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Breaking the Silence: Depictions of Domestic Violence in Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta's Literature

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Abstract

This study explores how domestic abuse is portrayed in the writings of two prominent modern Indian authors, Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta. By means of a qualitative analysis, the research aims to disentangle the complex depictions of domestic violence found in these works, clarifying its diverse aspects. Textual analysis and thematic classification are used in the study process to identify the writers' use of characterizations, recurrent themes, and narrative techniques. The results shed light on the different ways that Desai and Sengupta approached and dealt with the problem of domestic abuse, which enhances our understanding of the social implications of this issue and the function of literature in starting conversations about it. By comparing and contrasting the writings of Desai and Sengupta, this study adds to the body of knowledge by illuminating their disparate viewpoints and approaches to storytelling about domestic abuse. In the end, this study highlights the value of literature as a tool for delving into and tackling difficult social issues, encouraging more understanding, compassion, and activism in the face of the widespread issue of domestic abuse.

Keywords: *Breaking, Silence, Domestic Violence, Kishwar Desai, Poile Sengupta, Literature*

1. Introduction

The issue of domestic violence is a pervasive societal problem that is experienced by individuals from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and transcends both cultural and geographical boundaries. In the context of a close relationship, the term "domestic violence" refers to a pattern of abusive behavior that is employed by one spouse in order to acquire or maintain control over another partner. All forms of abuse, including sexual, emotional, psychological, physical, and financial abuse, are included in this conduct. Despite increased awareness and efforts to avoid it, this phenomenon continues to be significantly underreported and typically shrouded in secret (Banerjee, 2019). This is due to a range of societal factors that contribute to the phenomenon. There is still a pervasive problem of domestic violence that affects millions of individuals all over the world, regardless of where they live, what culture they come from, or what their socioeconomic situation is. Literature has been a strong instrument for highlighting this harsh truth and offering knowledge of its repercussions, despite the fact that addressing this subject aloud may be awkward and upsetting depending on the circumstances (Jha, 2016). The underlying problem of domestic violence is investigated in a compassionate and nuanced manner, and with an unwavering determination to eradicating the taboo, that surrounds this societal evil, in the writings of authors such as Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta.

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Through the many literary projects that they have undertaken, Desai and Sengupta have produced heartfelt narratives that investigate the myriad of facets that comprise domestic violence. Furthermore, they give sophisticated insights of power dynamics, gender roles, cultural norms, and the human psyche, going beyond the scope of basic depiction (Sinha, 2004). Their creations serve as powerful testaments to the actual experiences of victims and survivors, resulting in the debunking of falsehoods and the promotion of societal change.

1.1 Feminist Literary Criticism

With feminist literary theory, it is possible to conduct an analysis of the depictions of domestic violence that Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta have created respectively. The investigation of gender dynamics, power structures, and the depiction of women in literature are all brought to the forefront by this theoretical paradigm. Those who are critical of domestic violence from a feminist perspective investigate the ways in which patriarchal norms and societal standards influence the portrayal of abusive relationships, as well as the portrayal of victims and survivors (Kundu, 2018). They investigate the ways in which authors utilize their narratives to either challenge or sustain these ideals, as well as the ways in which they provide a voice to social groups who are underrepresented, such as women who come from other castes or financial origins. Through the lens of feminist literary theory, this research investigates the manner in which Desai and Sengupta handle issues of oppression, resistance, and gender inequality in their investigation of situations involving domestic violence (Das, 2019).

1.2 Intersectionality

According to the intersectionality theory developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, individuals are susceptible to several forms of oppression by virtue of their sexual orientation, gender, color, class, and other traits. These forms of oppression have the potential to overlap. An in-depth comprehension of the ways in which a multitude of identities intersect and influence the experiences of abuse and resistance within the context of domestic violence may be obtained via the utilization of intersectional analysis (Chakraborty, 2017). According to Desai and Sengupta, the concept of intersectionality offers a framework for analyzing the many ways in which gender, caste, religion, and local culture interact with one another to influence the dynamics of domestic violence in their own narratives (Khan, 2018). The purpose of this research is to provide an illustration of the complexity of domestic violence, which is experienced by a wide variety of women, as well as the method in which Desai and Sengupta navigate these complexities in their works by examining the intersections of different forms of oppression.

