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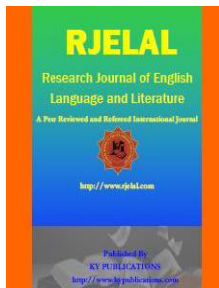
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## A DISCUSSION ON IMPACT OF FEMINISM ON THE POETRY OF W. B. YEATS AND T. S. ELIOT

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### ABSTRACT

The feeling of sympathy and pathos about sufferings of women and thirst to find out some feasible solutions has been emerged in practice long before the concept of feminism. Compassion and kindness are rooted in human nature. And very great poets who have altered the very attitude and approach to women's problems along with deeper human philosophy have been expressed in our time to which W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot are no exception, though they did not do it to inspire by feminist wave.

W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot being poets, how greater limitations therefore they express problems of women through using symbols because their heavy philosophical ideas are most often is very obscure and their ideas rooted in historical inferences. Mythological references, subconscious mind and psychology of human behavior and yet they have succeeded in sending message to the total humanity through their poetry of making women free if not more than man at least equal to man. Through their description both poets have created pictorial images in extremely convincing manner.

Eliot and Yeats did not say that some of their poems are categorized in terms of feminism, but after going through the original books by feminist writer-Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of women* (1792) and another equally powerful book by John Stuart Mill *The Subjection of women* (1869), Simone-d-Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970), Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), Juliet Mitchell's *Woman's Estate* (1971), Shela Rowbotham's *Women, Resistance and Revolution*(1972). John Mill's another book entitled *Liberty* is a landmark in the field of political philosophy. In respect of igniting awareness among women a masterpiece by the American writer Margaret Fuller's *Women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century* (1845) who is authorities on feminism. It clearly appears that some of the poems from both these poets which have been taken in this research work clearly indicate that these poems reflect feminism and show the characteristics of feminist writings. These poems fulfill the conditions of feminism.

**Keywords:** Personal, feminism, gender, symbol, philosophy.

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## INTRODUCTION

Feminism presents to womankind fresh avenues of new approaches to seek probable solutions to be susceptible problems to feminine thinkers through, philosophers, psycho-analysts, and even feminist activists open up potential probabilities. Feminist critical and creative writers from all sections of societies, all over the world have harsh experiences of being a woman at all fronts - personal, socio-economical, political and even creative and critical endeavors enabled women to feel that 'writing' as a process of presenting themselves in reality can serve as an effective weapon. Feminism throws light on excessive domination and interferences of 'Patriarchic' socio-cultural set up which has curved entire even reasonable freedom to woman this has been practiced even in the western world after going through details of woman's life. It is clearly indicated that similar condition existed everywhere in the world and therefore a woman began demanding equal rights and legal protection for women.

The study of feminism involves various movements, structures, theories, struggles and philosophies all of which focus light on issues of gender differences in social status and secondary treatment of women by men in every walk of life. The genuine demand for woman's rights and interests have summed up with organized force of intellectuals, thinkers, and creative writers among women have awakened acute awareness for putting forth their demands.

Domination of patriarchy at all levels to establish the facts in the very feminine psyche that it is masculine rationality that has always privileged reason, order, unity and lucidity and that it has been done so by silencing and excluding the irrationality, chaos, and fragmentation that has come to represent feminism. All negative qualities have been attributed to womankind and whatever is positive men have taken credit of belonging to it. This patriarchic system is male dominating and one sided. This has done great harm to womankind during the study and research work by feminist scholars this has come to their knowledge that patriarchic system of male domination is rooted in the tradition of the past and that such heritage of

women's subordination blatantly mistreat and devalues half of humanity.

## DISCUSSION

The sympathy is for the indefinable suffering of women in the writings of W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot is rooted in their temperament. They have not chosen to deliberately project feminism but it comes naturally in their writings. These poets have practically seen rampant negligence of women and their exploitation at the hands of men. To show these aspects particular poems which deal with the theme of feminism have been minutely studied in the critical light of this research because this research work focuses elements of feminism in the poems of the most illustrative poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Readers must appreciate the insight of these poets in respect of uncertainty in the lives of women. The cries of feminist writers are for the demand of dignity for women and the need to understand their problems from the view point of feminine angle. And yet man's suffering, uncertainty and endless pain continue to grow. In this respect men and women both are the victims of infinite agonies.

W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot being poets, how greater limitations therefore they express problems of women through using symbols because their heavy philosophical ideas are most often very obscure and their ideas are rooted in historical inferences. Mythological references, subconscious mind and psychology of human behavior and yet they have succeeded in sending message to total humanity through their poetry of making women free, if not more than man at least equal to man. Through their description both poets have created pictorial images in extremely convincing manner.

