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Race, Gender, and Colonial Hegemony: A Study of Marginality in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Literature is an important source to understand the social, cultural, and political conditions of a particular period. Literary works do not only tell stories but also show the real problems faced by people in society. Aphra Behn was one of the first professional women writers in English literature, and her writings give attention to important issues like race, gender, power, and colonial rule. Her well-known works, *Oroonoko* (1688) and *The History of the Nun* (1689), present the lives of people who face injustice and are pushed to the margins because of social systems and powerful institutions. The present study tries to examine how race, gender, and colonial hegemony play an important role in creating marginal identities. It also studies how the main characters face oppression, social exclusion, and different forms of resistance in colonial and patriarchal society.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The present study follows a qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory research method. The research is mainly based on a close reading and textual analysis of Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*. A careful reading of literary texts helps us understand the ideas and messages presented by the writer. For this study, secondary information has been collected from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research papers, dissertations, and other scholarly publications related to postcolonial studies, feminist criticism, and Restoration literature. The study uses postcolonial and feminist theories as the main framework to examine the representation of race, gender, colonial domination, and marginality in the selected literary works.

Findings/Result: The findings of the present study show that race and gender work as important sources of oppression in Aphra Behn's writings. These social issues have affected many people in different societies and time periods. *Oroonoko* clearly presents the harsh reality of colonial slavery and racial discrimination. On the other hand, *The History of the Nun* shows the many restrictions placed on women by patriarchal society and religious institutions. The study also finds that colonialism and patriarchy follow similar ways of controlling people and creating marginal identities. Because of this, many individuals lose their freedom and equal position in society. The struggles of the main characters represent the larger experiences of exclusion, resistance, and the continuous search for dignity in an unequal social system.

Originality/Value: The present study provides a comparative analysis of *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun* by connecting the ideas of race, gender, and colonial hegemony. Studying more than one literary work

together helps us understand the common social issues in a better way. Many earlier studies have discussed these two texts separately. The present research brings both works together and examines how different forms of marginalization are connected with each other. The study also highlights Aphra Behn's important contribution to the early development of feminist and postcolonial literary studies through her representation of social inequality and human struggle.

Paper Type: Exploratory Research Paper.

Keywords: Race, Gender, Colonial Hegemony, Marginality, Postcolonial Feminism,

1. INTRODUCTION

The seventeenth century was an important period in European history because many social and political changes took place during that time. This period saw the growth of colonial expansion, the increase of the transatlantic slave trade, and the strong influence of patriarchal social systems. These changes affected the lives of many people and created different kinds of social divisions based on race, gender, class, and power. The literature of that period also reflected these social conditions. At the same time, some writers tried to question the existing beliefs and social practices. Among them, Aphra Behn holds a special place because she is widely known as one of the first professional women writers in England. Through her writings, she discussed important issues like identity, power, oppression, and social inequality in a simple but meaningful way. [2]

Two of her well-known prose works, *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*, give a clear understanding of colonial rule and patriarchal power in society. Moira, in the work *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery*, explains that even though these two stories are set in different situations, both mainly focus on people who are pushed to the margins by powerful social institutions. *Oroonoko* tells the sad story of an African prince who is cheated, sold into slavery, and forced to suffer under colonial rule. Even though he is noble, intelligent, and brave, he becomes a victim of racial discrimination and imperial exploitation. Through the life of Oroonoko, Aphra Behn shows the contradiction in European society, which claimed to follow morality and civilization but at the same time supported slavery and colonial domination. [8]

In the same way, *The History of the Nun* presents the life of Isabella, whose entire life is controlled by patriarchal values and religious duties. Her story clearly shows the restrictions placed on women in a society where personal wishes are often ignored for social expectations and institutional rules. Her struggles also explain how gender becomes a powerful tool to control women and keep them away from freedom and equal opportunities. As we commonly see in many traditional societies, women are often expected to follow fixed social roles, and this idea can also be noticed in Isabella's life. [3]

