



Research Paper

Striving for Raising from Oppression: Mushrooms and The Grass is Really Like Me.

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ABSTRACT: The paper aims at analyzing two poems: 'Mushrooms', this poem is written by famous feminist and confessional poet Sylvia Plath and another poem 'The Grass is Really Like Me' by a famous Pakistani Urdu poet Kishwar Naheed. The concern of the paper is to bring out the voice of resistance against patriarchal notions and urging for an identity. This paper focusses on thrust of women to raise from distressful life conditions. Both poems show women struggle to overcome the challenges posed by patriarchal society. Both women poets raise their voice for liberty of women folk from many kinds of oppression. In these two poems respective poets show strong will to overcome all kinds of oppression.

KEYWORDS: liberty, Oppression, striving for Raising, voicing suppression.

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I. INTRODUCTION

From centuries women are treated as inferior to men. The biblical story of Adam and Eve is told in such a manner that Eve had been created just for Adam, a helpmate suited for him. God created Eve by taking her from the rib of Adam. This kind of false notion have been built to strengthen the clutches of male dominance. In 1976 Adrienne Rich through her the most influential book on women; *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* focuses on the reality that irrespective of sex all human beings would spend nine months in mother's womb. Adrienne Rich did a systematic study to show that all human beings on the earth are born of women. She showed that irrespective of sex both have a very common experience i.e. both have spent a long period in the womb of mothers.

Gradually, women start to raise up their voices against injustices have been done on them. This paper aims at examining such two voices of women: one is from western and another one is from eastern. Sylvia Plath an American poet lived in 1960s and Kishwar Naheed a Pakistani Urdu writer very active in 21st century, though they are from different time line but both believe and voice for women liberty from all kinds of oppression. The paper is critically examining and comparing the "Mushrooms" by Sylvia Plath and "The Grass is Really Like Me" by Kishwar Naheed.

II. "MUSHROOMS" GROWING UP TO "INHERIT THE EARTH".

Sylvia Plath was an American poet, novelist and short story writer. She wrote about women condition after world war II. The poem 'Mushrooms' deals with women plight especially house wives after World War II. Jessica Fernquist writes in her essay titled "Assessing Sylvia Plath's poetry" that 'Mushrooms' is a striking social commentary on the struggle of women to overcome the restraints of the house wife image." It is obvious that firm struggle is the central theme of the poem but word choice and emotions awoke women figure in the readers' mind. The use of metaphor like 'Mushrooms' to represent women condition as tender, insignificant and timid makes the poem special. Women have been considered and treated second class citizens and subject to all kinds of suppression and oppression. The poem opens with explaining the silent flourish of mushrooms. The wish of Plath in the poem is that women should flourish like mushrooms silently. Just like mushrooms women are gaining ground and they are pushing through obstacles slowly and laboriously but trying to push out. Mushrooms grow up in a very harsh and limited condition. They are able to grow up in such a condition because of their natural determination to overcome obstacles; just like mushrooms Plath advises women to determine and make a continuous effort to grow up.

Plath believes continuous effort to expand their existence and grow up to make progress is the only way to overcome the suppression of male dominated society. The fourth stanza shows that these soft and mild mushrooms are not quite they are raising. The idea of raised fists points at a revolution. This revolution would not take place over night. The women are striving hard from centuries to overcome their challenges. Women have been conditioned for centuries. They never allow to think individually; the words in the poem “Earless and eyeless” represent this condition of the women. Women have been expected to be mute. They should be silent, as if they do not have voice.

The next stanzas of the poem show the condition of women like “shadow”. They do not have their individual identity. They are always treated as shadow of the men in their lives. The following two stanzas tell us the condition of women. They do not get nutritious food even though they do wage less domestic work. They are never treated as human beings. Our world’s half of the population is made of women but they have not been considered, or given significance of their existence. Their existence is always unnoticed or ignored. They are living in the shadow of their husband’s opinions and desires. Women are not allowed to express their desires and they are expected to be submissive. Plath is urging for a treatment of women like human beings.

Diet on water
On crumbs of shadow
Bland- mannered asking
Little or nothing

The stanza ninth shows the way women have been used in the society. They are used as “shelves”, “Tables” and are “edible”. They are used as “shelves” to keep tradition and culture alive. They are used as tables to exhibit our heritage. They are the models of our culture. They are conservators of our culture. Every norms and clutches of culture and tradition have been given to women. Even in the 21st century women have been considered as edible not as human beings.

