



From Silence to Voice: Evolution of Feminist Consciousness in English Literature

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Abstract

The given research paper examines how the feminist consciousness evolved in English literature and how the role of women was changed, being silent and marginalized to voiced, identity, and empowered. In ancient literature, women were mostly restricted to inactive positions in patriarchal set up where they were defined through male views and their voices were muffled. As the feminist idea developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, authors including Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen were starting to question these restrictions and a greater female agency was entering literature. This shift was also reinforced during the modernist period, when such authors as Virginia Woolf focused on the freedom of thought and inner consciousness of women. In the modern literature, authors like Toni Morrison and Kamala Markandaya develop the idea of feminism by introducing the motifs of identity, opposition, and diversity to the contexts of various cultures. Another way the Indian English literature has impacted feminist views is the way it deals with the socio-cultural realities as it is presented in this paper. Examining the major themes, including silence to voice, identity, and selfhood, resistance to patriarchy, as well as intersectionality, the study proves that the development of feminine voices in literature is a literary and socio-political process. Finally, the paper concludes that feminist awareness has transformed the literary traditions and still remains a significant force in achieving gender equality, independence, and social justice.

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1. Introduction

The process of feminist consciousness development in English literature is a deep intellectual, cultural, ideological change, which traces the way of women out of marginalization to self-assertion and agency. Since ancient times, literature was actively serving as the mirror of the patriarchal society and perpetuating the gender hierarchies that reduced women to submissive and marginalizing positions. In such literary traditions, women were hardly depicted as self-reliant characters; they were passive, dependent and in many cases voiceless characters whose identity was influenced and governed by men writers and mainstream cultural discourses. They were symbolic and not substantive in their presence in texts, just as an embodiment of a virtue, beauty, or moral teaching and not a complex human being with thoughts and desires of their own. Silence, in this case, was not only the absence of narration but a strong ideological mechanism that established and demarcated the existence of women. It was a manifestation of their non-authorship, lack of inclusion in intellectual debate, and non-participation in the social life, thus supporting the point of view that women should be observed, not heard, represented but not self-representing.

This state of silence, however, should be perceived more than the simple literal lack of speech it represents a wider systemic marginalization to the space of knowledge production, innovation and cultural power. Women were traditionally deprived of education, literacy and structures of institutions needed to express literature and this made them almost invisible as authors and thinkers. As a result, their inner world: their feelings, goals, struggles, and cognitive abilities, had not been explored much or

only had a male-filtered prism in which their experiences were distorted or oversimplified. Women were either portrayed as

ideal figures of virtue and self-sacrifice or demonized as temptresses and moral feeble figures, which gave a narrow and quite conflicting range of representations that could not reflect the complexity of their lived experiences. Such depictions fully supported patriarchal ideologies, but also made the marginalization of women a normalized and natural thing. The role of literature was thus twofold, both the mirror of the existing gender inequalities and the active part in maintaining them by influencing the culture towards the understanding of femininity and womanhood.

The onset of this paradigm change was in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the rise of feminist thought which questioned the pre-existing assumptions of women as inferior and subjects of subordination. The role of intellectual personalities like Mary Wollstonecraft in bringing about such a change was important as she championed the idea of educating women, their rationality, and independence. By arguing, she broke the long-held assumption that women were only fit to be in the domestic setting, but rather contended that women could be intellectually and morally developed. Such intellectual awakening did not affect literary output immediately but brought to life more psychologically alive female characters who were more self-aware, and opposed the social restrictions. The early feminist literature was usually working within the constraints of the contemporary social norm, but still, they are a very critical shift in the way that women were represented in the previous literature by foreshadowing their voices and experiences. This era can therefore be regarded as a transitional one, where the germination of the feminist consciousness took root, which was to be used later to establish a more assertive and self-determined female voice in literature.

The more dramatic and revolutionizing change came in the twentieth century with the emergence of modernism, and feminist literary criticism, which both offered new conceptualizations and representations of the experience of women. Authors like Virginia Woolf were central in redefining female expression through highlighting the need to freedom of expression and independence and intellectual space. The structural inequalities that had historically silenced the women in literature is emphasized by the fact that Woolf insisted that women need material resources as well as personal autonomy to create literature. Furthermore, the literary styles of modernism, such as stream of consciousness, interior monologue, etc. made it possible to explore the inner world of women, putting all their thoughts, feelings, subjective experiences, into the forefront. This transforming outside presentation into an inside search was an important progress in the articulation of female voice, in that it recognized the complexity, the richness of the psychological worlds of women. Literature of this era therefore was a place of creative writing as well as feminist writing; it challenged the traditional narrative and gave literature an overall wider scope.

