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Feminist Criticism: A Comparison between Jane Austen’s “Emma” and Shashi Deshpande’s “That Long Silence” (Critical study)

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Abstract

The Present paper discusses “Feminist Critique” and gynocritique” in Jane Austen’s “Emma” and Shashi’s “That Long Silence”, which are Feminist Criticism. It compares and contrasts the two novels in accordance with Feminism. The objective of the comparison is find out the similarities and differences in two novels’ style between English novel and Indian novel.

The study applies the theory of Feminist to analyze the concept feminist Gynocritique is the important varieties of feminist criticism. The research Problem is the suffering of women under the dominance of the men. The study Hypothesizes that female are subordinated position to Male. The findings show that two novelists raise the status of women through their work, they convey the idea to the reader that women are equal to men.

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Key Word: feminist critique, Gynocritique , match-maker, Male, Female

النقد النسوي دراسة مقارنة بين جين أوستن في رواية "إيما" ورواية "الصمت الطويل"
لشاشي ديشباندي (دراسة نقدية)

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المستخلص

البحث المقدم يناقش النقد النسوي جينوكرتك في روايتين جن أوستن إيما ورواية الصمت الطويل لشاشي في النقد النسوي. مع المقارنه بينهما وكيفية تناقضهما في المنهج النسوي. وهدف البحث من هذه المقارنة هو معرفة أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في الاسلوب بين روايتين الرواية الانكليزية والرواية الهندية. وتطبق الدراسة النظرية النسوية لتحليل مفهوم النسوي جينوكرتك وهو متنوع في النقد النسوي. مشكلة البحث هي معاناة المرأة تحت سيطرة الرجل. فرضية البحث هي أن الإناث يكون مكانها ثانوي بالنسبة للرجل. النتائج تعرض أن روائيين يرفعان مكانة المرأة من خلال عملهما ينقلان للقارئ فكرة أن المرأة متساوية مع الرجل.

الكلمات الدالة: جينوكرتك النسوي، وسيط زواج، الرجل، المرأة.

Introduction:

Feminism has become a dominant force in contemporary literary criticism. Simply speaking, "Feminism" means an attempt to understand woman as a woman. It means to discover the so far hidden strength and ability of woman. Feminism thus is an ideology which tries to understand and change the world to suit the woman. Feminist criticism attempts to do the same in literature and other fine arts. Feminist critics do not accept the image of woman as presented by the male writers in their literature. According to them, male authors fail to present woman as she is seen by a woman. On the contrary, male authors present woman as man wants her to be. Thus, like Feminism in general, Feminist approach aims at the freedom of woman from the domination of male authors.(Jackson,1998:68)

Feminist Criticism has certain features. First, it has clear political nature. The Feminist critics do not accept the view of Arnold that criticism is a disinterested neutral activity. On the contrary, they assert that literary criticism is political in nature. Secondly, Feminist Criticism has interdisciplinary. It attempts to transgress the conventional subject and divide it among other disciplines. (Harding,1987:84)

Feminist Criticism has certain assumptions. First, the feminist critics believe the basic view that Western Civilization is patriarchal. In it, women are subordinated to men. Secondly, it is believe that male is active and female is passive. Thirdly, feminist critics claim that the patriarchal ideology is found even in great literature. Fourthly, the ways of dealing with literature need to be changed. They should be in favor of women. Finally, they emphasize the need of enlarging the literary cannon. Feminist studies should help to raise the statue of female authors. (Ibid)

Finally, Feminist criticism has certain thematic concerns. For example, Elaine Showalter views feminism in a historical point of view. She has given various phases in its movement. The first of them is the "Feminine Phase". In it women writers imitated dominant male artistic norms. This phase was followed by the "female phase" which looked at women's writing. According to Showalter, Feminism has two different modes. The first of them is "Feminist Critique". It is concerned about decoding the texts which disguise the real problems of women. The second mode of feminist criticism is called "Gynocriticism". It dealt with woman as a writer and its subjects are style, themes, genres and structures of writing by women. (Huang,2022:73)

In the prescribed essay "Towards Feminist Poetics", Elaine Showalter has spoken a great deal about the nature of Feminism. She has asserted that there is a need of feminist poetics which can unite all the aspects of feminism. She has also said that feminist critics should find out a new language to integrate the intelligence of women. (Showalter,2007:46)