The last two concluding stanzas show a little optimism. Despite of all the oppression and suppression women move on. At the same time the speaker tells that women are like mushrooms who are not standing for themselves, who are not raising their voice for their identity. On the other hand, the speaker tells that the women who are slowly but steadily raising their voice for identity and freedom. “Nudgers... Our kind multiplies “in this stanza of the poem the poet tells that women are strong, even though the male dominated society treat them as meek, they soon overcome their weaknesses and short comings. She assumes that women with their commitment will break all the barriers of male dominance. The poet very passionately believe that women are competent enough to break the domestic restrictions and they have all the rights to pursue careers. In the poem the poet focuses her attention on the struggle of women against patriarchy. She demonstrates terrible condition of women within a male dominated society through a powerful metaphor i.e. “Mushrooms”. The poem carries a wish of the poet is that the idea of gaining power by women to control their lives. The poet believes that the strength is their unity if they speak up as one entity their desirable life may open for them. “Our kind multiplies” This shows the number of women of this kind (raising their voice) will grow gradually.

We shall by morning
Inherit the earth.
Our foot's in the door.

The poet concludes the poem with an allusion to the bible. Allusion is reference to something outside of itself, whether another work of literature, something from pop culture, a song, myth, history or even the visual arts. The line “Inherit the earth” is from Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mountain in which he says, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”. The poet describes women as meek as mushrooms and they will come into the power that they deserve as they have already faced and come out of the night of struggle. On the other hand, the poet tells that yet their foot is in the door means they have a lot of binding clutches which are yet to be broken to get their deserved independence.

III. THE GRASS GROWS UP AGAINST ALL ODDS.

Kishwar Naheed is one of the famous feminist poets of Pakistan. Kishwar Naheed is one among the many Urdu women writers like Ada Jafri, Fahmida Riaz who brought feminist ideologies into Urdu literature. Among friends she is known as “The Phoolan Devi of Poetry” (Shoaib Hashmi). She is referred as a ‘Bandit Queen’ by friends because of her revolutionary ideologies to up lift women condition.

It is known that women have been treated as slaves in patriarchal society. Women have been seen and used as an object. Naheed through her poetry objects this objectification of women by patriarchal society. Women have been seen and treated as an object of pleasure. The society is moving very fast and the society is celebrating technological boom by even today the society is witnessing many kinds of violence against women. Women in 21st century are literally bought and sold for her chastity. Day by day the violence against women is

increasing. With the advancement of technology, the violence against women taking new faces like women trafficking.

Women writers have been showing their concern to show downtrodden condition of women in patriarchal society. Naheed uses a beautiful metaphor to express women subjugation in the hands of male dominated society. The poem "The Grass is Really Like Me" powerfully shows the way women have been suppressed and male dominative societies try to keep women under their control. In this poem the speaker expresses her experiences in her life and comparing her life with the life of grass in a modern society. The speaker has used the grass a powerful metaphor to exhibit women condition in a phallogocentric society.

The poem opens with stating "It has to unfurl underfoot to fulfil". This sentence of the poem expresses women life in the hands of man. The male dominated society always keeps women under its control. The gendered society continuously watches and makes sure that women should be under control. The male dominated society keeps an eye on gender roles and creates ways and ideologies to strengthen them. This kind of society does not allow women to flourish free.

"As soon as it can
Raise its head
The lawn owner
Obsessed with flattening it into velvet
Mows it down again".

This stanza of the poem explicitly shows that women have been flattened by the society to guard the male dominance. The patriarchal society takes help of religion, culture, tradition even scientific and technological enhancement to "level women down". The patriarchal society doesn't allow women to exhibit their abilities. The poem can be read as autobiographical expression because Kishwar Naheed throughout her life has struggles a lot to get a proper position, respect and a treatment of women as a human being. The poem shows that if the women accumulate courage to stand up and raise their voice for their rights, soon, the society knocks her down. The poet compares the life women with grass and finds a lot of similarities. Just like grass, which has been levelled and trimmed if it tries to grow up and stand up straight.

Kishwar Naheed through this poem gives a warning call to women folk that in spite of suppression and obstacles in life, they should raise up once again. The central idea of the poem is to strive to come out with flying colors.

"Those who cannot bear the scorching defeat of their courage
are grafted on to the earth.
That's how they make way for the mighty
but they are merely straw not grass
—the grass is really like me".

In the concluding stanza of the poem the poet says that if women accept slavery, domination of men over women "they make way for the mighty". The poet says if women try to get up even after facing a failure, then only they can resist the control of mighty; otherwise they will be forever slaves in the hands of male dominated society. Naheed says that the women who accept failure and do not make an attempt to get up again they "are merely straw not grass". The poet says that the women who resist against, show resentment with in their limited opportunities they are like grass. The poem foregrounds women struggle and strive to come out of their cages.

IV. CONCLUSION

The most feminist and female writers show their concern to resist the objectification of women. These two women writers are not exceptional from this. They show resentment against commodification of women, moreover these two women writers voice for women liberty. They resist and show resentment to the down trodden condition of women in patriarchal society. Both poems state condition of women in a male dominated society through a metaphor, symbolizes meekness and insignificant. Sylvia Plath explains women especially condition of house wives after world War II. Whereas, Kishwar Naheed deals with women condition in a post-colonial eastern country. But both women writers show women struggle to come out of their pity condition. The most prominent theme in both the writers' poems is striving of women to raise up against all odds.

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