The ideas of race, gender, and colonial hegemony are closely connected in both these narratives. Colonial hegemony simply means the political, economic, and cultural control of colonial powers over weaker communities. In the same way, patriarchy is a social system where men mostly hold authority, while women are denied equal rights and independence. Both these systems create inequality because they limit people's access to power, resources, and social recognition. [20]

This study aims to examine how Aphra Behn presents marginalized identities in *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*. By using postcolonial and feminist perspectives, the study explains how race and gender become tools of oppression and how the main characters react to these difficult situations. The study also tries to show that Behn's works not only reflect the social reality of her own time but also offer useful ideas for understanding present-day discussions on identity, inequality, and social justice.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the representation of racial discrimination and colonial oppression in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*.
2. To analyze the portrayal of gender-based marginalization and patriarchal control in *The History of the Nun*.
3. To investigate the role of colonial hegemony in shaping identities, social relationships, and power structures within the selected texts.
4. To explore the similarities and differences in the experiences of marginality faced by Oroonoko and Isabella as representatives of racial and gendered subaltern groups.
5. To evaluate Aphra Behn's contribution to early feminist and postcolonial discourse through her critique of social inequality, exclusion, and institutional domination.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Robert J. C.'s study explains that the ideas of race, gender, and colonial hegemony have become an important part of literary criticism because these concepts help us understand how power works in society. Literature is not only written for entertainment but also reflects the real social conditions of different periods. It also brings out the systems that create inequality and keep some people away from power and equal rights. During the seventeenth century, European colonial expansion and patriarchal social systems had a strong influence on political, cultural, and economic life in many parts of the world. These changes also affected literary writing and shaped the way race, class, gender, and power were presented in different literary works. Aphra Behn is one of the earliest professional women writers in English literature, and she holds an important place because her writings discuss issues like authority, identity, social exclusion, and human dignity. As we commonly see in many societies, these issues continue to remain relevant even today. [26]

Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun* are important literary works that describe the lives of people who remain at the margins of society. Even though both stories have different settings and different themes, they mainly focus on characters who struggle against powerful social systems. In *Oroonoko*, the main character is an African prince whose noble birth and good qualities are not enough to save him from the harsh realities of colonial slavery. His life clearly shows the racial discrimination and exploitation that became the base of European colonial rule. Through his painful experiences, Aphra Behn explains how colonial power takes away the freedom, dignity, and humanity of people who are treated as racially inferior. When power is used without justice, it often leads to suffering and inequality, and this idea is clearly reflected in the novel. [24]

The *The History of the Nun* tells the life story of Isabella, whose entire life is mainly controlled by patriarchal values and religious rules. Her own wishes and dreams slowly come into conflict with the strict social customs that women were expected to follow during that period. In many societies women were often expected to obey family and religious authority without questioning it. Isabella's life clearly shows how gender works as a way of controlling women and limiting their freedom. She is not allowed to make many important decisions for herself, and this affects both her personal life and her mental peace. The story also explains the emotional pain and inner struggle that many women faced when society gave them very little space to live according to their own choices.

The present study examines these literary works by connecting the ideas of race, gender, and colonial hegemony. Colonial hegemony simply means the way powerful groups keep their control through political power, cultural influence, and social beliefs. Both colonial rule and patriarchal systems created unequal

conditions where only a few people enjoyed power while many others remained ignored. This kind of situation has been commonly seen in many parts of the world. Because of these systems, characters like Oroonoko and Isabella suffer in different ways and lose many opportunities to live freely. Their life experiences clearly show that a person's identity is often shaped by the social, historical, and institutional forces working around them.