The Feminine stage was during the period from 1840 to 1880. During this phase, efforts were made to show that woman was equal to man in the field of intellectual achievement. The distinguishing sign of the fact was the use of male pseudonyms by female novelists. For example. The great English women novelist Mary Ann Avance adopted the male name George Eliot. However, the feminist content of the phase is obscure and ironic. (Ibid)

Thus, Feminism is a very significant critical approach of our times. It has spread its ideas in other critical approaches to literature too. It has well-developed in the hands of its exponents like Elaine Showalter, Virginia Woolf, and Kate Millet. (Walters,2005:48)

Jane Austen's novel "Emma" is studied from a feminist point of view. Austen has given more importance to her heroines. All of her novels are heroine-dominated and they do not have heroes in the true sense of the term.

The novel is entitled after its heroine, Miss Emma Woodhouse. It is, therefore, quite significance. Emma is the central figure in the novel. All the events are concerned with her. All the characters are subsidiary to her. Emma can be called the most loving heroine of Jane Austen. So the novel is rightly entitled after her name.

The central theme of the novel which is concerned with the heroine of the novel. It is Emma's self-education through experience. Emma plans according to her own imagination. She undergoes the mission of match-making in spite of being warned not to do so by her father and Mr. Knightly. (Bowen,1936:75)

Shashi Deshpande' novel "That Long Silence" can also be studied from a feminist point of view. The novel deals with the condition of women vis-à-vis men. The novelist wants the Indian woman to be aware of the subordinate position they have placed themselves in for the sake of their husband and children.

The title "That Long Silence" meaningful and suitable for a social novel of this type. Its significance may be stated as follows.

First, The title "That Long Silence" has thematic significance. It reflects the theme of the novel. Which is women dominated by man. The title refers to the fact that women have been keeping silence long in spite of being under the dominance of man. It thus is connected not only with the life-story of Jaya, the heroine, but of all the women who are deserted by their husbands.(Kukrethi,1998:37)

2.Feminism theory

Definition of Feminism: The term 'feminism' has its origin from the Latin word 'Femina' meaning 'Woman', and there by the term refers to the thought which focuses on women existence, their rights and powers. It is an organized movement, launched by the women of east, which promotes equality of women in political, economic and social fields. Feminism is a diverse set of political, social, and cultural movements that aim to establish equal rights and opportunities for women, challenge gender-based inequalities, and dismantle patriarchy and other systems of oppression that disadvantage women and gender minorities. Abrams, K. (2020) defines feminism as "the belief in social, political, and economic equality of the sexes" (p. 7). Feminism is a social, political, and cultural movement aimed at achieving equality between the sexes. It is based on the belief that women should have the same rights, opportunities, and resources as men. (Tyson, 2013: 191-192a).

Feminism has become a dominant force in contemporary literary criticism. Like Deconstruction and new Historicism, it has challenged several assumptions of traditional criticism. It has made considerable advancement during a small period of time. Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter, Kate millet and MaryEllmann are the major exponents of feminism. Feminism can be called a mode of critical discourse which emphasizes culturally determined gender differences in the interpretation of literary works. Feminism generally focuses on the history of male dominance and oppression in all aspects of life.(Friedan,2018:58)

History of feminism: Generally, it is supposed that feminism grew out of "Women's Movement" of 1960.however, the origin of feminism can be traced to earlier period. The real history of feminism can be given as follows.

The first phase of feminism covers the period from 1830 to 1920. During this phase emphasis was given on the campaigns such as one for the extensions of civil rights to women Critics like J.M.Mill and Friedrich Engel contributed to feminism as their works articulated women's problems. However, the first major book on feminism as their works articulated women's problems. However, the first major book on feminism during this phase was Simon Beauvoir's The Second sex. It throws light on the portrayal of women in literature, particularly in the novels of D.H. Lawrence.(Moran,2004:37)

The Second Phase of feminism falls during the period from 1960 to 1960. During this period no prominent books were written. The Phase shows inactivity as far as feminism is concerned. The third phase of feminism covers the years after 1960.In fact, feminism as an active movement developed during 1960.Education of women and their entry into

various occupations helped for the reemergence of the feminist movement. Betty Friedman's book *The Feminine Mystique*(1963) proved to be a seminal work on feminism. Soon America, Britain and France became the stages for feminist debates.(Ibid)

3. Apply the concepts “feminist critique” and “Gynocritique” to Austen’s Emma.

Jane Austen's novel “Emma” can be studied from feministic point of view. Unlike Shakespeare, Austen has given more importance to her heroine is “Emma”. Her novel is heroine-dominated and they do not have heroes in the true sense of the term. The concept “feminist critique” and “gynocritique” may be applied to the “Emma”.

