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**A Feminist Perspective in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* &
Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things***

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Abstract

*Feminist voice is the central idea of this paper. The paper seeks to study that individual freedom, ambiguity and contradiction, modernization, disorder, confusion, loneliness, exile and search for identity forms the features of feminism. Some examples in this perspective are like Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* as texts of 'feminine writing' and social conflict. The paper highlights a study on the background of feminist and social level. The various feminist aspects are focused through this paper.*

The paper also deals with issues regarding the connection of different discourses relating feminism. There is reflection of a realistic picture of contemporary middle-class woman. Family relationship is at the centre of this novel. The theme of marriage, love and sex are the themes of this novel. The differences in their outlook are so great that they fail to understand each other. Due to difference in attitude, their love based on social fear rather than mutual feel for each other. She portrays the predicament of middle-class educated woman, their inner conflict and quest for identity, issues pertaining to parent-child relationship, their exploitation and disillusionment. It is a creative attach on the sufferings of women in Indian Society.

Keywords: feminism, patriarchal, identity, freedom, disorder.

Introduction:

Marginality is one kind of system like culture, feminist and politics or social. It is emerged from the unimportant or secondary. Marginal voice is the central idea of this paper. The marginal can create variety in writing. The individual freedom, ambiguity and contradiction, modernization, disorder, confusion, loneliness, exilence, search for identity forms the features of marginality.

Marginality is a condition in which a person, a group or a community is marginalized by dominant force/forces. Hence marginalization is a process of domination and subordination. This premise partly answers the question that who marginalizes whom. Besides this understanding, there are complex issues involved when we theorize domination and subordination. It is Hegel in his theorization of self/other binary and critiquing Kant underlines the unequal relations between the two in that he privileges the self. This inequality has been theorized from socio-political, ideological, gender and liberal perspective. Among them, the two most dominant perspectives are Gramsci's theory of hegemony in which the dominant class marginalizes the subordinate groups and the 'subordinate' notion developed following Gramsci that attempts to historicize voicelessness. In India, marginality is very complex as it goes beyond the binary of domination and subordination. We have in India, marginalization of communities, minorities and others in the name of religion, location, and occupation and so on besides marginalization in the name of class, caste, gender and tribe.

India is multi lingual, multi cultural, and multi ethnic country. One of its basic tenets is unity in diversity. But contemporary scenario witness rapid decline of India's pluralistic identification. Who are representing the marginalized and with what motives? Are the

marginalized really powerless to represent them in intellectual environment? It will examine the manner in which they are represented in literary and cultural texts. Today, globalization seems to have taken over every form of art and culture everywhere in the world. There is still one form of writing which is emerged as marginal. It highlights the difference in ideas according to culture of local communities within that particular country. It has different histories and cultures. These marginalized cultures flourishes away from the mainstream. Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist Thinker called it as 'Subaltern'. In feminist perspective, Gayatri Spivak asked a rhetoric question in the essay, Can Subaltern Speak?

Literature as a mode of discursive articulation always endeavors to give voice to the marginal. It sensitizes us to condition of oppressed, the alienated, the discriminated and the one who exists on the margin. At the level of literary marginality, we face the problem at two levels, first, in the representation of the females, the dalits in mainstream writing in general. Secondly, even if they are represented, they mostly are represented as minor characters and are stereotyped. The critical analysis of a text never happens from the point of view of a minor and minority character. Further, in critical reading of minor and marginalized characters they do not draw our attention to their socio-cultural status, location, identity and voice. The voice of the marginalized is mostly muted. The paper highlights a perspective of feminist and social marginal expressions in literatures.