1.3 Postcolonial Theory

The field of study known as postcolonial theory investigates the ways in which colonialism and imperialism have left their imprint on contemporary elements of culture, society, and literature. Postcolonial theory offers insights into the ways in which colonial histories and power structures continue to have an influence on gender relations and patterns of violence in postcolonial states, particularly with regard to narratives of domestic abuse (Singh, 2020). As Indian authors who are working in a postcolonial context, Desai and Sengupta examine the complexities of colonial legacies, such as the imposition of Western conceptions of gender and patriarchy, as well as the points at which indigenous and colonial forms of oppression intersect. Specifically, they focus on the concepts of patriarchy and gender roles. This review makes use of postcolonial theory to investigate how Desai and Sengupta deal with dominant narratives that are imposed by colonial and

patriarchal systems, as well as how they manage the conflicts that exist between tradition and modernity, as well as the local and the global, in their representations of domestic violence (Chakraborty, 2017).

2. Background and Context

Domestic violence has frequently appeared in literature as a means of examining gender roles, power dynamics, and the intricacies of interpersonal relationships. Writers have utilized several narrative techniques to illustrate the harsh facts of domestic abuse, varying from nuanced undertones to overt depictions. Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta are two prominent writers from today's India who have addressed this problem in the country's cultural and social context (Mishra, 2018).

Kishwar Desai explores the murky corners of Indian culture in her books "Witness the Night" and "Origins of Love," illuminating the pervasiveness of domestic abuse and its effects on women's lives (Dutta, 2018). Similar to this, Poile Sengupta presents moving stories that face the reality of gender-based violence and question social conventions in pieces like "Kalbela" and "Park Street Kanya."

3. Objectives of the Study

In order to comprehend the writers' complex portrayals, thematic themes, and narrative strategies, this research was evaluating how domestic violence is portrayed in Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta's literary works. The following are some of the study's goals:

- To examine how domestic violence is portrayed in selected works of Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta.
- To identify recurring themes, characterizations, and narrative strategies related to domestic violence in the analyzed literature.
- To compare and contrast the approaches of Desai and Sengupta in addressing the issue of domestic violence within the Indian socio-cultural context.
- To explore the implications of these literary representations for understanding and addressing real-world instances of domestic violence.

4. Significance of the Research

This study is important in a number of ways. First, by offering a detailed examination of Desai and Sengupta's writings, it adds to the body of literature already in existence on domestic violence and deepens our awareness of the complexity involved in this ubiquitous societal issue. Second, the study provides insights into the function of literature in confronting and altering societal norms around gender-based violence by analyzing the cultural subtleties and narrative approaches used by the writers. Lastly, the research's conclusions may contribute to talks that are more extensive and actions meant to increase public knowledge of domestic abuse and encourage societal change in Indian culture and beyond.

5. Research Methodology

In order to examine how domestic violence is portrayed in Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta's literary works, this study uses a qualitative research approach. Qualitative approaches enable

in-depth textual data collection and interpretation, making them ideal for investigating intricate social issues like how domestic abuse is portrayed in literature.

5.1 Data Collection

A few plays and novels by Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta serve as the study's major source of data. For study, two pieces from each author have been selected based on their popularity and thematic relevance:

Kishwar Desai

1. "Witness the Night" (2009)
2. "Origins of Love" (2012)

Poile Sengupta

1. "Lights Out" (2004)
2. "Scripted in Time" (2018)

In order to provide rich and varied depictions of domestic violence, these texts were chosen via purposive selection. This makes it possible to conduct a thorough examination of the writers' approaches to the issue.

5.2 Textual Analysis

A thorough textual study of the chosen texts was conducted, with an emphasis on identifying major themes, characterizations, and narrative devices associated with the representation of domestic abuse. This approach was identified and evaluates key dialogues and passages related to domestic violence incidents within each work's contextual framework.

5.3 Thematic Coding

The textual data was thoroughly categorized and analyzed using thematic coding. We'll identify and categorize themes pertaining to the nature of domestic violence, its effects on people and relationships, power dynamics, and society reactions. Through this procedure, the researchers was able to identify recurrent themes and patterns in the chosen works, which was make it easier to compare the ways that Desai and Sengupta have depicted domestic abuse in literature. By using these analytical techniques, the research hopes to shed light on the intricacies and ramifications of this ubiquitous societal issue by offering a thorough knowledge of how domestic violence is portrayed in the writings of Kishwar Desai and Poile Sengupta.