Feminist awareness in literature has also been undergoing change in the modern era, where it has become more inclusive, diverse and intersectional. Other authors like Toni Morrison and Kamala Markandaya have played a great role in this growth by prefiguring the lives of women who live at the crossroads of various kinds of disenfranchisement like race, class, culture and colonialism. Their creations not only

challenge the prevailing narratives of silence of certain voices, but also the frameworks on which literature is perceived and explained. These authors show that the process of silence to voice is not just unique, but also diverse, because it is limited by certain historical, cultural and socio-political contexts that affect the ways of how women perceive and define their identities. Literature makes a great tool of resistance and change through their stories, as it allows women to rediscover their stories, establish their agency, and address oppressive structures that attempt to silence them.

Therefore, the phenomenon of the voice emerging in English literature is a complex and continuous process, which is indicative of the wider socio-political trends of gender equality and empowerment. It is not just a change of representation of literature, but a total restructuring of how women are envisioned, comprehended, and esteemed in the cultural and intellectual world. Following this development through the various historical eras, this paper aims at bringing out the dynamic and transformative identity of the feminist consciousness and how the voices of women have come out, matured and redefined themselves through time. By so doing, it helps in a better understanding of the connection between literature and social change wherein the literary expression plays a vital role in disrupting inequality and advancing a more inclusive and fairer vision of the human experience.

2. Women in Early English Literature: The Age of Silence

The social, cultural and intellectual life in early English literature was greatly shaped by patriarchal structures that shaped the image of women in the literature. The literature that was created in the period of the medieval and early modern times tended to have some worldview where women were placed as lesser to men both in the societal and in the domestic situations. They were mostly restricted to domesticity and constructed their identities out of their relationship as daughters, wives or mothers. Consequently, female figures could hardly be identified as their own voices, wants, and even opinions, which supports the idea that their main role was to serve and complement the male authority. Examples that were given by writers like Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare can be very important on how women were represented under these restrictions. As much as their works feature some memorable female characters, these characters tend to be influenced by patriarchal norms and the demands of the story. As an example, most of Shakespearean heroines are smart and eloquent, but they eventually submit to social standards that limit their freedom. In the same way, the women characters that Chaucer creates, even when they have some instances of individuality, are often portrayed within the contexts that either highlight moral virtue, obedience, or vulnerability to male domination. These are depictions of how even the complicated female figures were put into confines that did not allow complete expression of them.

Silence here is not simply referred to as the literal lack of speech. It is a general cultural situation where the women were deprived of rights to education, authorship and discussion. There were no female writers at this period as well, which added to the lack of genuine women voices in literature. Majority of works of literature were authored by men, and therefore the portrayal of women was through the masculine prism, which frequently led to stereotypes, which supported gender hierarchies. Women were either blessed as the embodiments of virtue and innocence, or blamed as the

instruments of temptation and moral decadence, and it hardly allowed depicting a woman as a complex and very human character.

In addition, the storyline of early forms of literature tended to undermine females by relegating them to the fringes of the storyline. Their experiences and interior lives were hardly delved into and their voices were put into the background when compared to male protagonists. Even when women were the main characters in a story, they usually did things not based on their own will but on the influence of other people. This absence of independence highlights how literary silence reflected the disenfranchisement of women in society and politically at the time.

Irrespective of such limitations, it should be noted that even early literature materials contain traces of opposition and subjectivity. Certain female characters are indirectly defying the demands that they should obtain, showing the first signs of the slow transformation of a new state of being more self-aware and expressive. Nevertheless, these examples are not numerous and quite unclear, which speaks of the omnipresence of paternal domination. The age of silence, thus, is not merely the act of silencing the voice of women but also the circumstances that had to lead to the rise of the feminist consciousness at later times.

Through this, early English literature can be used as a key point of reference as to how the voice of women evolved. Analyzing how women were prohibited and unacknowledged, one can possibly understand the importance of the change, which took place in later periods of literature. The shift of silence to voice is therefore based on this historical background thus it is a fundamental point of beginning any study of feminist consciousness in literature.