The writers, critics, artists who depend on these kind of writings like dalit marginality, voices of women for their identity, subaltern literature, that form the major part of literature. The voices and views of margins are taken into account in the new form called marginality. Here, the root of marginal writing arises for some times from such depressed & oppressed situation for the quest of their life. It deals not only with the class struggle, between rich and poor but also the struggle between castes and it is seen from the lower caste point of view, the suppressed, the 'have nots', the marginal. The marginal writers think that pen is the weapon of their voice. Every writer stresses on the social exclusion, political disorder and spiritual flexibility encourage their ultimate destination. All the voices are the outcome of their self-experienced feeling of their own point of view. The contextualized marginality in an Inter-disciplinary framework with reference to past and with its possible effects on life in future and also provides a comparative platform of literary study between woman and Dalit discourses. The chief concern of this research paper is to review literature on marginality in this concern.

The paper highlights the marginal voice in feminist and social context in the characters of Jaya in Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Ammu and Velutha in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.

Objectives

The aim of this paper is to trace the emergence of feminist, social issues in the modern world, to highlight the perspective of marginality in terms of feminist, social point of view. The paper intends to provide the man-woman relationship in Shashi Deshpande's novel, '*That Long Silence*,' and rebellious nature of the woman character Ammu, in Arundhati Roy's novel '*The God of Small Things*'. It also focuses social caste conflict in Indian society, through the suppressed character Velutha. The search for identity forms the major issues in these novels. The theme of love, sex, marriage is at the centre of these novels. The quest for identity still continues the major problem of the present world. This is the dominant marginal voice in all these novels of Indian writers. Jaya's search for her identity in her family as well as in society, Ammu's rebel against her family is the symbol of their search for existence. The search for getting identity is

the sign of existence. Everyone is in search of their own identity. Hence everywhere there is struggle for existence. It is suppressed by the majority of centre who holds the power. That's why there begins the emergence of marginal voices to form their own ideas, views and thoughts in their own point of view.

Main Arguments: -

Social Issues of Marginality in perspective of Women and Search of Identity:

Social issues of Marginality in perspective of dalits, Caste-Conflict:

Social Issues of Marginality in perspective of Women and Search of Identity:

Shashi Deshpande's '*That Long Silence*' Sahitya Akademy Award(1988) winner novel presents the social status of woman in 1970's and 1980's. There is reflection of a realistic picture of contemporary middle-class woman. Family relationship is at the centre of this novel. The theme of marriage, love and sex are the themes of this novel. The relationship between Mohan and Jaya brings out the failure married life due to lack of love and mutual understanding. The differences in their outlook are so great that they fail to understand each other. Due to difference in attitude, their love based on social fear rather than mutual feel for each other. She portrays the predicament of middle-class educated woman, **their inner conflict and quest for identity**, issues pertaining to parent-child relationship, their exploitation and disillusionment. It is a creative attach on the sufferings of women in Indian Society.

In her stream of thoughts Jaya looks at her marital relations where there is no conversation left between them. She feels that she and Mohan were not really speaking to each other, not even to make up a family, a home in real sense. They were just '**a man and a woman married for seventeen years**' but with no identity of her own 'just emptiness and silence' The novelist used beautiful images to describe Jaya's married life. "A pair of bullocks yoked together". There is no love in between Mohan and Jaya. There's a symbol of failure and sign of disgust, disappointment and depression.

The story is unfolded by Jaya, ironically again symbolizing victory, while in the actual life situation, she is supposed to lead a traditional, passive life like; "Sita following her husband into exile, Savithri, dogging death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband's travails....." (*That Long Silence*, P.11). Thus, Jaya rejects the image of traditional woman like Sita, Savitri and Draupadi and says: "No, What have I do with these mythical women? I can't fool myself. The truth is simpler. Two bullocks yoked together....."(*That Long Silence*, P.11-12). By implication her character represents modern woman's ambivalent or hesitant attitude to married life. She expects the physical enjoyment. She says, "First there's love, then there's sex - that was how I had always imagined it to be. But after living with Mohan I had realized that it could so easily be the other way round" (*That Long Silence*, P.95).