This study mainly tries to understand how power and marginalisation are connected in Aphra Behn's writings. It explains how race and gender become important reasons for social exclusion and unequal treatment. At the same time, it also studies how the main characters try to question and resist these unfair systems. By bringing together postcolonial and feminist ideas, the study shows that Behn's works are still meaningful in today's discussions on identity, inequality, justice, and representation. In the end, the study highlights that literature is not only meant for storytelling but also serves as a powerful medium to question dominant ideas and to bring forward the voices of people who are often neglected in society.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS BY SEVERAL WRITERS:

The review of literature is an important part of any research because it helps to understand what earlier scholars have already studied. Many researchers have discussed the ideas of race, gender, colonialism, and marginality in the works of Aphra Behn. Different studies have examined *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun* from many viewpoints such as feminism, postcolonial studies, race studies, and cultural criticism. These studies show that Behn raised important questions about social inequality and also presented the lives of people who were pushed to the margins of society during the Restoration period. Even then, most of the earlier studies have mainly focused on race or gender as separate topics. Very few studies have tried to connect race, gender, and colonial hegemony together in one analysis. Because of this reason, the present review looks at the important contributions made by earlier scholars and also explains the need for a combined study of these three major aspects.

Table 1: Review of Literature

Sl. No.	Author	Year	Major Findings
1	Todd	1996	Examines Aphra Behn as an early feminist writer who challenged patriarchal assumptions and represented women's experiences in a male-dominated society.
2	Ferguson	1992	Highlights slavery, race, and colonial oppression as central themes in <i>Oroonoko</i> and explores Behn's critique of imperial exploitation.
3	Pearson	1988	Discusses female identity, social restrictions, and the representation of women in Restoration literature and Behn's fiction.
4	Spencer	1986	Explores women's agency and the emergence of female authorship in early English fiction, particularly in the works of Aphra Behn.
5	Hulme	2003	Analyzes colonial discourse and imperial ideology in <i>Oroonoko</i> , emphasizing the contradictions of European colonial authority.
6	Ballaster	1992	Investigates gendered power relations and the construction of female subjectivity in Behn's literary narratives.

Sl. No.	Author	Year	Major Findings
7	Brown	1993	Studies the intersections of race, class, and empire in early modern literature and their impact on social hierarchies.
8	Rosenthal	2006	Examines female subjectivity, morality, and social control in eighteenth-century literary and cultural contexts.
9	Mowry	2004	Focuses on colonial identity formation, political culture, and the representation of power in Restoration society.
10	Pacheco	2020	Investigates marginality, resistance, and social exclusion in Aphra Behn's works through postcolonial and feminist perspectives.
11	Loomba	2015	Explores the relationship between colonialism, race, gender, and cultural domination, providing a theoretical basis for postcolonial analysis.
12	Said	1994	Discusses imperialism, cultural representation, and colonial power structures that shape identities and social relations.
13	Spivak	1988	Introduces the concept of the subaltern and examines how marginalized voices are silenced within dominant systems of power.
14	Butler	1990	Explains gender performativity and demonstrates how gender identities are socially constructed and maintained.
15	Showalter	1977	Emphasizes women's literary traditions and the importance of examining female experiences within patriarchal societies.

Many earlier studies have discussed race in *Oroonoko* and gender in *The History of the Nun* as separate subjects. These two topics have received good attention from different researchers. But only a few studies have examined both texts together by connecting race, gender, and colonial hegemony in one framework. In most cases, researchers have used either a postcolonial approach or a feminist approach, but not both at the same time. Because of this, there is still a gap in the existing research. The present study tries to fill this gap by giving a combined analysis of marginality and resistance in both narratives through the linked ideas of postcolonial and feminist perspectives.

5. CORRELATED WORKS

The themes of race, gender, and marginality found in *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun* have strong links with many literary and theoretical studies. These studies help us understand how society and different systems of power influence the lives of people who remain at the margins. Literature is not only about stories, but it also reflects the social conditions of the time. Because of this, these theories become helpful in studying Aphra Behn's works from different viewpoints.