3. Emergence of Feminist Thought (18th–19th Century)

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are the milestone of feminist consciousness development as women started struggling with the intellectual and social order that had restricted them to the silence for a long time. It was the time when the first feminist ideas, later called proto-feminism emerged and challenged the long-standing beliefs concerning the inferiority of women and their omission of education, politics and literary work. The slow development of women access to the education and print culture allowed them to engage more actively in the intellectual discussion, which preconditioned the appearance of the female voice in literature.

One of the most significant people who underwent this change was the author Mary Wollstonecraft whose seminal work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) held that women were not inherently lesser to men; however, they were not taught how to act and look like women. The demands of rationality, independence and equality as Wollstonecraft insisted on challenged the prevailing ideology of patriarchy and gave strength to other female writers in successive generations. Her concepts were a great breakthrough as compared to previous portrayals of women because of her capability to think and act morally. This act of active accepting to critical questioning is a significant development in the process of silence to voice.

The novel became a strong tool that women could use to make their voices heard and narrated their experiences in the world of literature. Such writers like Jane Austen or Charlotte Brontë were crucial in re-creating the image of women. Although the events and settings of her works were founded

in the frames of domestic life, the female characters that can be found in Austen novels are very intelligent, witty and have high moral judgment. Her heroines find their way in social norms with a subtle opposition, demonstrating their uniqueness in the society that tries to control their decisions. Equally, the novel of *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë can be considered a more overt demand of the female voice and agency. The fact that the lead character insists on his emotional autonomy and respect to himself is a challenge to the conventional female norms. The fact that *Jane Eyre* claims to be equal to her male counterpart demonstrates the audacious challenge of the patriarchal norm and highlights the development of a conscious female personality. Literature starts to indicate such an understanding of women rights and self-expression needs through such characters.

In spite of all these improvements, it is worthy to mention that feminist consciousness of this era was restricted by the existing social conventions. The female authors were forced to maintain a fine balance between writing their concepts and living according to social standards. They mostly use unobtrusive means in their work, like irony, restraint in the narration, and moral framing, to criticize patriarchal structures without necessarily challenging them. This hesitation reminds the reader of the shift in the time, as the urge to change is paired with the constraints placed upon the bygone days.

However, the works of these authors and philosophers can be considered a great contrast to the silence of the previous times. In claiming their intellectual and creative operations, women started finding a place of their own in the literary canon. The development of feminist ideas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, therefore, signals the start of a long-term campaign to oppose the gender inequality and reconfigure the role of women both in literature and in the society.

In this regard the transition of the silence to voice becomes more evident, because women can not only learn how to speak, but also have a right to create their own narratives. It is, thus, an important bridge between what can be called the repressed voices of the past and what can be called the more aggressive forms of feminist consciousness that would be expressed in the twentieth and beyond centuries.

4. Modernism and the Assertion of Female Voice

The first part of the twentieth century is the decisive period in the development of feminist consciousness since the literary movement of modernism offered new forms and techniques of expression of the intricacies of the human experience. It was also a time of an enormous break with the conventions of narrative and narrative writers could experiment with subjectivity, interiority and psychological dimensions in a manner never experienced before. Modernism was a valuable avenue that helped women writers to overcome patriarchal conventions and express themselves more. This trend toward deception of the outer as inner allowed the female characters to become self-conscious and self-definite as far as their identity and their point of view were concerned.

Virginia Woolf is one of the key contributors to this change whose works had a tremendous impact on the feminist literary discourse. Through her masterpiece, *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf claims that the oppression of female creativity lies in the material and social limitations especially the absence of economic autonomy and privacy. The fact that

she claimed that a woman needs both money and a room of her own to write fiction is an emphasis of the structural barriers that historically muted women. Woolf is an early example of the importance of subjective experience and emotional depth in her works, particularly on the novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, which anticipates the significance of inner lives of people and underscores the possibilities of female voice in literature.

Stream of consciousness, fragmented narration and nonlinear storytelling are modernist techniques that were key in bringing out the voices of women in a more realistic manner. These narrative techniques enabled authors to record the depths of female thought and emotion and go beyond the simplistic and stereotypical representations of earlier times. Given the belief that the experiences of women were minor or negligible, the modernist literature focused on the inner consciousness of women, which was to be a challenge. Rather, it accentuated their intellectual and emotional fullness and this way justified their voices in the literary canon.

