

Gender Relations and Industrialization in Literature

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Abstract

In the world today, women's issues dominate discussions in many areas of life like economics, politics and labour. Women's roles in many aspects of life are being re-examined. Gender issues have succeeded to a larger extent in creating awareness of the oppression of women. It has helped to check a great degree of these oppressions. As a literary theory, feminism is contributing its quota in shaping knowledge about women and gender roles cross culturally. This work adopted Threefold pattern theory of gender because women have proven beyond reasonable doubt that they are not inferior to men but help mate and should treat equally with men. The work did not limit to biblical achievement the women made both in the Old and New Testament but equally discussed what women have achieved in this 21st century in various field of lives such as education, economics, politics and in religious matters the work concludes that women should give more opportunity to use their God giving talents and recommends that in this era of industrial revolutions women should allow to be fully participated in all aspect of lives that can bring progress and development to the world at large.

Keywords: Gender, Womanism, Black Feminism, Industrialization

Introduction

Throughout history and across cultures, women and girls have faced innumerable challenges and injustices but the findings on the level of understanding of Women Ministry as epitomized in Jesus and Paul's time revealed that majority of the respondents accepted the fact that women have proven their ability to function in many ways prescribed to their sex at home and they have the right to hear confession, to preach and to read scriptures in public, the reason for this opinion by the majority of the scholars could be based on the fact that they perceived man and woman were created in the image of God and that Paul says that we are one in Christ. This opinion agrees with the submission of Akintunde (2004) who admits that both genders have a right of representation at all levels of decision making and she expects that the church should, therefore, be a living example of a free community of women and men, a community that is really set free in Christ. She maintains that when we look at scripture as a whole, the conclusion seems inescapable that human beings cannot and should not make categorized rules to exclude women or any other group of persons from leadership in the church. This also agrees with many biblical references such as Genesis 1:26- 27 which provides a basis for social justice in Christianity since God created human beings in the image of God, Psalm 103:6 identifies God as the one who executes righteousness and justices for all who are oppressed and Zephaniah 3:5 corroborates this position. Although, some pointed out that there was neither women among the twelve disciples nor any female mentioned of apostle but there were lot of examples where women have categorically discussed to have assisted both the ministry of Jesus and the early church in general.

And being in Bethany at the house of Simeon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on his head. (3) But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said why was this fragrant oil wasted (4) But Jesus said "let her alone, why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for me" (Mark 14: 3-4).

Findings further revealed that majority of the Biblical scholars agreed that in as much as the message, Good News, *Kerygma* that means the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus that we preach which is above the administrative work of the church was first proclaimed by a woman, there is no gainsaying in the fact that women have the basic qualifications for being named disciples, women not were only Jesus accomplices witnessed all miracles, heard all his teachings, and witnessed his passion, death and resurrection. In addition, they took care of the material needs of Jesus and disciples with their possession, Jesus and his disciples were freed from the concern about what they would eat or wear (Luke 12:22, 30) with these gets they are portrayed as prototypes of an ethos that is to be valid universally among the people of God Akintunde (2004).

Mary and Martha have been regarded as the most important and prominent women in the life of Jesus apart from his mother. The evidence lies in the gospel accounts of how two featured in his life (John 11:1-44; 1-11) these two women are best known for their hospitality and love for Jesus and disciples. The above verses are few examples of references which show how women supported the ministry of Jesus Christ and the Bible was not silent about their activities, therefore, priestly duties should not be based on gender.

Majority of biblical scholars has admitted that women need to upgrade themselves academically to meet up the challenges in the society and to be current and relevant as women of ministry for God uses anyone that surrenders himself or herself for God's work.

When King Josiah, the very young, God fearing, spiritual reformalist, sent Hilkiah, the priest, to go and find out what God wanted him and his subject to do about the book of the law which was discovered during repair work in the temple, it was to Huldah that Hilkiah went: so Hilkiah the priest... Went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Sallom ... (she dwelt in Jerusalem...) (2 kings 22: 14a). And she gave them the message, prefixed by the phrase that many prophets after her used: them she said to them thus said the Lord God of Israel... (2 Kings 22: 15a). It is very significant that it was to this prophetess that the king sent a priest for divine message, a very powerful evidence that she was known to be in communication with God in a special way. (Sowunmi, 2009).