The basic strength of this chapter is that there are substantial points of similarities and differences between these two great poets and they had lived quite a lot in common. Marginally enough, both poets were born in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both of them have reached the pinnacle of outstanding of 20<sup>th</sup> century English poetry. Interestingly enough they were awarded Nobel Prize in literature when they were at the height of their manifestation of their talents, literary and even

otherwise. As a result, it goes on without saying. Their poems and other literary works share some inherent characteristics for they have been writing during the same time period therefore; there exists two key factors that make Yeats' and Eliot's poem somewhat different for example, the impact of respective homelands and moorings and ethos on them and relationship they built up with the literary movements of the same period.

One thing is very sure that which must be taken into account their poetic output far from being purely British. For example, Yeats work was tremendously influenced by his Irish roots. This fact has been already discussed in the preceding chapter. To support this statement we can give an example of the interest W. B. Yeats took in the Irish mythology, folklore and even landscapes which is expressed in his poetry by means of recurrent symbols. In addition to that, he always took part in the politics of his native country and most important contribution of Yeats to literature is that he even established the Irish literary revival.

On the contrary to this, T. S. Eliot was born in the United States and moved to London when he was twenty five years old. His poetry combines influences of each country. At the same time another interesting feature of the differences can be found in the literary influences they followed even though the age difference between them is quite small as Yeats and Eliot were born in the 1865 and 1888 respectively. These twenty three years seemed to have been crucial for the literary production as has been seen earlier. Yeats started to write poetry in 1880's whereas Eliot's first poem were not published until the first decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century. And this is the very crucial point to see differences in their poems.

In fact the study of comparison between W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot is unexplored. There are only a few critics who have done this task but in reality this study provides very interesting area of searching the roots of their poetry. The only condition is the researcher must devote enough time as has been seen earlier. Yeats and Eliot though both are contemporary are regarded as different poets but there are also remarkable similarities between them. This is very interesting phenomena.

Yeats and Eliot both are great poets in English literature. There is no scope to say that one is greater than the other. In general, Yeats is classified as a symbolist poet, while Eliot is considered a representative modernist. But we must be attentive to come to a correct conclusion by way of proper evaluation of their poetry. This comparative study between these two poets is not in the manner of water-tight-compartment. And it is impossible to follow this method. But this study is based on their age, their approach to the problems of life and the poetic technique which they have used. For example, Yeats has no single poem the magnitude of *The Waste Land* or *Four Quartets* and yet Yeats poetry is also autonomous and very great.

#### Conclusion

Eliot never intended to claim that he has chosen feminism as the theme of some of his poems. Possibly he did it because it is the reality of man's real life situation. Moreover, feminism is not dealt in all his poems. T. S. Eliot is the powerful voice in the world of literature. And his major themes are reflected in his poetry. Every poem of Eliot has inherited appeal. His use of very selective images, symbols of vagueness and combination of words make us wonder struck. Such a great poet has not left even the description of 'the heavy thud of bus traffic', 'the creaking of trains', 'the drones of aeroplanes' all these factors find their echo in Eliot's poetry.

In respect of Yeats, it is very difficult to characterize his poetic characters in a word, because he wrote many poems in many different ways. W. B. Yeats is a virtually not only poet but very great philosopher, thinker and sympathizer for women. He is a unique poet who has been associated with many promising women of great caliber and potentials about whom a brief description has been given earlier in this chapter. His world popular poem *Leda and the Swan* is the poem in the form of a sonnet very successfully and perfectly composed. This poem is one of the most perfect poems ever written by W. B. Yeats.

Yeats', being a man of so great a height, does not hesitate or feels any inhibition in expressing so honestly and frankly his feelings of appreciating great qualities among his friends. It shows greatness

and thankfulness among his friends – men and women alike. His corpus of poetry clearly shows that he never ignored the role of women, their influence on him, and their contribution in inspiring him, encouraging him and supporting him in whatever form they could.

To read, to enjoy and to understand poetry of W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot is extremely beneficial from the view point of understanding human impulses and various phases of human life. These poets have unearthed the treasure of gems and jewels of human wisdom. These poets have caught up the pulsating pulse of human heart and they have converted this into their poetic garment. What is important in their poetry is the thought content. They have revealed various experiences with their complexity, intricacy and unexplainable human situations. They have used technique of using imagery and symbol. Their poetry has widened the horizon of human understanding and elevated the level of humanity. Therefore to study these poets cannot be at any moment taken casually. These poets need deep devotion and serious attention of readers.

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