

THE FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MOH'S *THE EDGE*

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winnieog65@gmail.com – 09032646641. a victim of circumstance in a cultural traditional practice

Abstract

*Fictions get women as protagonists in novel that have emerged over the years and provided a cultural phenomenon that cannot be disregarded. It is likely to analyse the development of feminism in the field of literature by combining it with feminist studies in a social context. The essay begins with an introduction to the relevant background of Women in years past until recently had no fulfillment in life as most of the things done was imposed on them by the males - who are seen to be superior in terms of everything. This gapping class distinction which gave the women an inspiration to struggle which now is seen as a fight for equality among the men which in recent years has seen so much modifications. The African culture or society is a patriarchal society which sees the relevance of a woman only if attached to a male figure. The African culture is bias to women, female efforts for equality seemed almost impossible but the growing civilization of our society opened up ways for the coming of women writers to make cases for themselves. Women do not want to fit into positions or roles imposed on them, they want their voices heard, they want to be independent, they want fulfillment in themselves and this should be considered not with wavering eyes. The work takes a description of the present state of research and theoretical framework of feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) that will be applied. Next, this work as a voice brings to focus Moh's *The Edge* to push to limelight what is seen as injustice to the women folk and what society has chosen to be the fulfillment of women and not for herself. Finally, the purpose of the study is to analyse what kind of demands for feminism are revealed in feminist novels, what are the progress and limitations of "feminist novels" and what kind of development can bring better results, at last, what we have learned and thought about.*

Keywords: Feminism, Society, Culture, Genital Mutilation.

INTRODUCTION

The growing civilization of our society paved way for coming of women into the literary arena to make a case for themselves. In focus, the powerful female compelling voices from the subsumed group pushed to the frontiers of our society the radical and revolutionary vision of the women.

Feminism is more than an ideology, more than a philosophy. In a wider scope of studies, researchers have shown that there are lots of rationale behind women who are into the literary scene to showcase their multifaceted and multi-variation grievances in terms of oppression under their male counterparts, society in diaspora and cultural disservice to them that is for women to be independent of their own financially and otherwise. This is hinged to the fact that feminism was not designed, but grew out of experiences of certain times, places and factors of social organization.

In the widest sense of the term – feminism as a search for the woman's social equality and individual fulfillment are engaged in searching and critical enquiry into the quality of women's live while raising pointed questions about the effects of entrenched social attitudes. Helen Chukwuma 1994 (Feminism in African Literature) defines feminism as "a region of inferiority and strolling for recognition" (Introd.Pg.iv)

Purpose of the study

The feminist critical theory (FCDA) will be used in combination with the specific texts- Moh's *The Edge* for the following analysis. Analyze the demands for feminism revealed in women's novels of different periods, taking into account the author's ideological tendencies and inner motivations revealed in the Moh's

The Edge. A consideration of the progressive and limiting aspects of women's fiction and what developments can bring about better results. The researcher's own views and reflections on women's fiction

Principles Of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis(FCDA)

Feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) as a tool raises people's critical awareness of social issues such as discrimination and inequality. This gender inequality has become an important research focus based on the fact that scholars who contributed to the creation of FCDA. additionally, feminist research and FCDA was formalized with the purpose of clarifying the contribution of feminist thought.

While maintaining a critical concern, the FCDA also argues that individuals' social identities change from one context to another and that the categories of femininity and masculinity, rather than being universal and dual, are varied, changing and pluralistic.

Five Interrelated Principles of the FCDA

- I. The FCDA believes that gender is an ideology that divides people into two distinct groups based on sexual difference and naturalness.
- II. Power is closely linked to feminist critique. Although the feminist movement has not ceased, the effects of male hegemony and patriarchal society have made it difficult for women to wield power.
- III. Gender is performative and constitutive. FCDA argues that in the current historical period, men and women are consciously 'performing' masculine and feminine identities.
- IV. Feminist criticism is reflexivity. Person or institution may use feminism for non-feminist purposes/Therefore, constant reflection on itself is necessary.
- V. FCDA's scholarship is considered analytical activism.

In the course of research, as well as the transmission, making society more inclusive and making gender less of a primary requirement in determining self-consciousness and relationships with others is the crucial goal.

Based on the Moh's *The Edge* the researcher have chosen the second and third theories to analyse for specific texts.

Method

Moh's *The Edge* is to substantiate the traditionality of the circumcision. It is hailed as a masterpiece of Female Leader novel. The researcher has chosen this text not only because it is classics of the feminist novel, but the period in which it was written make it uniquely relevant for analysing feminist thought in the present period.

There is the conviction that women are relegated to the background, that women suffer injustices mentally, physically and spiritually on a daily basis on account of their sex.

Feminism is geared towards a revision and reformative impact on the society. Feminist philosophers work within all the major traditions of the philosophical scholarship including analytic, pragmatic and continental philosophy. In the mid – 1800's the term feminist was used to refer to the qualities of 'females' and it was not until after the first International Women's Conference in Paris in 1848 that the term, following the French term *feministes* was used regularly in English for a belief and advocacy of equal rights for women based on the idea of the equality of the sexes.

The earnest struggles by women within the society yielded nothing; this is hinged in the fact that feminism was not designed.

