity control in the colonial era. It also celebrates her strength as a woman but at the same time, the line "But being a woman/she moved again" (Grace, p.6), points at the patriarchal set up in a third world. Women are not given the right to voice their opinion and their feelings are silenced because they can only be represented by the men of their society. This point is extensively debated by Minh-ha in her essay and according to her, patriarchy in a colonial setup works in three ways. Firstly, it positions them under the control of a White colonial master and their rights of representation and identity are taken away. Secondly, at domestic levels, they are represented by the male members of the society and they cannot express their emotions, feelings, and concerns openly. Lastly, they are denied the right of "subjectivity" and their voices are silenced in a patriarchal setup, these three ways result in the double colonization of an African woman (Minh-ha, p. 373).

Moreover, the postcolonial female identity issues also deal with the idea of the male gaze where women and their identity are viewed from a male perspective and they cannot demand their rights over their own body and sexuality. In an instance, Grace points to this idea: “and the men who seed the children/she wasn’t prepared for that look in their eye” (Grace, p.6). In a patriarchal setup, women are given passive and domestic roles and they cannot demand equality from men.

Similarly, she criticizes the male hegemony at the domestic level and calls them "primitive beings, who does not know about soul and body” (Minh-ha, p. 363). The idea of “veil” is discouraged by Minh-ha in her critique of the power roles, she says that African women are portrayed in veils by the Western canon and not as taking active roles in the society.

At the end of the poem, the African culture is pointed through the symbols of "birds" and a nostalgic tone is set because of the loss of native culture and land. In an alien land, an African woman cannot adopt her culture and African cultural values are significant to her. Minh-ha, stresses upon the need for culture validation and the power or authority of African people over their tradition and values. She says that when an outsider (colonizer) describes their culture to the world, it stereotypes it and portrays it in a negative light for the world to see. Moreover, the power over one's culture does not validate culture, it results in the powerful silencing the voice of the Other (Minh-ha, 375).

The identity issues faced by African women serve as a reminder of their dark past and even after the abolishment of slavery, they suffer the loss of their true identity representation. Moreover, due to fixed gender roles in a patriarchal setup, women are still fighting for equality and their subjective representation in society. In her essay, the idea of “subjectivity”, deals with the notion that demanding subjective representation in the literary and mass media space is the fundamental right of women. Likewise, postcolonial feminism allows women-centered narratives and discusses their colonial experience based on the memory of slavery, forced migration, identity, male gaze and loss of cultural values.

**Works Cited**

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