



Gynocriticism: An analysis of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and Jane Austen's *Emma*

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This study examines feminism and gynocriticism in both “*Emma*” by Jane Austen and “*That Long Silence*” by Shashi. It does so by contrasting and comparing the two books through the lens of feminism. The purpose of this analysis is to contrast the writing styles of two novels, one written in English and the other in India. Gynocritique, one of the most significant subgenres of feminist criticism, is the focus of this study, which applies feminist theory to its analysis. In this study, the oppression of women is the root of the problem. The research presupposes that women have a lower status than men. The research demonstrates that two writers improve women’s status in society by showing their readers that women are just as capable as males.

Keywords: Emma, feminist, gynocritique,, matchmaker, That Long Silence.

انتقاد النساء: تحليل لرواية "هذا الصمت الطويل" لشاشي ديشباندي و"إيما" لجين أوستن

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خلاصة

تبحث هذه الدراسة في النسوية والنقد الجنسي في كل من رواية “إيما” لجين أوستن ورواية “هذا الصمت الطويل” لشاشي. وهي تفعل ذلك من خلال مقارنة الكتابين من خلال عدسة النسوية. الغرض من هذا التحليل هو مقارنة أسلوب الكتابة في روايتين، إحداهما مكتوبة باللغة الإنجليزية والأخرى في الهند. إن Gynocritique، أحد أهم الأنواع الفرعية للنقد النسوي، هو محور هذه الدراسة، التي تطبق النظرية النسوية على فلسفتها. تحليل. وفي هذه الدراسة، فإن اضطهاد المرأة هو أصل المشكلة. ويفترض البحث أن المرأة لها مكانة أقل من الرجل. يوضح البحث أن كاتبتين يعملان على تحسين مكانة المرأة في المجتمع من خلال إظهار لقرائهما أن المرأة تتمتع بنفس قدرة الرجل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إيما، النسوية، النقد النسائي،، الخاطبة، ذلك الصمت الطويل.

1. Introduction

Modern literary criticism is largely dominated by feminism. Feminism is the study of women from a female perspective. What this entails is unearthing women’s latent power and potential. Thus, feminism is an ideology that seeks to comprehend and alter the world to better accommodate women. Feminist criticism seeks to do the same for writing and the arts. Feminist critics reject male authors’ depictions of



women because they are sexist. They argue that male writers never portray a woman's perspective accurately. Male authors, on the other hand, tend to portray women in ways that men want. Feminism, and the Feminist approach specifically, seeks to liberate women from the influence of male writers. According to Jackson & Jones, (1998, p. 68).

You can recognize a feminist critique by its hallmarks. Arnold's concept that criticism is an objectively neutral activity is rejected by Feminist critics. They argue, instead, that literary critique is fundamentally political. Second, feminism has multidisciplinary criticism. It's an attempt to break away from the normative approach and segment the topic into many academic subfields. (Harding, 1987, p. 84) Certain presuppositions underpin feminist criticism. The fundamental concept that Western Civilization is patriarchal is, first, accepted by feminist critics. Women have a lower status than men in this society. Second, the stereotype that women are more submissive to men prevails. Third, feminist critics argue that patriarchal ideology can be found even in high-quality works of literature. Fourth, we need to alter our approaches to literature. They need to support women. Finally, they stress the importance of expanding the canon of literature. Feminist scholarship has the potential to elevate the status of women writers. (Jackson & Jones, 1998, p. 66)

Finally, there are recurring themes in Feminist criticism. For instance, Elaine Showalter takes a historical perspective on feminism. She has described its development at several stages. The "Feminine Phase" is the initial stage. Women writers in this movement largely aped the styles used by men. The "female phase," which focused on the works of women authors, followed this one. Showalter argues that there are two distinct feminisms.

The term "Feminist Critique" describes the first. The focus is on dissecting writings that mask women's true issues. The term "Gynocriticism" is used to describe the second type of feminist criticism. Style, themes, genres, and forms of writing by women were discussed, along with the role of women in the literary canon. (Chen, 2022, p. 68) Elaine Showalter has elaborated on the definition of Feminism in the required essay "Towards Feminist Poetics." She has argued that feminism on its whole needs a feminist poetics to bring it all together. She has also remarked that detractors of feminism need to establish a new language to accommodate women's intelligence. (Showalter, 1985, p. 125)

The years between 1840 and 1880 are known as the Feminine era. During this time, people were working to disprove the stereotype that women lagged behind males intellectually. Female novelists' adoption of male pseudonyms stands out as a defining feature of the genre. This is only one example. Mary Ann Advance, an



accomplished English novelist, changed her name to the masculine George Eliot. The feminist meaning in the phrase is not obvious and is instead sarcastic. (Showalter, 1985, p. 97) Therefore, Feminism is a major critical theory of the modern era. Its principles have also influenced other forms of literary criticism. In the capable hands of Elaine Showalter, Virginia Woolf, and Kate Millet, it has flourished. (Walters, 2005, p. 11) The feminist interpretation of Jane Austen's "Emma" is discussed. Austen has elevated the status of her female protagonists. There are no actual heroes in any of her stories, but there are plenty of strong female protagonists.

