

present and future, home, hunger, love, death, and life, leaving the victim traumatized and emotionally scarred all through his life.

After overcoming the horrendous difficulties in ghettos and camps, survivors suffered from both physical and psychological wounds. The like appears in Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Wallant's *Pawnbroker*, Singer's *Enemies: A Love Story*, Shosha, "The Cafeteria", "Hanka", "The Mentor", Malamud's "The German Refugee", Ozick's *The Cannibal Galaxy*, Elman's *The 28th Day of Elul*, Cohen's *In the Days of Simon Stern*, Steiner's *The Portage to San Cristobal of A. H.*, Potok's *In the Beginning* and "The Dark Place Inside". Unlike Epstein and Elman who set their novels in the holocaust era, other writers use recollection and nightmare to record survivors' endurance of dehumanization.

The Jewish immigrant fiction not only deals with radioactivity of trauma but also with the depression that stems from the guilt the victims feel for outliving families and friends. They also portray the recurrent nightmares and memories of Holocaust indignities, betrayals, torture, the loss of faith and rejection of obligatory duties and rituals and the failure to resume prewar ambitions and professions. For instance Wallant's Kraków University professor becomes a pawn broker and Bellow's artist degenerates into a painter and sculptor of the grotesque.

In I. J. Singer's *The Family Carnovsky the Jew*, as immigrant and as Holocaust survivor, is a victim of exile, both from a life granting environment and from imminent death and destruction. It depicts survival in America, where the sense of exile persists. *Enemies: A Love Story* by I.B. Singer also focuses upon the lives of these survivor-exiles in New York after the war. Jewish American trauma narratives use recollection and nightmare to record survivors' endurance of Holocaust humiliation and pain. Trauma is ever present in their psyche as in Wallant's protagonist who dreams of surgery he suffered without benefit of anaesthetic, who remembers witnessing his wife's rape and his countryman's electrocution. Sammler in Bellow's novel is shaped by his past. He sees himself as a 'past person', someone "between the human and the non human states, between content and emptiness, between full and void, meaning and no meaning, between this world and no world" (Langer 425).

Holocaust and the diasporic existence offered situations in which the victim is powerless, and the victim sinks into a state of surrender as, any form of resistance is futile. Traumatic reactions occur when resistance, escape or any action of defense is futile. And the human system of self defense becomes overwhelmed and disorganized. The victim escapes from this situation not by action in the real world but rather by altering her state of consciousness. These alterations combine with a feeling of indifference, emotional detachment and profound passivity in which the person relinquishes all initiative and struggle.

In Sophie's Choice the holocaust experience is that of Sophie's, the

anguish of the loss of her children and her self esteem. Her husband and her father were killed in a German work camp. Her lover Nathan is obsessed with Holocaust. To Stingo, she recounts the night she arrived at Auschwitz with her children, and of how a Nazi officer forced her to choose life for one child, and death for the other. Sophie chose to sacrifice her seven-year-old daughter, Eva, in a heart-rending decision that has left her guilty all through her life. All these incidents were traumatic to Sophie and led her to a state of surrender and helplessness. Thus the radioactivity of trauma entered and deformed her psychic spaces and led to suicide.

Feelings of trauma can generate feelings of frustration and revenge that can produce a cycle of violence and also perpetuate feelings of victimhood on all sides of the conflict. Shared trauma generates a 'we-feeling', but also creates an 'us vs. them' mentality. This is another factor which promotes the Jewish self consciousness or the identification with the Jewish group in America. The decline in cultural differences has not been accompanied by a decline in Jewish self-consciousness. To a considerable extent this heightened self-consciousness is a result of the growth of anti-Semitism in the thirties and of the Nazi definition of Jews along racial and ancestral lines. But the third generation tries to break away from the shackles of radioactivity of trauma.

Surveys show that the children of holocaust survivors tended to become over achievers who restrain their normal aggression and rebellion in an attempt to compensate for the losses of their parents. These children developed unique coping mechanisms that enabled them to deal with their parent's psychological burden and life's struggles. They felt that they needed to be super-achievers to compensate for parental losses, and experienced the burden of being "replacements" for lost relatives. But the third generation immigrants succeed in liberating themselves from the emotional burden of their parents and grandparents, nurturing a renewed trust in their family's continuity and looking with hope towards the future, but without forgetting the fears of the past.