There is no doubt about the fact that academic qualification can still help in the ministerial work, but in the bible time those that were recorded for doing exploit were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and not because of male or because they were head of the family as men but because they surrounded themselves by the power of the spirit for Joel added that "add it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh: Your sons and daughters shall prophesy"

For this reason, women are not just marginalized in both in the Church or in the secular work; but they are placed under the authority of the men. They are denied of any leadership role, especially in ecclesiastical duties. (Acts 21: 8) gave the information about Philip has having four virgin daughters who prophesied. This account presented to us the first recognized record of Christian prophetesses in the apostolic age. Luke throws interesting light on the ministry of gifted women in public ministry in the apostolic age. Trenchard (2013) buttresses this as he notes that such gifted women had more than a merely domestic ministry in the apostolic times. From Trenchard observation, it is apparent that like the Old Testament prophets, who were to some extent national leaders, prophets in the apostolic age appeared in the leadership of the Christian community. Oderinde (2012) posts that the fact that many of the women in Mark took the initiative of serving Jesus and his male disciples, meeting their needs at that time, shows that women can reason. They are full of potentials which could be used for the furtherance of the gospel edification of the church, but have not been utilized because they have been lying down, hid behind men, surrounded by fear and suspicion, associated with passion and carnality.

Hilkert, raises some pertinent questions; is it not possible that the charging of women as the first official witnesses, the first preachers of the gospel, is actually part of the great surprise of the resurrection? Is it not commissioning by the risen Jesus, rather than cultural or religious limitations of the time, which determines who Christianity's official witnesses are? The fact that God raised up women like Deborah or Huldah whose decisions affected the entire nation implies that God could commit ministries to women today even if it were not only sharing the vision of Jesus but also entering into Jesus' commitments and praxis (Oderinde, 2012).

Furthermore, Oderinde advocated that church leadership in Nigeria today cannot but follow Christ's example in lifting up women and releasing them to function effectively, independently and as co-ministers in the Church. She added that the church needs to remember the "Union and companionship with Christ derive doing the will of God as Christ does and not from being male or female". Some women have remarkable wisdom and leadership qualities. Though, women have been restricted in the use of their spiritual gifts, but when and where their influence has been profound, as was the case with Aimee Simple Mcpherson of the Foursquare Gospel Church, and Catherine Both of the Salvation Army. (Oderinde, 2012).

Black Feminism or Black Womanism

The limitation of mainstream feminism led to the birth of black feminism. The black womanism argued that feminism's central focus should be human emancipation and the "construction of more egalitarian societies—one in which both women and men are freed, from sexist and other forms of oppression" (Akorede 2012:43). The black feminists insist that racial and sexual oppression were the fundamental issues in black women's oppression. Walker (1970), one of the leading black feminists and the proponent of womanism insisted that the black woman must begin to speak up for herself. Christian (1989:12), apparently advocating Walker's position, observes that if black women do not tell the world who they are other people will say it badly for them when we speak ... we validate our experiences. I am a black woman, which means that when I read I have a particular stance.

The development of the culture of black women's assertiveness encouraged them to speak out on issues which endanger their existence. Black feminist writers reflect this consciousness in literary works that emerged to correct early negative portrayals of the black people. The slave culture of silence and suffering, without demand for a redress, finally gave way to that of a conscious demand for human rights and better treatment. The black woman discovered that it was important for her to speak out if her desire for freedom and empowerment was to be realised. Brown (1986) captured this transformation when she quoted Clark, (1968:82)

I used to feel that women couldn't speak up because when district meetings were being held at my home, I didn't feel as if I could tell them what I had in mind but later on, I found out that women had a lot to say, and what they had to say was really worthwhile. So, we started talking and have been talking quite a lot since that time.

The discourse of Black Feminism is dominated by the demand for change in the socio-political and economic order of things. This took a new turn when Walker (1970) drew attention to the peculiar realities of the black woman in America. The necessity of defining the black woman's reality led to the birth of the movement which Walker called "womanism". As an ideology, womanism is the black woman's intellectual framework that articulates her standpoint on self, community and society. It is committed to forging positive self-definition, self-relevance, self-reliance self-discovery and self-independence that is capable of fighting racial and sexist oppression. Stewart, one of the early black feminists urged the black women

to be “bold and enterprising, fearless and undaunted” if they were to have any rich heritage of progress, independence and positive self-affirmation (Richardson, as quoted by Akorede, 2011).