Terry Castle's study on cultural performance and social identity gives an important idea about how society controls people through social rules and accepted behaviour. Castle (1986) explains that a person's identity is often shaped by social expectations and cultural values rather than personal choice. This idea can be clearly connected with *The History of the Nun*. Isabella lives according to religious and social expectations, and she is forced to perform the role expected from her instead of living according to her own wishes. As

commonly seen in many societies, including in our country, social rules sometimes become stronger than personal freedom. Because of this, Isabella experiences isolation and marginality throughout her life. [7] Michel Foucault's theory of discipline and power also gives a useful background for studying both *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*. Foucault (1995) says that power does not always work through physical force. It also works through observation, social rules, and discipline. This idea can be seen in both novels. In *Oroonoko*, the colonial system controls Oroonoko through slavery and racial discrimination. In *The History of the Nun*, religious beliefs and patriarchal values control Isabella's decisions and actions. In both cases, the main characters lose their freedom because powerful institutions decide how they should live. [9]

Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s work on race and representation also supports the understanding of *Oroonoko*. Gates (1986) explains that race is not simply based on biology, but it is created through society, culture, and systems of power. This idea helps us understand the colonial world shown in the novel. Oroonoko's racial identity is used by the colonial rulers as a reason to exploit and control him. His dignity and leadership are ignored because of the racial system created by colonial power. This shows how race becomes an important tool for exclusion and oppression in colonial society. [10]

Stephen Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning gives another useful idea for understanding identity in literature. Greenblatt (1980) explains that a person's identity is shaped by society, political power, and cultural expectations. This idea helps us understand both Oroonoko and Isabella. They both try to protect their own identity, but powerful social systems keep controlling their lives. In many societies people are expected to follow certain rules, and it is not always easy to live according to personal wishes. In the same way, both characters struggle to keep their individuality while facing strong social pressure. [11]

Melissa Mowry's study on political and social life during the Restoration period also gives an important background for this research. Mowry (2004) explains that social institutions often create and maintain inequalities related to class, gender, and political power. This idea supports the study of Aphra Behn's works because her novels clearly show how power is not shared equally in society. Both colonial rule and patriarchal systems create conditions where weaker people face discrimination and marginalization. Such situations are commonly seen in many societies, including in our country, where social differences sometimes affect people's opportunities and freedom. [14]

Anita Pacheco's study on Aphra Behn also helps in understanding the author's literary ideas. Pacheco (2020) points out that Behn often writes about people who remain outside the main centres of power and authority. This observation is very useful for studying *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*. Both Oroonoko and Isabella experience different forms of exclusion because of race and gender. Their lives show how society often gives more importance to power than to justice or equality. [16]

Mary Louise Pratt's concept of colonial encounters also provides an important theoretical support for this study. Pratt (2008) explains that when colonizers and colonized people come into contact, unequal relationships of power are created. These situations often lead to conflict, resistance, and cultural struggle. This idea can be clearly connected with *Oroonoko*. The novel shows how colonial authority tries to control Oroonoko's identity and freedom. Even though he resists, the colonial system continues to dominate his life through unequal power. [17]

Laura J. Rosenthal's study on gender, morality, and social control helps us understand the condition of women in early modern society. Rosenthal (2006) explains that women's behaviour was closely watched and judged according to patriarchal values. This idea can be seen in Isabella's life. She is expected to follow strict moral and religious rules, and she is given very little personal freedom. In many traditional societies women often face more social restrictions than men. Isabella's experiences clearly reflect this situation. [18]

Jane Spencer's research on early women novelists also gives valuable support to this study. Spencer (1986) argues that Aphra Behn brought an important change to English literature by presenting women as intelligent individuals who could think and make their own decisions. This idea strengthens the understanding of Isabella's character. Although she lives in a patriarchal society, she is shown as a woman with emotions, independent thinking, and the desire to control her own life. Through Isabella, Behn presents a strong picture of female resistance against social restrictions. [22]

