

Poetry as Agency: Reimagining The Transformation of Women's Voices through Verses

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Abstract

Kamala Das's "Introduction" and Tishani Doshi's "Girls Out of the Woods" are significant examples of contemporary Indian poetry that interrogate female identity in postcolonial and modern India. These poems navigate the complexities of gender, identity, and social norms, charting the course of women empowering themselves through both individual and collective experiences. They also examine how poetry can be used to critique society, instigate cultural shifts and reflect on women's struggles as well as their victories. If for Kamala Das the benchmark is postcolonial India, for Tishani Doshi it is modern India. This involves a close reading of texts guided by feminist and postcolonial theoretical perspectives. "Girls Out of the Woods" shows how collective female strength can overcome trauma, oppression. Their work used stark imagery and intense feeling to upend power structures and demand social change. Kamala Das and Tishani Doshi show us that poetry, aside from being an expression of beauty and creativity, can also be an avenue for cultural change and women's empowerment.

Keywords: "An Introduction", "Girls are Coming Out of The Woods", Socio-Cultural Influences, Cultural Evolution, Women Empowerment.

Introduction

Women's transformation and liberation has been a predominant theme in Indian literature, particularly poetry. Kamala Das's "An Introduction" and Tishani Doshi's "Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods" are two significant works which observe the cultural change in postcolonial India, and confronting and challenging modern Indian culture. While Kamala Das employs autobiographical musings to aim scorn at a patriarchal ideology, Tishani Doshi adopts an optimistic tone, focusing on women's solidarity in response to trauma and oppression.

As a body of work, the poems offer a potent backdrop for notions of gender, identity and empowerment. Based on feminist and postcolonial theories, the study scrutinizes the language, voice, structure and thinking of these works through which they critique social problems and promote change in the cultural.

Materials and Methods

This paper focuses on Kamala Das's "An Introduction" and Tishani Doshi's "Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods," from the 2017

collection. Example semantic scholar literature review: [Research Gates article]> These texts lie at the intersections of feminist and postcolonial theoretical frameworks that investigate and transform the cultural and political dimensions of gender, identity and resistance.

Feminist Theory

Poetry becomes tools against patriarchal practices through feminist lens. This study analyzes Deriving from the notion of “otherness” in Simone de Beauvoir’s “The Second Sex”, how Das damages the societies anticipations looking in feminine. Likewise, Tishani Doshi’s work aligns with third-wave feminist views, which focus instead on integration and intersectionality, as well as on the re-establishment of autonomy for victimized women.

Post-Colonial Theory

Using Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s notion of ‘subaltern’, the paper attempts to explore the muted voices of the women in postcolonial Indian socio-political settings. For Kamala Das, the tension between speech and identity exposes a broader struggle between religious inheritance and personal freedom. Tishani Doshi’s poetry, however, implies women who empower by vision and solidarity.

Analytical Methods

Textual Analysis

Using analytical vocabulary, these were mapped onto motivation, resistance, and identity. The plain language of “An Introduction” gives a sense of the poet’s defiance, as does the coral imagery of “Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods,” which suggests unity and strength.

Thematic Analysis

The poems explored socio-political themes. The discussion reveals how Kamala Das’s writings are interpreted in the context of postcolonial India and how the postcolonial resistance of women against the traditional patriarchy in that phase must be understood in its entirety. Doshi’s poems, by contrast, are rooted in contemporary India, engaging with concerns like domestic violence, gender inequality and women’s empowerment that extend beyond such struggles.

Comparative Approach

This study shows the progression of feminist discourse in Indian literature by contrasting the disobedient voice in Das’s work with the solidarity in Doshi’s poem. Through this lens, we can understand the socio-cultural changes and their implications on female identity.

Findings and Results

Kamala Das’s “An Introduction” narrates the struggle of an individual to maintain self-control in a patriarchal society. The speaker criticizes societal expectations:

“Dress in sarees, be girl

Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,

Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in” (Das, lines 23–25).

This imagery underscores the limited roles assigned to women. The poet’s refusal to accept these roles is expressed through her assertion of personal speech:

“Why not let me speak in Any language I like? The language I speak Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses All mine, mine alone” (Das, lines 31–34).

Thus, these lines convey the linguistic domination of women in post-colonial epoch. This language barrier can be seen as a metaphor for how women's voices are stifled and co-opted, compelling them to adhere to established societal and cultural standards. In contrast, Doshi's "Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods" centers around female solidarity. Its opening lines deliver a potent metaphor for survival and resistance:

*"The girls are coming out of the woods, Wrapped in cloaks and hoods,
Carrying iron bars and candles,
Coming back to the world" (Doshi, lines 1–4).*

The juxtaposition of "iron bars" and "candles" represents strength and hope. The scars described in the poem are displayed as symbols of survival from oppression

*"The girls are coming out of the woods To show all the scars on their bodies,
To be done with hiding, to be done with dying" (Doshi, lines 13–15).*

Showing the power of poetry as a vehicle for resistance and empowerment, the "scars" are a sharp metaphor for the pain and trauma we have had to be built of and often feel pressured to carry quietly. This revealing of the violence is a demand for justice and a call to name the pervasive violence against women and also a celebration of their strength to confront and overcome just that."

Interpretation and Discussion

Kamala Das's poetry uses her individual experiences of betrayal to discuss more general aspects of rebellion from societal norms." So her claim to freedom of speech becomes a metaphor for a bigger fight to reclaim identity within patriarchy. Das's work speaks to early self-governance themes of second-wave feminism.

In contrast, Doshi's poetry re-maps the narrative of victimhood onto one of strength, depicting scars of trauma as evidence of survival. Doshi's focus on solidarity and intersectionality resonates with modern feminist movements. United, these poems interrogate "art for art's sake" and show how poetry can challenge societal expectations and inspire cultural transformation.

Conclusion

Kamala Das's "An Introduction" and Tishani Doshi's "Girls Are Coming Out of the Woods" are remarkable examples of how Indian poetry can echo the cultural critique and women's empowerment of the time. Das takes on patriarchal norms through her personal rebellion and Doshi champions the power of female solidarity in moving past trauma. And both poems question the cultural assumptions attached to female identity in India, providing a literary map toward empowerment. Each shows how poetry can be more than beautiful and creative: it can be an instrument of social and cultural change.

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