According to Showalter, feminist critique and gynocritique are the two important varieties of feminist criticism. The first is concerned with woman as a reader of the work written by men. In it, woman is shown in her stereo-type image. She is shown as manipulated as in culture and films. This type of feminism hardly has any role in “Emma”. This is because here the work under study is by a female author and she has definitely uplifted woman from the manipulated condition. (Showalter,1988:58)

The other type,gynocritique, is concerned with woman as a writer. It deals with themes of the works by women. It is female-oriented and studies the works and women characters as models. This is true of “Emma”. The fact can be explained as follows.(Ibid)

First, “Emma” is written by a woman novelist, Jane Austen. Austen can be taken as a supporter of Feminism. She can be regarded as a challenge to Shakespeare or Thomas Hardy who are males and have shown female characters as secondary ones.

Secondly, “Emma” is superior to their male counterparts, She suffers form jealousy.Emma cannot accept any man to be her superior. Emma is more interesting and impressive as compared to the hero,Mr. Knightly. Emma is certainly the greatest creation of Jane Austen.She is the heroine of the novel. She is the central to the action of the novel. This is because every other character is related to her. Really, Emma is the axis on which the plot of the novel turns. The character of Emma is so significant that the novel bears her name.(Kirkham,1986:57)

4.Emma as a match-maker

Love and marriage are the recurrent themes of Jane Austen's novels. Emma too is not an exception to the fact. In fact, marriage and matchmaking is the leading theme of the novel. It is closely related to another important theme namely the education of the heroine through experience. The novel begins with a marriage of Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston and ends with three marriage of prominent characters including the heroine. The main action of the novel contain love, matchmaking and views of various characters about love and marriage.(Trilling,1968:62)

Emma's habit of match-making, though she herself is unmarried and does not wish to get married. Miss, Taylor, the governess of Emma has married a widower, Mr. Weston. Emma claims that it is she has brought about the matrimonial alliance between the two. Emma's Futile efforts to bring about a match between Harriet and Elton and also she's efforts for a match between Harriet and Frank. Emma tells them about the advantages of a marriage.

Thus, The whole novel deals with love, marriage and match-making. As far as this theme is concerned, Emma is a little different from others novels of Jane Austen. In other novels, generally mothers find husbands for their daughters. But in Emma the role of

mothers has been played by Emma. Emma is a heroine-dominating all events of novel.(Litvak,1987:p.36)

5.women characters as models in “Emma”

The feminist critics believed that female is passive. Now, we will see that this speech is proved or not from through women characters in Novel.

Harriet and Jane are realistic characters. Both of them have been endowed with life and are also sharply distinguished from each other. Harriet is a passive and submissive woman and so Emma wants to help her. However, in her mission of match-making, Emma causes much pain and suffering to gentle and mild Harriet. Harriet becomes a mere puppet whose string Emma holds behind a curtain. Emma turns her life upside down. First, Emma does not allow Harriet to marry Martin whom Harriet loves. Then Emma wishes Harriet to love and marry Elton and Frank but both do not like Harriet.(Kaplan,1992:47)

Jane Fairfax is a pity a girl who fall in love with an almost unscrupulous man like Frank. But there is a hope of Frank’s improving under the wholesome influence of Jane. Jane’s falling in with Frank and agreeing to marry him has been regarded as somewhat unconvincing and it surely is. Jane is sensitive and capable of deep feeling and she is a silent sufferer who has grown up as an orphan dependent on the charity of others. All these events indicate that Jane is a passive.(Ibid)

6. The male characters as models in “Emma”

The feminist critics believed that male is active.