Nature and Scope

As an organized force around the world, African Feminism requires a theoretical account of embodied gender differences that is ground in the complex realities of African Women's everyday experiences. This theory must specify and analyze how our lives intersect with a plurality of power formations, historical encounters and blockages that shape our experiences across time and space.

We need a framework that enables us to examine what it means to be who we are, and at the same time encourages us to realize who we want to become; In this way we will be able to move away from deterministic propositions, reductive notion of African exceptionalism.

My goal here is not to survey the history of feminism as set of ideas or as a series of political movements but rather it is to sketch some of the central uses of the term that are most relevant to those interested in contemporary feminist philosophy.

Biography

Felicia Alu Moh is an accomplished teacher, feminist and a playwright. Moh was born in Amasiri in Afikpo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State in 1964, Nigeria. She holds a Ph.D in African Literature from the University of Calabar. In addition to this she has published several articles and academic journals. She is married with kids, and has worked with the British Council. Among her literary works is a short story titled: *The Edge* – the very book under review in this work. *The Edge* is a gripping story of a young, female undergraduate, who is trapped in a cultural web, and dies as a result. It provokes thoughts on aspects of African's Cultural heritage especially the question of female circumcision, like most of her contemporaries. Moh was greatly affected by the failure of African Liberation struggles to radically alter life for their people. Within this culture, however, there was recognition of the existence of serious fault lines which needed urgent review and repair, one of such areas was that of gender and societal construct of cultural heritage. It is this theme – the need to end this wholly and collective cultural aberration – that reverberates throughout Moh's writings. Dr. Felicia Moh A. imparted in me the inspiration by the desire to know something – that change registers the alterations of the relations of meaning within the culture.

Critical Review of *The Edge*

Under the African "Eyes" Africa feminist writers draw attention to the deleterious effects of scholarship that utilizes Afrocentric frame works to analyze the experiences of African women.

Felicia Moh's *The Edge* has specific historical and social context. I have recognized and accepted to learn the text to become unintrusive, important, and patient to the point of tears while learning any possible lessons. These lessons constitute the motivating force behind my burning desire to write about Moh, because her books represent a multicultural feminist perspective.

The Edge is a heart touching book, which encapsulates a story of young female undergraduate (Tess) who finds herself as a victim of circumstance in a cultural traditional practice, Moh wrote with the intension of contributing to the ongoing discourse dilemma of African womanhood.

Drawing from the net, a source information posite that the type of traditional practice which takes place in Moh's *The Edge* which involves the circumcision of the female genital organ is known as genital mutilation, and the other aspect of it which involves the stitching together of the labia is as well known as infibulation; the book under review has portrayed female genital mutilation as most controversial and widely discussed of all harmful traditional practices. F.G.M has been defined as comprising of all procedures which involve partial or total removal or injury to the external female genitalia. Here is the procedure as pointed out in "The Edge" by Moh, --- she took hold of Tess's clitoris, with one sharp stroke of the knife, she excised it of (p.47). Same book explains further the procedure of infibulation; ___ she held the two bleeding lips together and stitched them with a needle and thread, leaving a tiny space for the passage of urine and menstrual blood (p.47).

This practice is mainly for cultural, religious and physical reasons from the perspective of public health, female circumcision is much more damaging than male circumcision, FGM is reported to be practiced in over 26 – 30 countries with an estimated 2 million girls at risk annually. This is inline with what happened to Tess in *The Edge* by Moh. She lost her life due to complications that are related to the practice. It constitutes a health hazard with short - and - long term physical complications and psychological effects. Tess goes through a horrific travail with both legs tied together depriving her of movement for seven days! She suffers common early complications of hemorrhage and severe pains which led to her death out of shock. In the addition to the above and from an inferred information gathered in a book titled: Psychological Aspect of Female Circumcision by Baasher T.J. Prolong bleeding may led to severe anemia as well and can affect the growth of a poorly nourished child. Local and systemic infectors are also common, infections of the wound, abscesses, ulcers, delayed healing, septicemia, tetanus and gangrene have all been reported. Recurrent stitch abscesses and the splitting of poorly healed scars particularly when they occur over clitoral artery can plague women for many years.

In Moh's *The Edge* to substantiate the traditionality of the circumcision is the presence of an image of a goat that is attached to it. In African cosmology, the killings of animals like goat etc are signs of sacrifices to the gods of the land. It is strongly believed that when an animal's blood spills to the ground, it appeases the gods or ancestors so is the blood of a virgin. So in this regard the Woman's blood symbolizes sacrifice as Tess's grand mother explains to her that she is about to be initiated into womanhood. That is to say that it is a tradition that every woman must pass through and the physical spilling of genital blood as the initiation to appease the gods of the land in order for her to become a full grown woman. Identity here is often stronger than individual interest and it may take some time and new information for people to abandon this aged - old harmful traditional practice.

Review

The truth is no ethical defence can be made to preserve a cultural practice that destroys women's health and interferes with their sexuality. It is however important that those who are alien to the culture make themselves familiar with the causes and meanings of cultural practices and relate them to ideas of sex roles in their own societies. Cultural identity is of paramount importance to everyone defending their identity.

In poorer societies where the extended family is the principal source of social and economic security and has not been replaced by the modern state, women have very few options outside marriage. Female circumcision is the physical making of the marriageability of women because it symbolizes social control of their sexual pleasure and their reproduction.

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