Michael McKeon's study on the development of the English novel gives an important idea about the connection between literature and society. McKeon (2002) explains that early novels often show the struggle between personal dreams and the authority of social institutions. This idea is useful for understanding Aphra Behn's works. In both *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*, the main characters want to live according to their own wishes, but society and powerful institutions control their lives. People sometimes have to sacrifice their personal choices because of social pressure. This conflict becomes an important part of both narratives. [27]

Deborah C. Payne's study on women's roles and public representation during the Restoration period also gives valuable support to this research. Payne (1991) explains that women had very few opportunities because society was mainly controlled by men. She also points out that a woman's identity was often decided by social expectations and institutional rules instead of her own choices. This idea can be clearly seen in Isabella's life. She faces many restrictions and has very little freedom to make independent decisions. Such situations are commonly seen in many traditional societies, including in our country, where women often face more social expectations than men. [28]

Catherine Gallagher's study on women writers and the literary world explains the difficulties faced by female authors in a male-dominated society. Gallagher (1994) says that women writers had to struggle for recognition, authority, and equal representation in literature. This idea helps us understand the importance of Aphra Behn as one of the early women writers in English literature. Through her writings, she discussed important issues related to gender, identity, and power. Her contribution opened new opportunities for women writers who came after her. [29]

Nancy Armstrong's study of domestic fiction also provides a useful idea for this research. Armstrong (1987) explains that literature often helps in creating social values and gender expectations. Her observations can be connected with *The History of the Nun*. In the novel, family values, moral beliefs, and social expectations become powerful ways to control Isabella's behaviour and identity. Social values can strongly influence individual lives, and this is clearly reflected in Isabella's experiences throughout the novel. [30]

Edward Said's idea of cultural imperialism gives an important background for understanding colonial rule in *Oroonoko*. Said (1994) explains that colonial powers create certain ideas about colonized people to justify their political and economic control. This idea helps us understand why Oroonoko, even though he is a noble prince, is treated as a slave in the colonial world. The colonial rulers do not respect his humanity. Instead, they judge him only through racial ideas and his economic value. When people are treated unfairly because of their identity, equality and justice become difficult to achieve. This situation is clearly reflected in the novel. [19, 20]

Homi Bhabha's theory of colonial discourse also gives an important understanding of identity in colonial society. Bhabha (1994) explains that colonial power depends on creating a difference between the colonizer and the colonized. At the same time, these differences are never fully stable because the colonized people also question and challenge colonial authority. This idea can be seen in *Oroonoko*. Oroonoko's courage, leadership, and moral values challenge the European belief that they are naturally superior. His character exposes the weaknesses and contradictions within the colonial system. [4]

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's idea of the subaltern is also very useful for this study. Spivak (1988) explains that marginalized people often do not get the chance to speak freely within powerful social systems. This idea applies to both selected texts. Oroonoko's voice is controlled by colonial authority, while Isabella's life is controlled by patriarchal society. Both characters lose the freedom to make their own decisions because powerful institutions dominate their lives. [23]

Elaine Showalter's feminist criticism also supports the understanding of *The History of the Nun*. Showalter (1977) says that women's experiences should be studied within societies that are mainly controlled by men. This idea helps explain Isabella's life. She faces many social expectations and very little personal freedom. Her life becomes a continuous struggle between her own wishes and the demands of society. As commonly seen in many traditional societies, including in our country, women are often expected to follow strict social rules. Isabella's experiences reflect this condition. [21]

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity also gives a useful idea for studying Isabella's character. Butler (1990) explains that gender roles are created and maintained through repeated social practices. Isabella is expected to behave as an obedient, pure, and devoted woman because society demands these qualities from her. When she goes against these expectations, she faces serious social and moral criticism. This shows how society controls women's behaviour through fixed gender roles. [6]