The male characters are vividly and convincingly drawn. Mr.Elton, Frank Churchill and Mr. Knightley deserve special mention. Mr. Elton is shallow-minded man who wants to marry for money. He wishes to marry Emma in order to enrich himself by getting married to an heiress. He shows his shallowness and his lack of delicacy when he refuses to dance with that girl. He is essentially not a bad-hatred man, nor is he wicked. But he is not a likable characters too. However, he gets a wife who brings some dowry and who is mentally also suitable to hot temperament though she does not make a parade of this moral concern. (Brandbrook,1967:37)

Frank is shallow-minded man and he has a few more faults too. Frank is selfish and lacks consideration. Secondly, he is of deceptive nature. He deceives Emma. Thirdly, he is clever enough to befool young ladies. Fourthly, he is proud and showy.

Mr. Knightley is the hero of the novel not only because he married the heroine but also because he possesses many qualities of head and heart. He is heroic and virtuous. He is without any vice. He is an admirable man(Ibid)

Comparison between the two Stories

7. Similarities: There is a diversity of similarities in both the stories in relation to the theme of the two stories. These similarities are shown by various aspects in the stories such as the use their works to show that woman was equal to man in the field of knowledge and other themes such as It dealt with woman as a writer.

8.”That Long Silence” deals with the condition of women in a male dominating society.

Shashi Deshpandes’ novel “That Long Silence” can also be studied from a feminist point of view. The feminist critics believe the basic view that Western Civilization is Patriarchal in it, women are subordinated to men.

The major theme of the novel of Deshpande is the condition of women vis-à-vis men. She believes that women very often suffer due to male chauvinism and their own defeatism. This is told in "That Long Silence" too. The title itself reveals the theme of the novel. It tells us that women do not raise their voice against suppression. The theme is expressed through the marital theme which can be discussed as given below. (Ahuja,1989:58)

First, the heroine Jaya herself is the woman who is dominated by her husband. Her father gives names "Jaya" which means 'victory'. But ironically enough victory never came to her in life. She marries a man who has no love for her. He does not tell her about his office. He heaps several charges against her. He says that she did not inspire him in his career. He called her so ignorant that she did not know the meaning of a CEO. He does not allow her to write stories saying that they revealed their private life to the public. Not only this but he leaves house without telling her about his whereabouts. Then he tells her that he would come back. Jaya desires to change but we are sure that she would not change. Through the story of the marital life of Jaya and Mohan, the novelist wants the women to be aware of the subordinate position they have placed themselves in for the sake of their husbands and children. (Ibid)

The theme is revealed through the stories of other women also. First, Kusum is a deserted woman. She is a mother of three children. She got daughters only. When she went mad, nobody except Vanitamami gives her shelter.

Secondly, Nayana the sweeper woman is mother of two daughters. Two of her sons died soon after their births. Her husband has said that he would throw her out if she gave birth to a daughter again.

Therefore, Nayana wished to have a son. Nayana is so much dominated by man that once she says: "the men, my husband, my brother and my father" wasters, good-for-nothings and drunkards." (Ahuja,1989:49)

Thirdly, Jeeja and Tara belong to the lowest stratum of the society. They lived in a Chawl and did odd jobs. Jeeja is a childless widow her husband was a drunkard. He married again for children. Jeeja is so simple that she did not oppose her husband to remarry for children. The woman dies and leaves two children behind who are to be grown up by Jeeja. The son marries Tara. He too becomes a drunkard and beats Tara for money. Thus, women have to live in kind of hell. (Ibid)

Next, Asha is Ravi's wife. The case of Asha shows how husbands become cruel to their wives. They leave no option to them except going to their parents. There is no malice or meanness in Asha. On the other hand, Ravi is dishonest, He does not like Asha's father. He tells Jaya:

"I am not going to put up his big belly tactics." (Deshpande,1989:46)

Ravi threatens his wife that he would 'chuck her'

Finally, there are minor women characters who suffer under man domination. One woman has been beaten by her husband on the road during a night. Mohan feels for the woman but others do not feel sympathy for her. Another example is that of the mother of Mohan. She is tortured by her husband. He beats her even when she has not prepared his favorite chatney. He throws the brass plate at the wall and leaves

Thus, the theme of the novel is women's suffering under male domination.

9. Female characters as models in "That Long Silence".

(A). The role of Jaya in the novel.

Jaya plays the heroine's role in *That Long Silence*. The significance of her role may be discussed as follows.

