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## FEMINIST CONCERN IN ALICE WALKER AND GLORIA NAYLOR

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### ABSTRACT:

*Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor are the most aware and alert authors who are vocal about women's suffering and their place and position in the male dominated society. They uphold the cause of women and make writing their weapon against the inhumanities and indignities hurled at them. Their fiction is factual and full of force of feminism. Their characters are a perfect emblem of modern womanhood that is undaunted and assertive. The vision of both the writers is the betterment of their sisters who should be confident, creative and cooperative. This paper attempts to explore the character delineation in the works of Walker and Naylor and through which their feminist concern is studied.*



**KEYWORDS:** *Domination, Feminist, Ideologies, Male, Patriarchal.*

### INTRODUCTION :

."She was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused." (Greer 68)

In the light of the above quote it is vivid that the subjugation of women has been a norm in the society. Men have mercilessly enjoyed making women victims due to power and position thrust upon men by the patriarchy. The secondary position of women is detested and disliked by both the writers in the discussion. Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor have

established a narrative of opposition by organized and continuous renunciation of reading of the subjects of female pursuit in their literary work. The fervent feminine outlooks and strong ideological representations make the authors able to proclaim that women are not "Gaily content in a world of bed room and kitchen, sex, babies and home." (Friedan 32)

The feminist writers have got great success to present the real concept of patriarchy or sexism. They have realistically delineated a large number of circumstances where woman is made only to be henpecked by man. These writers are courageous that they boldly opposed the phallo-centric power

rules their novels. Their fictions became medium to resist male dominated patriarchal culture and they explicated their conceptual statements for a bisexual society. They have invented big numbers of female protagonists who have profoundly internalized paternal assumptions and are not aware of its inauspicious effects on their lives or are impotent to dissent it. The ideologies of feminist writers are always expressed by the protagonist or "the female hero" who owns the character of modern female. These women of present generations are portrayed in such a manner that they become subservient for the corruption of patriarchal ideologies which have been ruling

the positions and activeness of the people of various generations. In order to accent the crisis of Afro-American women, Alice Walker in her novels has aped some of the characters of the opposite gender and at the same time has perfected some of the other female characters. Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor have used different schemes to build up the feminist sensation and to support female liberation. Their black female characters can be divided into some groups established on their general features. The first category of females presented by them is the women who are not courageous to oppose the patriarchal curse. They have not wished to come out of such inhuman condition. Like puppet they are living under their father's or husband's mercy. They are equal to animal that have no dignity of characters. These are the females who are ready to collaborate with those men who limit them to develop and keep them in hyponymy. These types of females are always blamed by the writers because these female characters are foolish and have no sense of their status. They are selfish and have no feelings for other females.

Here the feminist writers like Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor want that if females want to get their identity back, they will have to unite first. The female bonding is essential to fight against male exploitation and subjugation. The novels of Walker like "The Color Purple", "The Temple of my Familiar", "Meridian" etc. present the need of unity for black females to deal with their sufferings. In the same way Gloria Naylor's novels like "The Women of Brewster Place" and "Linden Hills" have the themes of female bonding. All women should come together and face their male exploiters. If these women want liberation from the clutches of male domination they will have to be one. Their oneness and unity is really the only way to uplift from their melancholic condition.

There is another category of females who are not aware about their rights. They are confused with the clouds of ignorance and entirely have famine of the consciousness for the need to change. We can say among them many women have not got education, they are literate and hence they are afraid to revolt against any type of injustice. Some woman are so simple and innocent that they are even unknown about own rights. Throughout their lives, they have faced exploitation and overburden. The new generation of female characters come in next and most essential category who are well educated and determined for a change in social order. These new women don't wish to bear any type of cruelties. They have wisdom to take right decision. These females are politically illumed and deeply understand their deprived fellow woman's excruciation who unwillingly yet successfully conquer their troubles and sorrows and contribute a life of selflessness. Their feelings and deeds show their political way of rumination. The females who are talented, independent confident and self-sustaining are the free women or new woman.

Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor have invented such characters in their novels that directly and at times in a mask, are the representations of the feminist awareness and conceptional temperament of the respective novelists. In such case, an attempt is made as to how the feminist writers have deconstructed the unflattering stamps of females as subordinate sex objects and have invented powerful and persuading female charismas who engross the fundamental and essential places in their fictitious world.

It is indeed very courageous to discover and evaluate the ideologies that influence all social conventions and practices in cultural circumstances. The feminist writers absorb themselves in reviewing and interpreting all the patricentric ideologies penetrating words, actions and thoughts of people.