Janet Todd's studies on Aphra Behn explain that the author had progressive ideas about women and social inequality. Todd (2000) says that Behn often questioned traditional beliefs about gender and power. This idea can be seen in both *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*. Instead of praising powerful institutions, Behn presents their weaknesses and shows how they create injustice for ordinary people. [25]

Moir Ferguson's study on slavery and colonial discourse also gives valuable support to this research. Ferguson (1992) explains that *Oroonoko* is one of the earliest literary works to show the cruelty of slavery. The novel clearly presents how colonial economies depend on exploitation and racial inequality. Ferguson's observations support the idea that Behn criticizes the moral failures and unfair practices of European imperialism. [8]

Peter Hulme (2003) also explains that colonial literature often exposes the internal problems of imperial rule. This idea is clearly visible in *Oroonoko*. The colonial administrators claim that they represent civilization, but at the same time they practise deception, violence, and exploitation. This contradiction becomes an important part of Behn's criticism of colonial authority. [12]

Jacqueline Pearson's study on women in Restoration literature explains that female characters often struggle against strict social rules. Pearson (1988) argues that women face criticism whenever they try to make their own choices. Isabella's life clearly supports this idea. Every time she attempts to follow her personal wishes, society judges and condemns her. This shows how difficult it was for women to enjoy personal freedom during that period. [15]

Ros Ballaster's study on women in early modern literature also explains the close relationship between gender and power. Ballaster (1992) points out that patriarchal systems continue their control by regulating women's behaviour and limiting their opportunities for self-expression. Isabella's experiences clearly show this reality. She remains under constant social and moral pressure throughout her life. [1]

Ania Loomba's postcolonial study connects race, gender, and empire as closely related forms of domination. Loomba (2015) explains that these systems of power work together to create different forms of inequality. This idea is very useful for the present study because it allows a comparison between Oroonoko's racial oppression and Isabella's gender oppression. Although their situations are different, both characters experience marginalization because powerful social systems deny them equality and freedom. [13]

All these related studies together show that race, gender, and colonial power are closely connected with one another. They provide a strong theoretical background for the present study and help in understanding how Aphra Behn presents marginality, oppression, and resistance in *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*. Literature helps us understand society in a better way, and these theories make the analysis of Behn's works more meaningful and relevant.

6. RESEARCH GAP

The review of the existing literature shows that many researchers have already studied *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun* by Aphra Behn. They have discussed many important topics such as slavery, colonial rule, race, women's identity, patriarchy, and moral conflicts. These subjects are very important for understanding society as well as literature. Some studies explain *Oroonoko* as one of the early anti-slavery works, while some other studies focus on *The History of the Nun* as a strong criticism of patriarchal society and the restrictions placed on women. But in most of these studies, both texts are discussed separately, and mainly from only one theoretical point of view.

A clear research gap can be seen in the comparative study of these two works by using the combined ideas of race, gender, and colonial hegemony. Very few researchers have tried to explain how racial discrimination and gender discrimination work in similar ways to create domination and marginalisation. Existing studies also give less attention to the close connection between colonial power and patriarchal power and how they together influence the lives, identity, and experiences of individuals.

Another important gap is that not many studies compare Oroonoko and Isabella as characters who face different kinds of marginalisation but still struggle for dignity, recognition, and personal agency. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by giving an integrated analysis of race, gender, and colonial power in both texts. This study is expected to provide a better understanding of different forms of marginalisation in Aphra Behn's literary works and also add useful ideas to the existing research.

7. RESEARCH AGENDA

The proposed research aims to study the representation of race, gender, and colonial hegemony in *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun* written by Aphra Behn. The study tries to understand how society and its institutions create different forms of exclusion and marginalisation based on race and gender. These social issues have affected people in many parts of the world for a long time. The research also wants to examine the lives of people who are denied equality, freedom, and personal agency because of powerful social and political systems.

