

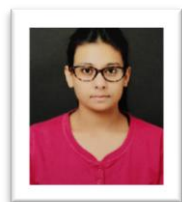
From Silence to Speech : An analysis of Amrita Pritam's 'Pinjar' and Shashi Deshpande's 'That Long Silence'

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Abstract

This paper tries to analyse journey of women from silence to speech. Literature depicts society and Indian women are depicted as tolerant and submissive in our Literary books. This paper tries to establish that women not only express themselves through speech but also through silence and they break silence when they feel pressed against time, space and situation. Both the books analysed in this paper are witness to Indian women's journey from internalized patriarch-an value of silence to conscious effort of establishing one's own independence through speech.

Keywords: Silence, Speech, Patriarchy, Journey.

Introduction

Indian society being patriarchal, Indian women seem to have internalized the concept of general and have learnt to be tolerant and submissive. They have ceased to be individual and exist only in general role of mother sister wife and daughter. With the passage of time literature has started depicting silence of their women breaking into conscious decisive speech.

Main Text of Study

Literature is an unofficial record of society. Thus, Indian Literature depicts Indian society, which is mainly patriarchal. Gender bias is part of our collective consciousness since ever. Women are taught to be tolerant and submissive. They are taught to avoid loud behaviour of any kind. They must take care 'what to say' and 'when to say'. Indian women have suffered silently for years. They have never been able to claim their own individuality and are always busy playing different roles as mothers, sisters and daughters. They are expected to subordinate themselves to someone else.

With the changing times, rise of education and awareness of human rights, women consciousness has risen a lot. Women have begun to express themselves as well as their thoughts and desires. Literature has become a medium of expression and a medium to break that long silence. The present paper tries to establish a relationship in the psyche of women characters across time, space and situation through Amrita Pritam's Pinjar (1950) and Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence (1989).

Amrita Pritam's Pinjar (1950) is a novel, initially written in Punjabi and translated in English by Khuawant Singh. Set in rural Punjab at the time of partition, this novel depicts the condition of Indian Women in the patriarchal system. Pooro, a fourteen years old daughter of a rich moneylender is engaged to Ram Chand, a son of rich man. She is abducted by Rashid, a muslim sheikh to take revenge from Porro's family, as Pooro's uncle ran away with Rashid's aunty. Pooro Manages to flee back to her home, but her parents/ specially her father, refuses to take her back. Her mother is sad for her daughter, but she is taught to follow her husband without questioning. Pooro's parents leave Pooro to her fate telling her that her religion is gone and so is her birth. Pooro is rejected by her own family. She returns to Rashid accepting her fate. Although she is living but her soul is dead. Her parents have left her dejected. She has lost her love, her religion, her family and her name. She becomes a mere Skelton. She does not raise her voice neither against her parents nor Rashid. To avenge her fate, she helps other women like Lajjo and Tillo and keeps hanging between love and hate for Rashid, her abductor, but now her husband and father of her children. After partition when Hindu women

were being sent to India, she chooses to live with Rashid and for the first time speaks for herself, voices her emotions and ends her silence.

Shashi Deshpande's women characters also show progressive movement from oppression to freedom, from silence to speech. Deshpande presents women of different age groups in her novel and present the journey and subsequent misery of Indian Women in a panoramic view. Her old women have accepted their fate, but her young heroines are rebels against the traditional way of life. They rebel against gender bias restricting their potential and seek freedom from the traditional norms and ways of life.

Aim of Study

Silence is considered golden, more in the case of women. There silence is modified and adjusted as per the convenience of their male counterparts. It is taken as a consentor shyness or respect for elders but never as protest or displeasure. So when I read these two books, I liked the way both the heroines Jaya and Puroo broke their silence and used the power of speech to express themselves. That's why this paper.

Conclusion

In comparison to the setting of 'Pinjar', 'That Long Silence' has a modern setting. Here also woman is presented as a meek, silent, creature. Jaya, meaning victory, was born in a middle class family, in a small town, but now she lives in Mumbai with her banker husband. Her father wanted her to have her own identity, but after his death, her elder brother married her off in a hurry. Puroo lost her name because she lost her religion, but Jaya becomes Suhasini for the pleasure of her husband. Her identity is trapped into being a wife and mother. She leaves writing to take up 'her only profession of being Mohan's wife.' Jaya remains silent for long years, accepting Mohan's decisions in every walk of her life. Even when Mohan walks out of her, charging her with negligence of duty and insincerity during his difficult time, Jaya keeps silent and does not contradict,

because her Aji always taught her to keep silence. She compares her silence to the silence of Sita, Savitri, Dropdi and Gandhari, who followed their husbands silently. But then she realizes that she has lived in silence out of choice. Silence has not been imposed on her and she decides to break her silence.

Both Puroo and Jaya are connected by their suffering, silence and pain. They are treated as subsidiary characters accepting the decisions made by their husbands and fathers. When Puroo goes back to her parents, her mother laments for her daughter, but lack of courage to voice her opinion against her husband. But frustration forces strength that protagonist finds within themselves and are able to discard old values and ties that bound them and failed them in the time of need. Puroo chooses to live with Rashid and refuses to return with her brother. Jaya chooses to go with her husband, but leaving her silence behind. This silence of Indian Women characters in both the novel criticizes patriarchal approach towards women. Silence symbolizes helpless but men consider it acceptance, contentedness, and agreement. Both Puroo and Jaya represent Indian Women having no identity and who even lose their names after marriage. Their silence gives rise to unending pain and anguish. But both gain strength from their own self and have courage to fight their existential fate.

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