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The Idea of the Female in Elaine Showalter's Literary Theory: A Case Study of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*

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Abstract

The paper aims at interpreting Elaine Showalter's idea of the female as formulated in her theories. It is basically concerned with her female tradition and what she calls in her essay *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness* two distinct modes of criticism i.e. Feminist critique and Gynocriticism. It will also undertake a study of Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* in the light of Elaine Showalter's categories. The first section of the paper will critically analyze Showalter's categories of - Feminine, Feminist, Female - with the help of the available scholarship. The second section will focus upon the analysis of *That Long Silence* and it will also explore the extent to which Showalter's idea of the three types of female reflects in the female characters of *That Long Silence*. The last section would gather the findings and make generalizations that are warranted.

Keywords: Feminine, Feminist, Female, gynocritique, introspection, self realization, mutual understanding, collective female.

I

Elaine Showalter projects the women in literature in a different position than men both in terms of women as reader and as writer. In her essay *Feminist criticism in Wilderness* she formulates a biological model of difference and it implies that men and women have completely different experiences and perceptions. Showalter's exploration of this essential difference establishes the idea that women's writing is different because it is based on women's experiences. Women cannot rely upon critical tradition of male they must consider "[their] own subject, [their] own theory, [their] own voice." (247)

In her essay Showalter discusses two modes-'women as reader' and 'women as writer'. The first mode 'women as reader' is a way to re-read canonical texts from women's perspective and to resist the ideological assumptions of the literary texts about women by discovering the 'omissions' (245) and 'misconceptions' (245). As She calls it 'a mode of interpretation' (245). The role of women as radical re-reader is promoted by other feminist theorists such as Judith Fetterly and Kate Millett. Judith Fetterly in her book *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to Literature* articulates the concept of immasculation and Millett's *Sexual*

Politics exposes the politics of reading and suggests that established canon must be challenged.

With the second mode 'gynocritique'(248) Showalter placed women as creator of meaningful text and their texts include distinctively feminine subject matters, history, styles, themes, genres and structures. As Showalter defines it:

... gynocritics offers many theoretical opportunities. To see women's writing as our primary subject forces us to make the leap to a new conceptual vantage point and to redefine the nature of the theoretical problem before us. It is no longer the ideological dilemma of reconciling revisionary pluralisms but the essential question of difference. (248)

Showalter proposes the model of difference as an essential condition to the creation and interpretation of women's literature and it is equally concerned with the "evolution and laws of a female literary tradition." (248) In *A Literature of Their Own* and most of her early essays and editorial work Showalter traces the evolution and growth of women in literature from the Victorian period to the Modern Age. Showalter brings in the light the dark and mute areas of women and Toril Moi in her book *Sexual/Textual Politics* considers it Showalter's major contribution to literary history and Feminist criticism that she emphasizes "the rediscovery of forgotten or neglected women writers." (56)

The innovative aspect of Showalter's female is that she develops the concept of universal sisterhood within the female literary subcultures. She has constructed a single tradition for all the subcultures of female such as black, Jewish, Canadian, Anglo-Indian and even American because she believes that the female writers always wrote with the common "Physical experience and shared...the entire female sexual life cycle" (Showalter, L.T.O.15). Therefore women's writing and women's experiences "implied unities of culture" (Showalter, L.T.O 15). The first phase extends from the year 1840 to 1880; the second phase extends from the year 1880 to 1920 and the last phase from 1920 till the present day. Showalter describes Feminine idea in the following lines of *Toward Feminist Poetics*:

Women wrote in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture, and internalized its assumptions about female nature. (137)

In this period women writers of each subculture imitated dominant literary tradition with the desire to be measured up to the male writers. To achieve the standards of art, they adopted male pseudonym, male culture and the language with which they could fully express their experiences as women it was also within the confines of men. This phase includes women writers such as Bronte Eumls, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, and Elizabeth Lynn Linton etc. These women writers included in their novels women's perspective and concern but it is obliquely and subvertly indicated in subtle ironic tone "one has to read it between the

lines" (Showalter, T.F.P.138). The feminine' novelists who were under the masculine disguise and their will to write as women developed "a double standard of literary criticism" (Showalter, L.T.O.20) but Showalter considers male pseudonym as great historical shift because women writers tried to make their presence in the public sphere.