When Mohan walks out of the house, she feels that she has failed in her duty as a wife. There grows a silence between the husband and the wife. It creates a gap between them. Mohan keeps on asking questions but Jaya does not find a word to answer them: "I racked my brain trying to think of an answer...." (*That Long Silence*, P.31). **She does not like to submit to male prejudiced ideas.**

Thus, love, marriage and sex form the important theme of novel. **Jaya's search for identity is the representative of the entire woman's, in Indian patriarchal society.** Jaya wants to erase the long silence by practice.

The work of Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* as a text of '**feminine writing**'. It also analyzes how the myth of the double/twin has been appropriated by Roy so as to deconstruct and rewrite cultural concepts of masculinity and femininity enabling her to foreground the distinction between biological sex and culturally constructed gender, and to raise questions about gender attributes and the marginal position assigned to the female subject in the dominant culture. Through the characters of the twins, she seeks to divide between 'self' and 'other', 'mind' and 'body', 'masculine' and 'feminine', illustrative of the confused state of creation. In the process, Arundhati Roy, as a feminist writer, indulges in experimental writing that exemplifies the concept of **écriture feminine**, the aim of which is to scare phallogocentric systems of patriarchy.

Social issues of Marginality in perspective of dalits, Caste-Conflict:

The Man Booker prize (1997) winner Arundhati Roy's '*The God of Small Things*' is the novel of social, economic and caste conflict. Velutha, the lower caste character caught into the conflict of the traditions, customs and caste. He is a down trodden representative of man. Ammu is the heroine of Roy's novel. She is very rebellious, bold in her nature and accepts the opposition for her existence. Close tight and she actually shares a moment of intense desire with him. This suggests the change in social psyche from the period of Mammachi to Ammu. At this moment Velutha and Ammu were very close to each other. Such advanced psyche is presented through, feminine point of view in the novel.

Arundhati Roy in her '*The God of Small Things*' has highlighted the oppression of the **marginalized group like woman along with dalit** or 'Untouchable'. Roy has tried to sensitize this Postcolonial society to the cruelty of some of its traditions. She has challenged certain common-age-old, self-satisfied yet dehumanizing social taboos. She has shown **how patriarchal ideology of an ancient culture decides codes of conduct for both, women like Ammu and untouchables like Velutha**. It is this ideology and the value system that is responsible for the violence of the 'Touchable' (Higher class) towards the 'Untouchables' (Lower class). Roy has presented all this through the eyes of Estha and Rahel.

Comrade Pillai is an opportunist. Velutha has been appointed as the chief mechanic of the factory. The touchable workers are fearful that his way Velutha may become their boss. So, they request Comrade Pillai to discharge Velutha from his position. Pillai does not want to lose a number of votes of touchable workers. So, he denied to the police that Velutha is a party man. It is he who helped Baby Kochamma's conspiracy in several ways. Contrary to his slogans – "Annihilation of the class Enemy", "caste is class" (p.287), he didn't help Velutha against Chacko, their common enemy. However, he gives his tacit support to torture Velutha. He says to Chacko: "But see, comrade, any benefits that you give him (Velutha), naturally others are resenting it. They see it as partiality. After all, whatever job he does, carpenter or electrician or whatever it is, for them he is just a Paravan. It is a conditioning they have from birth. This is I myself have told them is wrong. But frankly speaking, comrade, **change is one thing. Acceptance is another.**"(p.279)

Analysis: The paper deals with retracing the marginalized voices on the premise that literature is a social product. Literature is more responsible in this mission than other disciplines. It always contributes to centralize self and other, centre and periphery, domination and subordination.

That Long Silence, reflects on the various dimensions of problems of women in the traditional society of India. The awareness of oppression, consciousness of self identity, ability to control the resources of economy, capability to make independent spaces, carving out unconventional mode of existence and the realization of rights and duties can mark the dawn of true emancipated existence.