Miss Emma Woodhouse, the novel's protagonist, inspired the title. Therefore, it is of great importance. The novel revolves around Emma, the protagonist. Everything that happens has to do with her. Everyone else in the story is there to serve her. Emma is Jane Austen's most lovable heroine. So, it makes sense to name the book after her.

Emma is learning for herself through her adventures. She uses her creativity when making plans. Despite her father's and Mr. Knightly's warnings, she accepts the mission of matchmaking. (Nubile, 2003, p. 22) Even from a feminist perspective, "That Long Silence" by Shashi Deshpande is worth reading and thinking about. The novel focuses on women and their treatment by males. The author of the work wants Indian women to realize their subservient role in society, which they have chosen to play for the benefit of their husbands and children. This type of sociological fiction requires a meaningful title, and "That Long Silence" fits the bill perfectly. We can sum up its significance in a few words. That Long Silence, the title, is thematically appropriate. It's quite fitting with the novel's overall message. That is a situation in which men have control over women. The title alludes to the idea that women have kept quiet for a long time despite being oppressed by men. This makes it relevant not just to Jaya, the protagonist, but to all women whose husbands have abandoned them. (Nubile, 2003, p. 17)

2. Theoretical Feminism

Feminism, in a Nutshell: Feminism, which derives its name from the Latin word for "woman" (femina), is a political and social ideology that promotes the equality of sexes and the advancement of women. It's an initiative spearheaded by Eastern women for the advancement of gender parity in all spheres of society and government. Feminism is an umbrella term for a wide range of political, social, and cultural movements that work to abolish discrimination against women, end patriarchy, and end other forms of sex and gender-based oppression. Feminism is "the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. Although largely originating in the West, feminism is manifested worldwide" as defined by



Burkett & Brunell (2023, p. 2). Feminism is a political, cultural, and social movement for gender parity. It's founded on the idea that women and men ought to enjoy equal privileges and access.

Modern literary criticism is largely dominated by feminism. It has, like Deconstruction and new Historicism, posed serious questions to long-held beliefs in critical theory. Significant progress has been made in a relatively short time frame. The notable feminist proponents include Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter, Kate Millet, and Mary Ellmann. Feminism is a critical discourse that emphasizes how gender roles are socially constructed and how these roles affect how texts are analyzed. The history of male supremacy and tyranny over women is a central theme in feminism. (Hooks, 2000, p. 53)

Feminism is commonly thought to have originated with the "Women's Movement" of the 1960s. However, feminism's roots go back further in time. The following is a more accurate timeline of feminism's development.

Between 1830 and 1920, feminism went through its early stages. Campaigns, such as one for the extension of civil rights to women, received a lot of attention during this period. J.M. Mill and Friedrich Engel were both influential critics whose writings helped advance feminism by giving voice to women's issues. But their writings articulated women's difficulties, including the first significant book on feminism. Simon Beauvoir's *The Second sex* was, however, the first major book on feminism during this period. It sheds insight on the treatment of women in fiction, especially in the works of D.H. Lawrence. (Swinth, 2018, p. 128) The years 1960–1960 constitute the Second Phase of feminism. There were no notable literary works produced during this time. When it comes to feminism, The Phase is a sign of dormancy. After 1960, feminism entered its third and final phase. The year 1960 marked the beginning of feminism as a political movement. The resurgence of the feminist movement can be traced in part to the rise of educated working women. *The Feminine Mystique*, written by Betty Friedman in 1963, is widely regarded as a groundbreaking text in the feminist movement. Eventually, feminist discussions were held in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. (Ibid)