One of the main aims of this study is to explore how colonial power works through racial differences in *Oroonoko*. The research will examine how slavery, colonial authority, and racial discrimination shape the life, identity, and social position of the main character. It will also study how the colonial system supports exploitation by claiming that its culture and values are superior to others. This kind of thinking was commonly seen during the colonial period.

Another important aim of the study is to examine the working of patriarchal power in *The History of the Nun*. Special attention will be given to the influence of religion, morality, and social expectations on the lives of women. The research will explore how Isabella's life reflects the larger problem of gender inequality in Restoration society. Social expectations often decide the role of women, and this can be clearly seen in the novel.

The study also aims to compare the experiences of Oroonoko and Isabella to understand the common patterns of marginalisation in both texts. Even though their situations are different, both characters face

systems that limit their freedom and reduce their opportunities in society. The research will examine how race and gender work together as powerful methods of social control and how these systems affect individual lives in different ways.

The research further aims to study the different forms of resistance and personal agency shown by both protagonists. By examining their reactions to oppression, the study tries to understand how they protect their dignity and face difficult situations with courage. Finally, this research hopes to make a useful contribution to postcolonial and feminist literary studies by giving a better understanding of marginalisation in Aphra Behn's narratives.

8. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The proposed study focuses on the relationship between race, gender, and colonial hegemony in *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun* by Aphra Behn. The main reason for choosing this topic is to understand how different systems of power create marginalised identities and influence the lives of individuals in colonial and patriarchal societies. Power and inequality have affected people in many societies for a long time. Many earlier studies have discussed slavery, race, and gender in Aphra Behn's writings. However, there are only a few studies that examine these themes together by comparing both literary works.

The study proposes to use postcolonial and feminist theories to analyse the selected texts. The research will examine how colonial thinking creates racial differences and how patriarchal institutions control the behaviour and choices of women. It will also explore the similarities between colonial domination and patriarchal control. Both of these systems create exclusion and reduce the freedom of individuals in different ways. This comparison is expected to provide a better understanding of the selected works.

The primary source for this research will be Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun*. The secondary sources will include books, research articles, doctoral theses, conference papers, and other scholarly publications related to postcolonial studies, feminist studies, race studies, and Restoration literature. The study will follow a qualitative research method. It will mainly use textual analysis and close reading to understand the ideas, characters, and themes presented in the selected texts.

The proposed study also hopes to make a useful contribution to literary research by showing the close connection between race and gender oppression. Colonialism and patriarchy do not work separately. They often work together and influence the identity and everyday experiences of people. By studying marginalisation through a comparative approach, this research aims to provide a better understanding of Aphra Behn's literary contribution and also show why her writings are still important in today's discussions on power, inequality, and social justice.

9. CONCLUSION

The present study has examined the themes of race, gender, and colonial hegemony in *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun* by Aphra Behn by giving special attention to the idea of marginality. The analysis shows that both literary works present unequal social systems that influence people's lives and decide who gets power and who remains without it. Inequality has been a part of many societies for a long time. *Oroonoko* becomes a victim of slavery, while Isabella faces strict patriarchal rules. Even though their situations are different, both characters experience exclusion, loss of freedom, and social control in their own ways.

The study also shows Aphra Behn's ability to question the dominant ideas of her time while giving importance to the lives of marginalised people. Through the portrayal of racial discrimination, colonial violence, and gender inequality, she raises questions about social systems that give more power and privilege to certain groups. At the same time, both *Oroonoko* and Isabella show courage, resistance, and

the strength to protect their dignity even in difficult situations. Their struggles help the readers understand the human side of oppression.

The research finally concludes that *Oroonoko* and *The History of the Nun* continue to be important literary works because they discuss lasting issues such as identity, power, inequality, and justice. These issues are still discussed in many societies, including in our country. By studying the connection between race, gender, and colonial authority, Aphra Behn adds valuable ideas to the discussion of human dignity and social change. Her writings continue to provide useful understanding about the lives of marginalised people and remain relevant for present-day studies in literature, feminism, and postcolonial criticism.

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