Jaya is a faithful and true wife. She loves her husband Mohan, though he is a perverted man. Jaya does not become furious or vindictive. She knows that all the charges against her are baseless. Yet she does not oppose but bears everything silently. Jaya thought that Mohan was in a pitiable condition like Rahul in his childhood. She says

“Rahul had looked like this when I had pulled my nipple
Or the bottle out of his mouth. Poor Rahul, Poor Mohan
Deprived of the nipple.” (Deshpande, 1989:78)

Jaya feels sympathy for the neglected people. For example, she feels pity for Kusum. She does not like Kusum in the beginning but then she brings her to live with her. Jaya feels sympathy for the mad woman.

Jaya feels satisfied when Mohan does remain indifferent when a man beats his wife in the street. Jaya has a regard for her husband's feeling. She does not tell him truth which could hurt his feelings. Jaya was in perfect harmony with her husband. She says:

“The thought of living without
Him had twisted my idea.” (Chandramani, 2014:28)

The story of other women in the novel is Mohan's mother, She is a silent sufferer. Her husband is very poor. He abuses her for small reasons. She has to take care of her children too.

Kusum becomes sane and commits suicide. She had three daughter and no son and that was the main reason of her torture. And we have another example of a woman's sacrifice is Vimla who dies because of lack proper medical treatment. (Ibid)

Thus, Shash Deshpande is deeply shocked by women's tendency to suffer silently and die silently. Their silent sacrifice remain unnoticed. Therefore, She wants the women to break that long silence in order to take their place with men.

10. male characters as models in” *That Long Silence*”.

(A) Mohan's role in the novel.

.Mohan plays an important role in *That Long Silence*. Mohan is the husband of jaya, the heroine of the novel. He is from very poor family. His mother cooks for some ceremonies of other families and bring food for her family. Mohan stands for a dominating husband. He does not have spiritual love for Jaya. The two have only the urge of sex which gives birth two children but cannot join their hearts. Mohan blames Jaya for all of his misfortunes. (Chowdhury, 2011:46)

Mohan plays an important role in the story-writing career of Jaya. He wants Jaya to do something. He meets the publishers for getting Jaya's stories published. But later on it is Mohan himself who stops her career. He blames Jaya to bring realities of their family life to the public through one of her stories. Jaya is a conventional wife who obeys the husband as a God. She stop writing stories.

(B) The role of Kamat in *That Long Silence*.

Kamat plays a small but significant role in the novel. Jaya's husband allows Jaya to find a job. Later on he speaks with the editor of a magazine to accept her stories. But soon Jaya stops writing stories as her husband charged her of revealing his family life to people. Kamat who supports Jaya to write stories under a false name. She can give his address. Kamat helps Jaya to continue her career of writing stories.

Kamat helps and advises Jaya properly. He helps Jaya to continue writing stories under a pseudo name. He allowed her to use his address. But Jaya felt that there was something negative behind his help. Kamat returned the unaccepted stories to Jaya. He observed that Jaya's stories lacked force of feelings and conviction in matter ad style. He advised her how to use them in her stories. Thus, Kamat becomes a friend, Philosopher and guide for Jaya.(Chandramani,2014:37)

Shashi Deshpande showed us through the events of the story that Jaya was equal male writers in the field of intellectual achievement. Shashi used of male pseudo names for the heroine in the story to show her works.

11. The difference: There are several differences manifested in the stories "*Emma*" heroine is dominated all the events of the story and She wrote her stories under her real name and "*That Long Silence*" the heroine is dominated by husband. She used of male pseudonyms to continue writing her stories. These are the points of difference in both stories.

Conclusion:

This study uses of comparative literature to examine the similarities and the differences of "*Emma*" and "*That Long Silence*". The similarities in the two stories are in relationship to the theme of the two stories. We find the as the use their works to show that woman was equal to man in two stories..

The difference can be clear in various situations such as "*Emma*" heroine is dominated all the events of the story and She wrote her stories under her real name and "*That Long Silence*" the heroine is dominated by husband. She used of male pseudonyms to continue writing her stories.

Jane Austen and Shashi Deshpande are trying to raise the statue of women through their work through understanding women for women to discover the strength and ability of women. They give Female characters the freedom in the event of two novels.

Jane Austen gave more importance to his heroine- dominated all the events of the novel. She does not heroine in the true sense because She has shortcomings and contradictions in her character on account of which probably, Jane Austen wrote in a letter. "I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like"(Austen,157)

Shashi shows us that the heroine and all women are dominated by men so they have to be vis-à-vis men. She wants women to break the barrier of fear and not remain silent in order to get their place in the man –oriented world.

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