3. Feminist and Gynocritical analysis of Emma by Jane Austen

The novel "Emma" by Jane Austen can be analyzed from a feminist perspective. When compared to Shakespeare, Austen's heroine "Emma" receives more attention from the author. The protagonists in her work are all heroines, and there are no actual heroes. The "Emma" is open to "feminist critique" and "gynocritique" interpretations. Showalter argues that there are two main types of feminist criticism: feminist critique and gynocritique. The first concentrates on



women as consumers of male-authored literature. It portrays women in a very traditional light. (Jasim & Lateef, 2023, p. 133). She is portrayed in media as easily manipulated. There is little room in “Emma” for this kind of feminism. This is because the creator of the work under consideration is a woman who has helped liberate women from a position of oppression. (Showalter, 1985, p. 58). Emma in her journey of self-realization from the chains of her society undergoes attitudes and decisions to her emancipation. Emma, here, may resemble Nel of Toni Morrison's *Sula* in the regard of defining herself and maintaining her social individuality. Like Nel, Emma defines her womanhood only when she decides to marry and to experience being a wife in parallel with her traditional community and that is what let her realize her actual feminism. (Abdulbaqi, 2017, p. 650)

And then there's gynocritique, which focuses on female authors. Topics common to literature written by women are discussed. It takes the works and characters of women as its primary point of reference. True, “Emma” is like this. The following is an explanation for said fact. (Ibid)

For starters, “Emma” is written by a woman author, Jane Austen. One can interpret Austen as a feminist. She's a direct challenge to male authors like Shakespeare and Thomas Hardy, who tend to write weak female protagonists. Second, “Emma” feels envious of the male characters since she is superior to them. Emma will not acknowledge any male superiority over her. When compared to the hero, Mr. Knightley, Emma is far more fascinating and remarkable. Without a doubt, Jane Austen's masterpiece is Emma. The novel's protagonist relies on her. She plays a pivotal role in the novel's plot. All the other characters have connections to her. In truth, the novel's action revolves around Emma. Emma is such a pivotal figure in the story that her name appears in the title. (Kirkham, 2000, p. 57)

4. Matchmaking by *Emma*

Jane Austen's writings often revolve around romantic relationships and weddings. This holds for Emma as well. Marriage and arranging unions are central to the story. It's tied to another major theme, too: the heroine learning from her mistakes. Miss Taylor and Mr. Weston's wedding is the first of three marriages involving major characters in the novel. The novel centres on a love triangle and the various characters' perspectives on marriage. (Byrne, 2013, p. 62) Emma's penchant for arranging marriages, although she has little interest in tying the knot herself. Emma's nanny, Miss Taylor, has tied the knot with Mr. Weston. Emma says she is responsible for arranging the marriage between them. Attempts by Emma to set up a date between Harriet and Elton or Harriet and Frank both ended in failure. Emma discusses the positive outcomes of tying the knot. Therefore, romance, nuptials, and attempted marriage are central to the story. In this respect, Jane Austen's



Emma departs slightly from her other books. Usually, moms are the ones to go out and find partners for their daughters in books. However, in Emma, Emma has taken on the role of mother. Emma is the novel's protagonist and driving force. According to (Litvak, 1985, p. 39)

5. representations of women in "*Emma*"

Some feminists' detractors held that women are naturally submissive. Now we'll check in with the novel's female protagonists to see if their presence lends credence to this speech. Both Harriet and Jane feel like real people. Both have their unique forms of life and are strikingly different from one another. Because of Harriet's submission and passivity, Emma feels compelled to assist her. Despite her good intentions, Emma's matchmaking efforts have a devastating impact on sweet Harriet. Behind the scenes, Emma manipulates Harriet like a puppeteer. Emma completely upends her existence. To begin with, Emma forbids Harriet to wed her longtime beau Martin. Then, Emma hopes that Harriet would fall in love with Elton and marry Frank, despite the fact that they despise her. (Kaplan, 2019, p. 47)

Sadly, Jane Fairfax fell in love with a guy as seemingly unethical as Frank. Under Jane's positive influence, though, Frank may change for the better. Some have found implausible Jane's sudden attraction to Frank and subsequent agreement to marry him. Jane is an orphan who has grown up silently suffering from the kindness of strangers; she is sensitive and capable of profound feelings. These occurrences point to Jane's passivity. (Kaplan, 2019, p. 49)

6. The "*Emma*" males as role models.

Feminist opponents assumed men were more likely to take initiative. The male characters are painted with life and authenticity. Mr. Elton, Mr. Churchill, and Mr. Knightley should be singled out for praise. Mr. Elton is a materialistic oaf who only cares about getting married. He hopes to marry Emma and become wealthy by inheriting her fortune. His refusal to dance with the girl demonstrates his lack of subtlety and depth of character. In general, he is neither a bad-hatred man nor a malicious person. However, he is not a particularly likeable protagonist. But he marries a woman with a modest dowry and mental make-up that complements his fiery nature, even if she doesn't brag about it. (Walt & Bradbrook, 1966, p. 73)