In the second stage woman writers brought great revolution like a conscious rebellion they stepped out the embedded patriarchal standards and values. They demanded their rights not only in terms of language and thought but it also included their important calls of autonomous female self. The Protests fictions were full of social commentaries and it embodied in itself "advocacy of minority rights and values." (Showalter, L.T.O.13) These writers transposed their own felt pain and sufferings to those of the poor, the child labourers and the prostitutes. Showalter points out:

Feminist phase, a confrontation with male society that elevated Victorian sexual stereotypes into a cult. (Showalter, L.T.O.29)

Women novelists of this phase adopted various tools of attack; their strong denunciation of the ideal of self sacrifice and the 1870s sensational novelists "*protest against marriage and economic oppression.*" (Showalter, L.T.O.28) Militant suffragists also took part in the protest phase literature and demanded "chastity and fidelity from men" (Showalter, L.T.O.28). On the whole Showalter does not consider it the example of a female centered literature. She says that projects of Feminist phase' were concerned more with message than the creation of art but through this phase female searched their way to self-discovery.

The Female Phase' before Women's Liberation Movement a phase of "courageous selfexploration, but it carried with it the double legacy of feminine self-hatred and feminist withdrawal." (Showalter, L.T.O. 33). Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf worked toward female aesthetic and they saw the world "as mystically and totally polarized by sex." (Showalter, L.T.O.33) The female experience and its creative process held mystic implication. It is both transcendental and self destructive. These writers applied feminist' analysis of culture in their novel. Showalter denounces Woolf's androgynous vision because it believed that creative mind is sexless. She comments that Woolf wants a retreat from vicious male society and her writing lacks the experiences of a female body. Since 1960 the female phase novelists reject both imitation and protest:

two forms of dependency and turns instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and technique of literature. (Showalter, T.F.P. 139)

Women's writing, in general, has been evaluated by the sociological and cultural overpowering structure of androcentrism. Showalter advocates

to approach the female phase' from the cultural perspective which is newly visible culture of female but she does not meant by it to avoid other perspectives which are traditionally continue such as cultural anthropology and social history. She warns that a feminist critic must use cultural theory and social history as ways to understand what women actually write rather than to what woman ought to write. Showalter's purpose is not to establish a utopian world for female. She argues that women must work both "inside and outside of the male tradition" (Showalter, F.C. W.246) simultaneously.

Toril Moi harshly criticizes Showalter's notion of female phase' i.e. necessary search for female identity and canon formation on the basis of different experiences. She considers this phase as limited view of woman. The main problem according to Toril Moi is not that of equality but one of founding a canon. Toril Moi argues: "a new canon would not be intrinsically less oppressive than old." (Moi 78) She denies any determination of identity based on gender. Similarly Judith Butler, a constructionist theorist in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* rejects the identity based on gender and sexuality. She questions the category of woman and proposes gender as "performative" (190) i.e. the masculine and the feminine are not biologically fixed but culturally presupposed. And further Sydney Janet Kaplan from "Varieties of Feminist Criticism". *In Making a Difference* suggests a problem with Showalter's model of feminine/ Feminist/Female writing:

Showalter's paradigm, while useful for organizational purposes, may actually distort the individual achievements of particular authors" nearly all women who wrote earlier than the 1960s fail to achieve success in her terms. She appears to assume that history moves towards greater and greater improvements and more intense consciousness. But are the "Female" novelists of our time really more successful in attaining their own goals as women than were the less evolved "Feminine" and "Feminist" novelists? (Quoted in Critique of Showalter 3)

II

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* reveals to us the story of a middle class Indian housewife, who being restrained in the conservative society, maintains silence throughout her life. The novel ends when she breaks her long silence and emerges as a confident individual. The novelist depicts the mental agony of Jaya, who is constantly trying to know herself and admits that: "*Self-revelation is a cruel process. The real picture, the real you' never emerges. Looking for it is as bewildering as trying to know how you really look. Ten different mirrors show you ten different faces.*"(1)

Through this autobiographical narrative of Jaya, Shashi Deshpande brings into focus one half of the humanity in the novel. Actually this novel is a protest against the limitations of women's life and it is well

articulated by the novelist, drawing the striking similarities among Jaya and other female characters. Jaya identifies herself with the female figures such as her mother, grandmother, her cousin Kusum, her widowed neighbor Mukta and Nayna, who all have been trained into silence. The silence is the major concern here and no doubt it indicates the oppressed state of women but Deshpande portrays this silence in such a way that it becomes a tool to protest against the male dominance. It seems as if this novel belongs to the Feminist phase' of Elaine Showalter i.e.: "*a phase of protest against these standards and values, and advocacy of minority rights and values including a demand for autonomy.*" (Showalter, L.T.O.13)

Jaya is not only demanding her rights but throughout the novel she goes through the process of introspection, self-analysis and self-realization. She always quests her identity. As in the beginning of the novel she thinks of her biodata: "*I was born. My father died when I was fifteen. I got married to Mohan. I have two children and I did not let a third live.*" (2) Shashi Deshpande says about the novel:

"And then I wrote *That Long Silence*, almost entirely a women's novel, nevertheless, a book about the silencing of one-half of humanity. A life time of introspection went into this novel, the one closest to me personally; the thinking and ideas in this are closest to my own." (Jasbir Jain, ed., *Creative Theory* 210)

For, a woman identity is defined in terms of her relationship with man as daughter, wife and mother. Jaya's treatment in her family was different she had freedom of eloquence and interrogation. As a child she was chided by her grandmother for being talkative and now the ironical situation after marriage "*Jaya had learnt no questions, no retorts. Only Silence.*" (143) Jaya's father taught her confidence and named her as "Jaya. Jaya for the victory." (15) As per the ritual in some Brahmin communities Mohan renamed Jaya as Suhasini' who is "*a conservative, educated, middle class, smiling placid, motherly woman.*" (15-16) Jaya wants to survive with the name her father has given, her rejection of the name Suhasini' shows her victory.

Jaya's husband Mohan is an engineer who cares for money, status and material comforts, unfortunately he is caught taking bribe as a result of which an inquiry is held. This is the reason in the beginning they move from Churchgate bungalow to a small suburban flat in Mumbai. This shift disrupts the normal routine of Jaya that till now governed her life. Adele King observes: "*Jaya finds her normal routine so disrupted that for the first time she can look at her life and attempt to decide who she really is.*" (King 97) She has become a stereotype housewife "*who is nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support.*" (76) In fact Jaya's quest for her identity starts from Dadar Flat Jaya begins to analyze her life comparing from the past she sees she has become a mechanical wife. When she goes through her diary she is astonished to find that how a creative writer wasted her valuable time in such trivialities as, what she

bought and how much paid and so on. She realizes the most *"essential core has been left out. The agonised cries- I can't cope, I can't manage, I can't go on'- had been neatly smothered."*(70) But Jaya never expresses her feelings she does not want to cross the sacrosanct orbit of marriage. The relatives and family of Jaya trained her to be obedient to husband. Vanitamami taught her the importance of husband *"a husband is like sheltering tree"* (32) and Jaya proceeds to keep *"the tree alive and even if you have to water it with deceit and lies."* (32) On their relationship in Bombay she says *"In fact we had stopped speaking, except for the essentials of daily lives."* (55).

In the early years of her marriage Jaya was the creative writer of genteel Feminine pieces. Mohan promotes and suggests her to write *"light humorous pieces about the travails of a middle class housewife."*(148-149) But she was not satisfied with her writing because she craves to project the real pictures of life into her fiction. Once she wrote a story about a man *"who could not reach out to his wife except through her body."* (144) this story won the prize for its realistic portrayal of life. Mohan presumed that this story reflects their own personal life and indirectly restricts Jaya to write such controversial stories. Jaya did not argue as she had been *"scared- scared of hurting Mohan, scared of jeopardizing the only career [she] had [her] marriage."*(144) though she is unhappy that only due to her husband the writer within her could not come into the lime light *"I had known then that it hadn't mattered to Mohan that I had written a good story."* (144) Anyhow she is trying to be an ideal wife and contrives to model herself according to Mohan's desire. She makes her haircut like Mrs. Mehra and when she knew that to Mohan anger of women makes unwomanly' she had learnt to repress her emotion. But her husband could not understand her emotional life. Because of this loss of communication Jaya is broken from inside she describes her marriage: *"A pair of bullocks yoked together". A man and woman married for seventeen years."* (8)

Though Jaya wishes to erase the silence between them, she tries for it, but inner conflict is always in her mind one side she wants to prove herself an ideal and good wife. On the other hand, she is discovering herself and Suhasini has already gone in search of her identity. Her silence burst into hysterical laugh: *"Laughter burst of me, Spilled over and Mohan Stared at me in horror as I rocked helplessly. When finally I recovered myself I was alone in the room"* (122) When Mohan leaves home, Jaya understands Mohan's agony to see Jaya in place of Suhasini. Living a life of solitude she contemplates Kamat words and it plays great role in her journey of self actualization. He points out Jaya that it is her fear of being failed as a writer that kept her away from her profession. Kamat prompts her to come out of the social trap. He admonished Jaya against self pity, *"I'm warning you- be aware of this "women are the victims" theory of yours. It'll drag you down into a soft, a squashy bog of self- pity. Take yourself seriously, woman. Don't skulk behind a false*