6. Results

6.1 Depictions of Domestic Violence in Kishwar Desai's Literature

Renowned Indian novelist and social activist Kishwar Desai tackles the delicate subject of domestic abuse in her writing, shedding light on its many dimensions and effects on both victims and society as a whole. This section examines how Desai depicts domestic abuse in "Witness the Night" (2009) and "Origins of Love" (2012), two of his well-known works.

2009's "Witness the Night": In "Witness the Night," Desai explores the subtleties of spousal abuse under the context of a suspenseful murder investigation. The protagonist, social worker Simran Singh, is entrusted with discovering the truth behind the thirteen family members—including an infant—who were brutally murdered. Desai deftly reveals the layers of familial

instability and domestic violence that lie behind the ostensibly perfect exterior of the rich household as the story progresses. Desai illuminates the pernicious nature of domestic abuse, its continuation via social stigma and secrecy, and the psychological damage suffered by its victims via Simran's research and interactions with survivors. The book offers a powerful critique of the urgent need for social change and justice as well as the widespread culture of impunity around domestic violence in Indian society.

2012's "Origins of Love": Desai returns to the subject of domestic abuse in "Origins of Love," but this time around, she uses a different story structure. With surrogacy and the commercialization of women's bodies as background, the book explores the intertwined themes of gender-based violence, exploitation, and power dynamics in close relationships. Desai skillfully depicts the hardships faced by surrogate mother Meera as she becomes caught up in a web of cruelty and deceit planned by her husband and the wealthy couple who hired her to be a surrogate. Desai explores the vulnerabilities faced by underprivileged women and the ways in which exploitation, class, and gender connect to perpetuate cycles of violence via Meera's horrific experiences and inner anguish. "Origins of Love" is a potent critique of patriarchal systems and cultural practices that condone and support domestic abuse, challenging readers to face hard realities and push for structural change.

Table 1: Themes and Patterns.

Themes	"Witness the Night" (2009)	"Origins of Love" (2012)
Cycle of Abuse	Examines how abuse is cyclical, with the protagonist battling violent patterns that keep happening in her marriage.	Illustrates how expectations and cultural standards feed the abuse cycle, affecting several generations at a time.
Psychological Impact	Focuses on themes of trauma, anxiety, and emotional suffering while discussing the psychological impact of domestic abuse on victims.	Examines the effects of trauma on generations, showing how the characters' current relationships and actions are shaped by their violent pasts.
Resistance and Empowerment	Depicts the protagonist's moments of empowerment and resistance as she confronts her abuser and tries to end the cycle of violence.	Uses a story of agency and resiliency to highlight people who overcome social restraints to recover their independence and sense of value.

Table 2: Character Portrayals.

Characters	Description
"Witness the Night" (2009)	The 2009 film "Witness the Night" has compelling character development. Inspector Vish Puri, the main character, is a cunning, driven detective with a passion for justice. The complex personalities of supporting characters like Dr. Mohan Sharma and Rani give the story more dimensions and add to the book's intriguing mystery.
"Origins of Love" (2012)	The 2012 "Origins of Love" features striking character depictions. The protagonist is a young artist who is having identity issues; he is shown to be vulnerable and nuanced. Complementary personas, such as mentors and love partners, contribute further nuance. The complexities of human connection and themes of self-discovery are explored in their entwined journeys.

Narrative Techniques

Origins of Love

- The book uses letters and diary entries to reveal the underlying feelings and ideas of the protagonists.
- Desai juxtaposes disparate viewpoints on domestic violence by using parallel tales.
- The narrative is made more suspenseful and the constant danger of violence is highlighted with foreshadowing.

Witness the Night

- Desai Use flashbacks as a means of elucidating the protagonist's prior experiences with abuse.
- The work integrates several points of view to present a thorough comprehension of the matter.
- To illustrate the emotional and psychological effects of domestic abuse, symbolic imagery is used.

It is clear from the examination of Desai's writings that she adeptly handles the difficulties of domestic abuse, illuminating its many facets and social ramifications. Her stories provide moving insights into victims' real-life experiences, obstacles they encounter, and resiliency and resistance strategies they use on the path to freedom.