Walker (1984) described womanism as a universalist ideology which is “committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female.” Womanism emphasises the centrality of the family, motherhood and mutual coexistence. Its central concern however is similar to that of other women-centred movements. It however equally agitates for the actualisation of the black woman’s desire for political, social and economic relevance in the United States of America.

Womanist ideology is communal in its orientation, and it is committed to the destiny of the redefinition of the distressed people. Ogunyemi (1988), who was credited with the coinage of “womanism” almost at the same time with Walker, emphasises the difference between black feminism (womanism) and western feminism. She accused the proponents of western feminism of promoting separation between the two sexes in order to fuel a breakdown in communal living. She described western feminism as “rhetorical, polemical and individualistic.”

According to Christian (1989:12) black feminist theory recognises the interdependence of the sexes, and it celebrates motherhood and highlights the black woman’s struggle to:

...protect her child not only from overt physical danger, but also from the more hidden patterns of castration and debasement sketched by the concrete plantations ...a “brown good-looking girl”, plagued black and white ... struggling to survive, working overtime ...a slave, in the framework of society.

The slavery experienced by the black people is a major recurring concern of the black feminist theory (Kolawole, 1997; Adebayo, 1999). Works of arts are examined, re-examined and re-interpreted in this regard to locate the oppressive reality of the black people, with more concentration on the black woman’s experience. The analyses of literary works depict the dewomanisation and dehumanisation of the black woman. The negative influence of gender and race are also reflected in the objectification of the woman. The de-construction of literary works by the black critics led to the appreciation of the bitter agonies of the black woman. This reflects in the breaking up of the family unit, an experience which makes the woman almost completely responsible for the upbringing of her children. The Afro-American man is so depersonalised that he is reduced to a flotsam in the community. He is not gainfully employed like his white counterpart, neither is he regarded as a man in the real sense of the word. He cannot provide for his family because he does not readily fit into the political or economic scheme of things.

The black man’s inability to provide for the family in the African-American reality makes him dependent on the black woman whose labour as domestic worker or cleaner in big establishments guarantees the food at home. The breadwinner status of the black woman runs counter to her white counterpart’s experience. The white household contrasts sharply with the reality of the black woman. Collins (1999:43) observed that in the white-American home:

The father presides over the intimate private affairs of his own sphere of influence ... the family serves as a haven from the pressures and the demands of the impersonal, public sector. All members ... (are) glad to retreat from the impersonal public sphere to the warm, supportive environment of the “home.”

Black feminism equally highlights and addresses the black woman’s sense of insecurity in her work experience. It points out the bitter experience the work life is, even when the black woman works under her white “sister”. The black woman’s work is under-

valued, poorly remunerated, and her activity is hardly unappreciated. The Womanist, therefore, argues against the social status derived from exposure (Davis, 1983; Dill, 1988).

Coleman (1987:45) recounted her mother's experience as a domestic worker in a white woman's service:

Mama came home from work early on Saturdays, she spent six days a week mopping, waxing and dusting other women's houses and keeping out of reach of other women's husbands. (emphasis mine)

Coleman's mother, like many black women, is over worked and has little time to take care of her own children. The white masters usually sexually abuse black women who work for white families. This, according to Coleman, is a carry-over of the experience of the slave era. Black feminism highlights and addresses the reality of the rape of black women by white men. In addition, it exposes in its discourse, the hypocrisy of the whites. Collins (1999) also revealed that working as servants in the big house allowed:

African-American women to see white elite ... from perspectives largely obscured from Black men and from these groups themselves... Black domestic workers stress the sense of self-affirmation the woman experienced at seeing white power demystified ... these Black women knew they could never belong to their white 'families', that they were economically exploited workers and thus would remain outsiders (Collins,1999:47).

The demystification of white power and the self-affirmation of the black woman resulted in the registration of the voices of black women against violence and injustice tied to sexism and racism. The tradition of joining scholarship and activism as noted by Collins saw the forging of special relationship between black women intellectuals and the wider community of African-American women. Black womanism affirms that women priests need self-affirmation, and self-relevance; they are to be bold and undaunted in the face of injustice in order to fulfil their ministry. They should not see themselves as inferior to their male counterparts but consider the role Anna played in Luke 2:36-39 by displaying her God-given gifts and exercising her potential.