The God of Small Things, is grounded in historical realities. One finds colonial heritage local realism all together in the novel. Ammu has presented a women's struggle in seeking 'identity' in a male dominated conventional society. She has successfully tried to highlight her attention on social reform. She has definitely arisen our sense of sympathy for the downtrodden and the less privileged. Vellutha, the lower caste character caught into the conflict of the traditions, customs and caste. He is a down trodden representative of man.

A review, of Social Marginality of women and dalits in perspective of modern world:

Entrenched institutions of caste and patriarchy: These are the principal agents of enforcing silence. The widespread belief in certain groups (mainly upper castes and male) that they are superior to others and that any protest or assertion from the others is a threat to them is the fundamental basis of oppression. Typically, such a belief is created and perpetuated to continue the economic and social dominance of the elite groups.

On the issue of gender, our society expects the 'silently sacrificing' Indian woman. Silence and patience are held up as the greatest virtues for the ideal Indian woman, and they are thus excluded from every decision making process.

Control of media by vested interests: This is perhaps the subtlest of ways in which large groups of society are systematically silenced by an institution. But it has been shown that big media is structurally dependent on big business and the government for its survival, and will resist reporting against dominant ideologies and state narratives, even if free on paper. Where these ideologies and narratives clash with the interests of the marginalized, the media will side with the dominant groups, compelled by its dependence on them.

In India, both the news and entertainment media are also affected by a terribly low presence of marginalized groups, especially Dalits. This is absolutely critical, you would not see anywhere near the coverage of India's rape and sexual or physical abuse crisis had Indian women not entered the media (especially the English electronic media) in large numbers.

Literacy: Historically, illiteracy and denial of access to scriptures has been the main tool of India's high castes to keep the mass population marginalized. The same attitude persisted after independence, with mass literacy being opposed by the dominant group in various ways. Quite obviously, there is little chance of marginalized groups developing an effective voice without literacy.

In recent years, there has been a shift in educational policy, with the Rights to Education Act being a truly inclusive step. However, the quality of education remains poor, with a shortage of teachers and a curriculum and testing regime driven by elite interests.

The most marginalized section of the society are able to organize and voice their concerns. The voice of the marginalized will bring them in mainstream.

Conclusion: Thus to conclude, 'Marginality' is generally employed to interpret and analyze socio-cultural, and economic spheres, where disadvantaged people struggle to gain access to resources, and equal participation in social life. The superstructures of race in Africa, Australia, USA and caste in India deform, and complicate the identities of the marginalized along lines of

gender, class, and family structure. In the modern day debate, various facets of marginality have been discussed in scholarly circles in almost every disciplinary area including literature, history, sociology, and political science with implications for issues as diverse as justice, gender, equality and inequality.

The beginning of literary and cultural theories in the literary field has brought major changes in the way of reading, interpreting and understanding literature and culture. This has empowered, in a significant way, marginalized discourse which often remained unnoticed by the hegemonic culture. Marginality is a state which reflects backwardness of a person, thing or various social aspects, which is related to political, religious, educational, economic, and physical aspects. Somehow, it is dependent upon the Social Order. In the present context marginality is generally used to describe and analyze feminist, socio-cultural, political spheres, where disadvantaged people struggle to gain access to resources, and full participation in social life. They are usually discriminated against, ignored, and often suppressed on the basis of race, gender, age, culture, religion, custom, occupation, education and economy by the mainstream which can be studied in societal dimensions.

The Higher class society or Patriotic society is thirsty of power out of basic human instinct or selfish factor. So they enjoy power by ruling upon lower class and woman equally. But, they forget that the same basic instinct is the real cause of unhappiness in their life. They are unaware about the fact that they themselves also are part of the society. If lower class or woman is neglected, not happy in their life, how higher class or Patriarchy could be happy? As expecting beneficial support of woman and lower class, Patriarchy and Higher class have to recognize the identity and importance of the subordinates. Otherwise, the ultimate worse effects have to be suffered by higher class and Patriarchy as a part of the whole society. Therefore, the due respect for woman and lower class will lead the better human life. It will also lead the best future to the human race.

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