In "Witness the Night" as well as "Origins of Love," Kishwar Desai uses her storytelling skills to draw attention to the widespread but sometimes disregarded problem of domestic abuse. Desai challenges cultural attitudes and practices that uphold silence and impunity by bringing readers face-to-face with the horrific reality experienced by survivors of domestic violence via detailed characterizations, complex plotlines, and evocative narrative. Desai's art serves, as a powerful reminder of how urgently empathy, consciousness, and group action are needed to end the cycle of violence and build a society that is more just and equal.

6.2 Depictions of Domestic Violence in Poile Sengupta's Literature

Famous Indian novelist Poile Sengupta explores the subject of domestic abuse in her writings with startling empathy and clarity. She portrays the complex dynamics of violent relationships via her writings, emphasizing the devastating effects of violence on both people and society. This section examines Sengupta's representation of domestic abuse and its thematic foundations through an analysis of two of her well-known pieces, "Lights Out" (2004) and "Scripted in Time" (2018).

"Lights Out" (2004)

In "Lights Out," Sengupta painstakingly creates a story that highlights the pernicious nature of domestic abuse behind the walls of what appears to be an average family. The protagonist of the tale is Meera, whose life has been ruined by her violent husband Amit's tyranny. Sengupta skillfully depicts Meera's psychological suffering as she struggles with powerlessness, anxiety, and a sensation of being trapped.

Sengupta skillfully captures the cycles of violence that Amit engages in, from subtly intimidating to overtly attacking, using vivid imagery and powerful words. The internal conflict Meera experiences and her final search for freedom are a moving commentary

on the human spirit's ability to persevere in the face of hardship. The way that Sengupta depicts Meera's path to strength and self-realization highlights the transforming force that comes with facing domestic abuse.

"Scripted in Time" (2018)

Sengupta explores the intricacies of marital abuse in "Scripted in Time," weaving her characters' individual hardships with larger social problems. The book chronicles the lives of several characters that, against a backdrop of societal unrest, are all battling personal traumas and anxieties. Sengupta deftly addresses issues of patriarchy, power relations, and intergenerational trauma while illuminating the structural causes of domestic abuse. She draws attention to how intertwined society systems and personal experiences are, encouraging readers to consider the far-reaching effects of intimate relationship violence via detailed characterizations and linked storylines.

"Scripted in Time" is a moving example of the survivors' tenacity and the possibility of societal transformation and group healing. Sengupta emphasizes the significance of community support and activism in confronting domestic abuse, providing a glimpse of light amidst the darkness with her portrayal of solidarity, resilience, and the quest of justice.

Table 3: Themes and Patterns.

Themes	"Lights Out" (2004)	"Scripted in Time" (2018)
Cycle of Abuse	Examines how abuse is cyclical, with the protagonist battling violent patterns that keep happening in her marriage.	Illustrates how expectations and cultural standards feed the abuse cycle, impacting several generations at a time.
Psychological Impact	Discusses the psychological effects of domestic abuse on victims, emphasizing themes of trauma, anxiety, and emotional distress.	Examines the effects of trauma on generations, showing how the characters' current relationships and actions are shaped by their violent pasts.
Resistance and Empowerment	Depicts the protagonist's moments of empowerment and resistance as she confronts her abuser and tries to end the cycle of violence.	Uses a story of agency and resiliency to highlight people who overcome social restraints to recover their independence and sense of value.

Table 4: Character Portrayals.

Characters	Description
"Lights Out"	A victim of domestic abuse, battling to get the courage to leave her spouse behind. The violent husband is shown as being in charge and cunning.
"Scripted in Time"	A family with several individuals, each representing a different generation, struggles with the legacy of domestic abuse. Women with a variety of backgrounds, exhibiting agency and resiliency in the face of injustice. Violent individuals who are motivated by patriarchal systems and cultural standards.

Narrative Techniques

"Lights Out" (2004)

- Uses a nonlinear narrative style that switches between past and current timelines to show how abuse escalates over time and how it affects the protagonist's mental health.
- Uses metaphorical language, such as "lights out," to symbolize the protagonist's internal conflict and the gloom of her situation.