However, what is difference in all these aforementioned of how women ministers are being treated with the story of poor widow in Mark 12:40-44 (Oderinde, 2012). Posits that the church for the most part has taken the focus of this story to mean that Jesus commends the true measure of gifts or the spirit in which the gift is given; self-offering, total commitment, loyalty and devotion to God's call, trust in God to provides for one's needs, and detachment from possessions.

Jesus' saying is not a penetrating insight on the measuring of gifts; if it is a lament. The widow had been taught and encouraged by religious leaders to donate as she did, and Jesus condemned the value system that motivated her action, and he condemned the system that motivated her action and he condemned the people who conditioned her to do it. The widow gladly gave to God all the money she had, on which her life depended.

The amazing generosity of women, in the churches today cannot be over-emphasized. They contributed much financially to the development of the church. Even earliest missionaries testify to the deep faith and religiosity of African women in matters of faith and morals and rapid response to conversion (Oderinde, 2012). Women show readiness to help both in cash and in kind. They contribute to the building; they equip churches, keep churches clean and promote essential cooking services when needed. While these are acts of services, good in themselves, of some church leaders are taking advantage of the faithfulness of these poor women just like the scribes did by leading them into misguided piety, they persuaded the widows to give more than they can afford, encouraging them to give all that they could have without thinking of tomorrow because God will take care of them, while they the leaders live

in luxury on these guided offerings. Jesus was being challenged by the full devotion of the poor widows, she had spoken to Jesus boldly, even in her silence, as he prepared to face the Jewish authority, endure pressure, hostility and rejection. Olademo (2009) pointed out that the journey to leadership status and position for women in Christianity has been a slow but progressive one. It is beyond contention that the primary gender role classification of Christianity at its advent in Nigeria is no longer tenable or visible, but later suggested the theory of an alternative space of power is different but not opposed to Susan Paltners (1993). Threefold pattern of gender relations among women in new religious movements. She submits that the threefold pattern includes sexual polarity (the two sexes, the male is superior), and sexual unity (the two sexes but both are equal). The three manifestations occur sometimes in the same congregation at different times in different context as the case may be.

For example, in theory, women should have equal access to leadership position in the Pentecostal churches, and this convention could manifest itself in different circumstances. However, this should serve as lesson for Methodist Church in Nigeria that where the senior minister is not around the female minister who is on ground should be allowed to perform the priestly and ecclesiastical duties. Toryough (2009) opines that while Paul directed that women should not be saddled with the responsibility of governing the church, he does not imply that they cannot play any role at all in the church. Such roles as do not fall under authoritative teaching are permissible for them. Some churches in Nigeria is not focused on the Biblical premise and justification for the ordination of women as priests. Therefore, churches in Nigeria should realize that God made both woman and man in his image, thus underscoring the fundamental and intrinsic equality of both in his sight; through the birth of Jesus Christ God elevated the status of women highly and by the teaching of Jesus Christ in (Rev 21:5) He has set the new social-cultural standard of all time and for all people based on absolute love. This standard is devoid of all prejudices and discrimination against women and any other categories of people discriminated against.

Yoruba Society and Women Participation

In Yoruba society women participate actively in religious ceremonies. In some cases, they serve as religious leader. Adewale (1998) opined that there were some cults where men and women had equal participation and the leadership of such could fall on either male or female members, depending on seniority or heredity election or choice by the divinity. It is of great interest to note the radical changes that have occurred in the Middle East, regarding the role of women in religion, particularly in view of the strongly patriarchal culture in that religion. Furthermore, the region is the cradle of Christianity (Akitan, 2002). It is particularly gratifying and heartening to note that there are now women deacons and priests in the Episcopal (Anglican) church in Jerusalem and the Middle East (Sowunmi, 2009).

In the Old Testament, in characteristic distinction from pagan antiquity there are no priestesses of Yahweh in Israel. In the strict sense sacred ministry is reserved for men. This does not mean the exclusion of women from the religious community or from the cults. Women take part in national festivals (2 Samuel 6:19 Deuteronomy 12:12) they are also active in cultic dancing (Judges 21:21) and in the sacrificial meal (I Samuel 1:4f), especially the Passover. Not merely the men, but the whole community, including women and children and aliens, are brought into covenant with Yahweh (Deut 29:10). Women are even admitted to lower offices at the entrance to the tent of revelation (Exodus 38:8). A religious significance almost equivalent to that of man is achieved by prophetically gifted women like Miriam, Huldah and Noahdiah (Ex 15: 20-21, II Kings 22: 14; Nehemiah 6:14) Falusi, 1976. Furthermore, in conjunction with the respondents and interviews, Oderinde, (2012), posits

that women in contemporary societies have proven to be more than sex objects rather they are a force to be reckoned with in every sphere of life-politics, industry, science, education, religion and so on, in order to preserve the peace which Jesus came to give, and to accomplish the purpose of his death, which is the salvation of the world, the church must avoid suspicious and contentions, among men and women. The church needs to follow the pattern of Jesus who acknowledged exceptional women of faith and treated them with honour. She added that some evidence in the New Testament and other extra biblical accounts have shown that women were actually involved in the spread of the gospel and the management of the early church.

