REPRESENTATIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POST-COLONIAL INDIAN WRITING

ABSTRACT

The study examines the politics of representation of violence against women (specially with reference to rape) in Post-Colonial Indian writing. The late articulation of the theme; an inquiry into the dynamics of rape in peaceful situations as also in war/conflict are some aspects explored in the study. The transition of the discourse from a descriptive to a prescriptive and enabling one, spell the relocation of women’s identity. Also, the emergence of the discourse as primarily women’s writing, are some of the issues that the study interrogates.

The discourse of corporeality succeeds a period of silence on such issues in the colonial period. The absence of the female body implies a liminal and ethereal identity. The paradigm of rape wishes to rectify the image through representation of the embodied self. Silence on the theme of violence against women (specially rape) is an aspect of subdued representation of women’s sexuality in Indian writing. A gradual introduction of this theme as a reticent and disguised discourse takes place. Subsequently, in the sixties and seventies, fortified by the parallel feminist engagement with the issue of violence, the theme begins to figure in Partition literature. The limited engagement of men’s writing with the theme is seen in the corpus of Partition literature and that too when the community’s honour is at stake. Women’s writing has therefore been endowed with the responsibility of addressing this theme.
In recent times, however, some exceptional, meaningful engagements with the theme have been noticed in a few works by men.

The late narrativisation of the theme of rape in Indian writing, a cross-cultural phenomenon, reveals the patriarchal bias embedded in mainstream Indian writing. However, in contemporary Indian writing a meaningful engagement with the theme has taken place. Complicated issues and concerns like rehabilitation of the victim, analysis of the mind-set that leads to rape, the legal loopholes in rape laws, the role of media and alcohol are some of the motifs scrutinized vis-à-vis the theme in Post-colonial Indian Writing. Writers are now engaged with redefining limits of the theme with their invasive approach. The open-endedness of most narratives suggests that justice eludes the victims of violence against women. The resignification of the discourse in the eighties into a more enabling and holistic one coincides with the Second Wave of Indian feminism. Gradually, the moratorium on the theme of sexuality is lifted and a more meaningful discourse on violence against women emerges on the Indian literary scene.

Chapter I  Introduction

Chapter II  The Psycho-Socio Dynamics of Rape or Why Rape Occurs

Chapter III  The Praxis of Rape in Peace: Some Aspects

Chapter IV  The Praxis of Rape in War and Conflict

Chapter V  Inadequacy of Rape Laws: A Literary Perspective

Chapter VI  Conclusion

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