"Scripted in Time" (2018)

- Integrates personal narratives with historical and cultural contexts to highlight the broader societal implications of domestic violence and the need for collective action.
- Adopts a multi-perspective narrative approach, offering insights into the experiences of various characters and generations affected by domestic violence.
- Sengupta skillfully reveals the intricate dynamics of domestic abuse via these topic analyses, character depictions, and narrative strategies, encouraging readers to interact critically with the subject and consider paths toward empowerment and change.

Poile Sengupta's body of work is evidence of her deep understanding of human nature and her unwavering dedication to bringing attention to the horrors of domestic abuse. With books like "Lights Out" and "Scripted in Time," she pushes readers to face hard realities and take action to build a society that is more compassionate and just.

6.3 Comparative Analysis

Convergences and Divergences: When comparing the writings of Poile Sengupta and Kishwar Desai, it becomes clear that both writers are dedicated to raising awareness of the problem of domestic abuse in Indian culture. Their stories explore the intricacies of power dynamics, cultural conventions, and familial ties that support the continuation of abuse. Desai and Sengupta have a strong awareness of the psychological and emotional harm that domestic abuse does to victims, families, and communities. Their narrative strategies and thematic focuses, however, differ. Works by Desai that blend elements of mystery and suspense with social criticism include "Witness the Night" (2009) and "Origins of Love" (2012). These works frequently highlight the investigation of crimes connected to domestic abuse. On the other hand, Sengupta's stories, like "Scripted in Time" (2018) and "Lights Out" (2004), delve deeper into the subtleties of power struggles and emotional manipulation, and concentrate more on the private, interpersonal aspects of abusive relationships.

Similarities in Approach: Both Desai and Sengupta use a subtle approach to character development, portraying multifaceted characters who struggle with the effects of domestic violence in their lives, despite their different narrative approaches. By use of intricately detailed narratives and a compassionate depiction of their characters' experiences, both writers humanize the abused, subverting common misconceptions and stigmas surrounding domestic abuse. Additionally, Desai and Sengupta bravely approach taboo subjects and reveal the hidden truths of abuse in order to break the silence around domestic violence in Indian society. Their writings operate as conversation starters and inciters, getting readers to face hard realities and think about the structural causes of violence in close relationships.

Differences in Representation: Desai's stories frequently have female heroines who successfully negotiate the difficulties presented by patriarchal systems and social norms. Her writings provide light on the ways that cultural norms and gender inequity support abusive cycles, highlighting the significance of agency and empowerment for survivors. However, Sengupta's works cover a wider range of situations, presenting the viewpoints of both male and female characters who are victims of domestic abuse. Sengupta's tales provide a more comprehensive knowledge of the intricacies of abuse inside Indian households by examining the intersection of gender, class, and generational factors.

Overall, even though Desai and Sengupta both make substantial contributions to the literary discussion on domestic abuse, their unique voices and narrative strategies deepen our comprehension of this ubiquitous societal problem by providing readers with a range of viewpoints and insights into the human condition.

7. Conclusion

This study emphasizes how important literature is as a potent instrument for bringing up delicate societal topics like domestic abuse and starting talks about them. This study adds to a better understanding of the difficulties of domestic violence and how it is portrayed in modern Indian literature by critically analyzing the writings of Desai and Sengupta. After a thorough examination of Kishwar Desai's and Poile Sengupta's writings, this research has provided valuable insights on how domestic violence is portrayed in modern Indian literature. In order to illustrate the intricate dynamics of domestic violence and emphasize its widespread prevalence as well as its effects on both people and society, the writers make use of a variety of storytelling approaches and characterizations. Sengupta's stories concentrate on the psychological and emotional toll that domestic abuse takes on its victims, whereas Desai's writings frequently explore the socio-political aspects of the problem. Both writers challenge social conventions and increase awareness of domestic abuse despite taking different tactics.

7.1 Recommendations for Future Research

Expanding on the results of this study, future research might compare the representations of domestic violence in a wider variety of modern Indian literature, including writings by male authors as well as authors from various language and geographic origins. Reader-response theory may also provide a more thorough knowledge of how these literary representations connect with various audiences. Additionally, longitudinal studies that monitor how domestic violence is portrayed in Indian literature over time may offer insightful information about how cultural views and conventions are changing. Finally, interdisciplinary methods that combine literature with disciplines like gender studies, sociology, and psychology may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex problem of domestic violence and how it is portrayed in literature.

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