Frank is a man of limited depth of character. Frank is inconsiderate and self-centred. Second, he has a dishonest character. They both lie to Emma. Finally, he is so perceptive that he can easily trick pretty girls. Fifthly, he puts on a show of pride and ego. Not only does Mr. Knightley marry the novel's heroine, but he also exhibits many admirable traits of mind and spirit, making him the novel's hero. He



is a brave and admirable man. He does not have any bad habits. A truly remarkable human being. (Wright, 1967, p. 37)

7. *That Long Silence* and the plight of women in a patriarchal society

When comparing the stories' themes, they share some commonalities. Several elements in the stories, like the authors' efforts to prove through their writings that women are intellectually on par with men and the prevalence of topics centred on female authors, demonstrate these parallels. The novel "*That Long Silence*" by Shashi Deshpande is equally interesting from a feminist perspective. Feminists argue that Western culture is patriarchal because women are treated as second-class citizens. Deshpande's novel focuses largely on women's status in relation to that of men. She thinks that female victims of masculine chauvinism and their own self-pity are overrepresented. You may read about this in "*That Long Silence*" as well. The novel's title gives away its central idea. This data shows that women are not actively challenging patriarchal power structures. The marriage topic is used to convey the concept, and it can be discussed in the ways indicated below. (Deshpande, 1989, p. 28)

To begin, the heroine Jaya is the submissive wife in this story. Her dad named her Jaya, which means "victory" in Hawaiian. Ironically, she never achieved success in her life. She wed a coldhearted husband. He keeps his workplace a secret from her. He accuses her of many things. He claims she did not motivate him to succeed professionally. He said she was so dense that she didn't even know what a chief executive officer was. She is not permitted to publish articles claiming he has made their personal lives public without his permission. Not only that, but he regularly sneaks out of the house without giving her a heads-up. He assures her that he will return later. Jaya wants to change, but we know that won't happen. The author hopes that through telling the narrative of Jaya and Mohan's marriage, women will realize the sacrifices they have made to maintain the status quo at home for the benefit of their husbands and children. (Deshpande, 1989, p. 97)

The stories of different women all highlight the same underlying pattern. One, Kusum is a woman who has been abandoned. She has raised a family of three kids thus far. All her children were girls. Nobody except Vanitamami took her in when she went mad. Second, the sweeper's wife, Nayana, has raised two daughters. Tragically, two of her sons passed away shortly after birth. If she had another daughter, her husband threatened to throw her out. Nayan wanted a son for this reason. At one point, Nayana describes her male relatives as "wasters, good-for-nothings, and drunkards" because of the extent to which they rule her life. (Deshpande, 1989, p. 28) The third reason is that Jeeja and Tara are poor. They supported themselves by doing odd jobs and living in a Chawl. Jeeja's husband



was an alcoholic, hence she has no children. The need for offspring led him to remarry. Jeeja is so no-nonsense that she didn't even object when her husband started a second family through marriage. Jeeja is responsible for raising the woman's two young children after her death. Our son and Tara are engaged! Even he succumbs to alcoholism and starts beating Tara for cash. This makes life for most women rather terrible. (Deshpande, 1989, p. 52) Asha, next, is Ravi's wife. Husbands can become very nasty to their women, as evidenced by Asha's situation. They give them no other choice but to return home to their parents. Asha is not a malicious person. But Ravi is dishonest, and he doesn't get along with Asha's dad. In response to Jaya's question, he says, "I am not going to put up his big belly tactics." (Deshpande, 1989, p. 46)

Ravi says he'll 'dump her' if he doesn't get what he wants from his wife. Last but not least, there are supporting female characters that are victimized by male protagonists. The husband of at least one lady has beaten her while they were travelling at night. Mohan sympathizes with her, but no one else does. The mother of Mohan is another case in point. Her spouse is torturing her. Even if she doesn't make his favourite chutney, he still beats her. He then walks off, having thrown the brass plate on the wall. The oppression of women by men serves as the novel's central topic.

8. The female characters in "That Long Silence" as role models.

(A). Jaya's role in the narrative.