Florenza (1983) contends that as long as Christian women are excluded from breaking the bread and deciding their own spiritual welfare and commitment, *ekklesia* as the discipleship of equals is not realized and the power of the gospel is greatly diminished. Oderinde (2012). The church needs to follow the pattern of Christ who acknowledges exceptional women who demonstrated faith in him and without any prejudice use them as example of great faith and a challenge to his disciples who were of little faith.

Churches in Nigeria should know that Jesus lifted the level of womanhood just as he did for other oppressed and under-privileged group. He associated with them more freely than was the custom in his day. Some of his followers and closest associates were women they proved their appreciation for him and their devotion him by being the last at his cross and at his tomb.

He demonstrated his confidence in them by revealing himself for the first time after his resurrection to one of them, Mary Magdalene and by sending her to his disciple with the message that he had risen from the dead (John 20: 4-8). While Paul counsel women to conform to the customs of their day, restricted considerably their participation in church life, and seemed to fear that they might abuse their new found liberty, for you are all one in Christ (Gal 3:28). Above all, the teaching of Paul was that the husband was to be the head of the wife.

Women in 21st Century

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took office as the president of Liberia in January 2006, becoming the first elected woman head of state in Africa. She signed a Freedom of Information bill (the first of its kind in West Africa) and made reduction of the national debt a cornerstone of her presidency. To investigate crimes committed during Liberia's civil war, she established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As a result, she became a global icon with her commitment to fighting dictators, corruption, and poverty through empowerment of women and girls.

President Sirleaf and two other female leaders – Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkol Karman – were awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace prize for their nonviolent role in promoting peace, democracy and gender equality. More so Wangari Maathai was a Kenyan scientist, professor, and environmental and political activist. She founded the Green Belt Movement, a community initiative that seeks to empower women through civic education and environmental stewardship. She was also the first woman in East or Central Africa to earn a doctorate degree. In 2004, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work on sustainable development, democracy and peace, becoming the first African woman and first environmentalist to receive the prize.

Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani advocate for girl education and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. In 2009, when Malala was just 11 years old, she began blogging about

life under the Taliban, speaking out directly against their threats to close girls' schools. The blog on BBC Urdu garnered international attention, making her the target of death threats. In October 2012, a gunman shot her and two other girls as they were coming home from school. Malala survived the attack and went on to publish the autobiography *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*. In 2013, she founded the Malala Foundation to champion every girls' right to education, and in 2014, she received the Nobel Peace Prize, along with Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi.

Nadia Murad

Iraqi Yazidi activist Nadia Murad is a prominent voice in the fight to help women and children affected by war. In 2014, she was kidnapped by the Islamic State and held captive for three months. During that time, she was held as a slave and experienced sexual and physical violence. After her escape, she became the first person to speak on human trafficking to the United Nations Security Council. She's also the founder of Nadia's Initiative, which helps those affected by genocide and human trafficking. In 2018, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, alongside Denis Mukwege, for their work "to end sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict." She is the first Iraqi and first Yazidi to receive a Nobel Prize. The paper can speak on and on and on what achievement made by women not only in the bible time but in this era of industrialisation despite the fact that women are not given equal opportunity with their male counterparts yet those who have the opportunity have shown to the entire world ability to perform is not based on gender.

Conclusion

This paper has pointed out that there are many ways by which women have not been given equal opportunity to serve in the same capacity with their male counterparts. This paper also confirm that Bible as God's word does not subjugate women, rather women should be seen as help mate to men and since women have recorded several successes in the position they have been able to serve, the paper therefore recommends that the number of women to serve in all field where men are also being represented such as in politics, economy, education and all the rest should be considered and increased and given more recognitions, and that given responsibility to serve should not be based on gender but on performance

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