Feminist literary criticism postulates a kind of demonstrative access to literature. Feminist literary criticism is a type of study which involves an act of regular opposition to the acute patriarchal mythos which is expressed by the use of literary language. Therefore, it is viewed as the responsibility of a feminist critic to read afresh the text and read in between the

lines to remove every phallo-centric rule and exhibit them with full of courage with feminist political orientation.

Their women are absolutely strong and brave who dauntlessly pick apart the customs and convention in the phallo-centric horizon. At the time of exhibiting female character, Gloria Naylor attacks the sexual and biracial stereotypes of Afro-American women. It is proved that her female characters are animated by the traditional image of black women, and they are a strong depiction of the free women like Mattie Michael Kiswana, Kora Lee and Etta of her novel "The Women of Brewster Place". Similarly, the dominant character of Alice Walker like Shug Avery, Sofia and Celie are no less than lustrous start in the sky. These female characters are inspiring for other Afro-American women too. These audacious black women embody the abstract confrontation and feminine rage of the writers.

The female characters of Walker and Gloria Naylor are not average human beings with just flesh and blood. They are strong with great willpower. These black females are not unequal to other human beings; they have intellect, desires and dreams too. These women, like other human feel disenchantment, crave and choler too. But their decision to grow the caterpillar's status within the cocoon of patricentric envelopment which limits and forbids the liberty and development of women under the pretense of shelter makes them different and uncomparable. In such a dominant patriarchic atmosphere they plainly rejected the rule and regulation of male organization. It requires great heart to come out of such dreadful conditions. Hence, these feminist writers forcefully proclaim that the unity of women can give them status and freedom. If the black slave women have to live in free and happy environment they must assist one another at any cost. The female bonding is the only way for their dignity and identity.

Both Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor have projected conventional phallogocentric prospects of femininity but they intrepidly disclose the emptiness of these images and then bravely upset and deconstruct these implanted sexist projections and portraiture of womanhood in a very lurid fashion. Alice walker and Gloria Naylor have also done the reconstruction of answerable modern black women with reasonable qualities and self-fulfilling hopes.

In their fictional works, Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor have disapproved unrealistic images of the overstated openhandedness of maternity and the exultant complacency of wifehood. They are feminist writers who have intentionally contrived bright and strong images of women in their novels. The protagonists in their novels are endowed with attractive qualities such as egotism, assurance and self-assertion. Alice Walker writes through her character:

"All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men. But I never thought I'd have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I loves Harpo, she say. God knows I do. But I'll kill him dead before I let him beat me." (The Color Purple)

Some black women characters in their novels are hard-working, active and sensible women who are completely aware about their responsibilities. They also wish that they should be given appreciation and equal status like men in the patriarchal society. These women want to give significance to their life. They desire to cross the boundaries of their domestic world in order to make their live purposeful and fruitful. They don't want to bear any kind of restriction and burden on them which earlier women faced. The characters in their novels are self-important but certainly not self-absorbed and egoistical women.

The problems which black females have faced in their lives are exhibited by Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor by placing their female characters in an actual and difficult life-situations where in black females lose their power to confront future hopefully. They intend to clear that women are always dominated both physically and mentally in such a manner that they cannot even think about their freedom from the conventional patriarchic framework.

The exhibition of woman as a submissive, innocent and emotional is totally rejected and disapproved by feminist writers like Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor. It is very essential reason that the female protagonists in their novels are not conventionally and traditionally beautified by them. Their protagonists in the end come out as revolutionary women who dismantle the entire bad and exploiting rule by the androgenic society. One of the protagonists of Naylor in *The Women of Brewster Place* utters out the agony of women.

“Brewster Place became especially fond of its colored daughters as they milled like determined spirits among its decay, trying to make it home. ... They cursed, badgered, worshiped, and shared their men. Their love drove them to fling dishcloths in someone else's kitchen to help him make the rent, or to fling hot lye to help him forget that bitch behind the counter at the five-and-dime. ... They came, they went, grew up, and grew old beyond their years. Like an ebony phoenix, each in her own time and with her own season had a story.”  
Gloria Naylor

These female protagonists are clearly confirmed that their husband would never truly satisfy their feelings. They know that even their children would not be able to fill up the emptiness in their lives because feeling and emotions of any females can only be comprehended by female. Hence, the feminists always stress on the female bonding. This black females bonding is the only basic pillar which can assist them to survive.

Eventually, Walker and Naylor want to give women a dignified status in the society. Through one of her women in *Mama Day*, Gloria Naylor puts, “She could walk through a lightning storm without being touched; grab a bolt of lightning in the palm of her hand; use the heat of lightning to start the kindling going under her medicine pot. She turned the moon into salve, the stars into swaddling cloth, and healed the wounds of every creature walking up on two or down on four.”

The idea of a merry and most exuberant is depicted in the works of both the writers.

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