

Women from the Margins: An Exploration of the African Women Marginalization in the South African Context from Postcolonial Feminist Perspective

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Abstract : As one of the sub-Saharan African countries, South Africa has a majority of women living at the receiving end of all ferocious atrocities, afflictions and social ills such as utter poverty, unemployment, morbidity, sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based and domestic violence. The response to these social ills that permeate the South African context like wildfire requires postcolonial feminism as a lens which needs to directly address this particular context. In the empirical study that was conducted among the Zulu people about Zulu young women in the South African context, it was found that a postcolonial young woman has a lot of social challenges that militate against her. In her struggle to liberate herself, there are layers of oppression that she has to deal with before attaining emancipation of any kind. These layers of oppression emanate from postcolonial effects on cultural norms that come with patriarchal issues, racial issues as the woman of colour and socio-economic issues as the poverty-stricken marginalised woman. Such layers also render marginalized women voiceless on many occasions, and hence the kind of feminism that needs to be applied in this context has to give them a voice, worth and human dignity that they deserve. From the postcolonial feminist perspective, this paper examines the condition of women from the margins and seeks the ways in which the layers of oppression could be disengaged. In the process of the severed layers of oppression, these women can be uplifted to becoming the women of worth, restored to life-giving dignity from the inferiority complex of racial discrimination and liberation from all forms of patriarchy and its upshots that keep them bound by gender inequality. This requires, in particular, postcolonial feminism that would find profound ways of reaching into the deep-seated socialization and internalization of every kind of prejudice against women. It is the kind of feminism that questions the status core even among those who consider themselves feminists. With the ruination of all postcolonial layers of oppression, women in the margins could find real emancipation that they have always longed for through feminism that will take into consideration their context. This calls for the rethinking of feminism in different contexts because the conditions of the oppressed woman of the South cannot be the same as the conditions of the woman who considers herself oppressed in the North.

Keywords : exploration, feminism, postcolonial, margins, South African, women

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