The lead female character in *That Long Silence* is played by Jaya. What follows is some food for thought regarding the relevance of her part. A devoted and honest spouse, Jaya is. Despite Mohan's perversion, she remains faithful to him as a husband. There is no anger or vengefulness in Jaya. There is no truth to any of the accusations made against her. She doesn't fight back, just takes it all in stride. Similar to Rahul when he was younger, Mohan seemed to be in a desperate situation, in Jaya's opinion. This is how she describes Rahul's appearance after she removed her nipple or the bottle from his lips. A nippleless Rahul and a nippleless Mohan. (Deshpande, 1989, p. 78)

Jaya feels sorry for the discarded population. As an illustration, she has compassion for Kusum. She first dislikes Kusum, but eventually decides to take her in. Jaya has compassion for the raving lunatic. When Mohan ignores a man beating his wife in the street, Jaya feels fulfilled. Jaya is sensitive to her husband's emotions. She withholds the truth from him because she does not want to harm his feelings. The relationship between Jaya and her husband was harmonious. The



prospect of continuing without Him, she says, “had twisted my idea.” (Chandramani, 2014, p 28) Mohan’s mother is one of the other ladies whose experiences are depicted in the novel. Her husband is a poor man. He’s always berating her for nothing major. As a mother, she also has responsibilities. Kusum finally sees the light and kills himself. The fact that she was a mother of three female offspring but fatherless was the main source of her suffering. And in the case of Vimla, who succumbs to illness for lack of access to healthcare, we have yet another illustration of a woman’s selflessness. (Chandramani, 2014, p. 27) Shash Deshpande has been clearly taken aback by the way women prefer to endure pain and ultimately pass away in silence. They gave everything without anyone ever noticing. She feels that women need to end their lengthy silence to be treated equally to men.

9. The masculine characters in “*That Long Silence*” serve as role models.

(A). The part Mohan plays in the book.

In *That Long Silence*, Mohan is crucial. Mohan is the hero Jaya’s (the novel’s protagonist) husband. His background is humble. His mother is a professional cook, and she often brings food home from other families’ celebrations to feed her own. Mohan is a metaphor for an abusive spouse.

His feelings for Jaya are not spiritual. Despite having two children together, the two are unable to unite emotionally. All of Mohan’s ill luck, he says, is Jaya’s fault. (Sarkar, 2022, p. 45) Mohan is crucial to Jaya’s success as a writer. He has a request for Jaya. He arranges to have Jaya’s writings published by meeting with editors and agents. But in the end, it is Mohan himself who puts an end to her success. He feels Jaya’s story exposed the truth about their home life to the world, and he holds her responsible. Jaya is a typical wife who treats her husband with reverence due to a deity. She ceased creating new tales.

(B). *That Long Silence* and Kamat’s Characterization.

Kamat has a small but significant role in the book. Jaya is permitted by her husband to seek employment. In a later conversation, he convinces a magazine editor to publish her work. Soon, though, Jaya quits penning tales altogether after her husband accuses her of exposing their private life to the public. Kamat, encourages Jaya to publish under an assumed name. She can provide his home address. Kamat encourages Jaya to keep working as a writer.

Kamat is there for Jaya and gives her sound advice. He encourages Jaya to keep using a pen name and publish more articles. He was cool with her using his



address. Jaya, however, suspected that his assistance was tainted. Kamat gave Jaya back the manuscripts that weren't chosen. He realized that Jaya's narratives lacked emotional impact and stylistic conviction. He gave her suggestions for incorporating them into her narratives. So, Kamat ends up being Jaya's buddy, philosopher, and mentor. (Chandramani, 2014, p. 37) The story's developments proved Shashi Deshpande's point that Jaya was just as brilliant as any male writer. To showcase her abilities, Shashi gave the protagonist in her story men fake names.

Conclusion

Comparative literature is used to analyze the parallels and dissimilarities between the novels "*Emma*" and "*That Long Silence*" for this study. The commonalities between the two tales lie in their shared subject matter. In two of their stories, we find, the authors demonstrate the equality of the sexes through their writing. This distinction is made obvious by contrasting the heroines of "*Emma*" and "*That Long Silence*," in which the former is dominated by her husband and the latter by her husband's father. To keep penning tales, she resorted to using male pseudonyms.

By focusing on women's experiences and perspectives, authors like Jane Austen and Shashi Deshpande hope to help other women recognize their inner fortitude and potential. In the case of the two novels, they allow female characters to act independently. The novel's heroine, whom Austen accorded greater prominence, drives the plot. Probably because she has flaws and contradictions in her character, Jane Austen stated in a letter that she is not a true heroine. I'm going to pick a heroine that nobody, including myself, will care about all that much. Shashi demonstrates that the heroine, and all women, must operate in a male-dominated world. She hopes that more women will overcome their inhibitions and speak up for equal treatment in the male-dominated workplace. The stories diverge in several ways. While the protagonist in "*That Long Silence*" is ruled by her lover, the protagonist in "*Emma*" is dominated by her husband. To keep penning tales, she resorted to using male pseudonyms. These are the divergences between the two narratives.

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