Meanwhile, the modernist literature is a mirror of the general changes that occurred in the social life of the first part of the twentieth century such as the rising role of women in the life of the people and the necessity of gaining political rights. The feminist movement of suffrage and other women causes made people more aware of gender inequality as it is reflected in the subjects and interests of the modernist authors. Literature was the place where women had an opportunity to challenge conventional roles, experiment with other forms of identity, and claim their independence whether in personal or social life.

Nevertheless, even the claim of female voice in this era was not devoid of problems. Female authors had to endure criticism and marginalization when they were in a literary community that was largely male. Although this was an uphill task, they still kept on testing the boundaries of form and content and gave way to the next generations of writers. Their writings did not only increase the frontiers of feminist awareness but also showed the strength of literature as an instrument of social and cultural change.

In this way, the modernist era is a significant step in the process of the silence-voice transformation because women stopped being represented but started to express themselves through their voices. Modernist writers, by preempting the inner workings of women and undermining the restrictions as dictated by the patriarchal society, were critical in redefining the role of women in literature. This period prepared the groundwork of more diverse and intersectional voices in feminism that was to be heard later in the twentieth century.

5. Contemporary Feminist Literature: Voice, Identity, And Resistance

The second part of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century is the period of great development in the feminist literary expression, when various and strong voices that are not interested in the traditional stories and the redefinition of the feminist consciousness appear. Contemporary literature has been informed by the second and third areas of feminism as it is no longer focused on the struggle of basic rights but has gone further to touch on other issues like identity, sexuality, race, class and culture belonging. This era is indicative of the shift of a single concept of womanhood to a more intersectional and inclusive concept of the experiences of women and thus makes it add

to the discussion of gender and power.

Authors like Toni Morrison have been instrumental in preempting the voices of the people who are marginalized or anyone who has experienced the nexus of both gender and race. The works of Morrison touch on the historical and cultural truths of African American women, and a woman is heard who was, until recently, silent in the mainstream fiction. By her narratives, she does not only criticize systemic oppression but also retrieves the narratives of women who have been oppressed by patriarchy and racial discrimination. The manner in which she writes also shows how literature can be an effective tool in reclaiming lost histories as a way of affirming cultural identity.

Much in the same way, Margaret Atwood explores the machineries of patriarchal power and how women can counter them and even counteract them. Dystopian societies in which the freedom and the bodies of women are controlled are frequently portrayed in her works, which promotes the risks of uncontrolled power and gender inequality. The narrative of resistance that Atwood created highlights the point that voice does not just deal with expression, but it is also about resistance and claiming independence. In her stories, she invites the readers to rethink the systems that are used to regulate the lives of women and acknowledge the significance of agency and self-determination.

The rise of postcolonial voices is also a characteristic feature of contemporary feminist literature and it leads to the emergence of issues specific to women in the former colonized communities. Other authors like Kamala Markandaya and Shashi Deshpande bring in the issue of gender in relation to cultural norms, economic disparities and historical experiences. In their works, they bring out the struggles of women in a world where patriarchy is coupled with societal and cultural values. These authors help to understand feminist consciousness more deeply by showing how their characters overcome hardships and endure in their battles without paying attention to geographical and cultural borders.

The other notable element of contemporary feminist writing is that it puts the body, sexuality and private identities as resistance sites. Women authors are starting to defy the dominance of their bodies and their stories, making their claim to define themselves their way. This emphasis on self-representation is part of a wider cultural transformation that has involved realizing the diversity of women experience and the significance of individual voice. Literature is therefore a place where women would be able to express their desires, challenges their fears, and balance their own identities when it comes to the world they live in.

Besides, modern feminist literature tends to take an experimental mode and a narration style to represent the incomplete and manifold identity. Going beyond the traditional narration, authors develop new resistance to the narration of complicated lives of women. Such innovation does not only help to increase the aesthetic level of work in the sphere of literature, but also to strengthen the notion that the voice of women cannot be reduced to the conventional patterns.

Modern feminist literature is, in this sense, a shifting and changing phase on the path towards silence to voice. It does not just make the voices of women heard but also multiplies them, recognizing the diversity of opinions that form the feminist consciousness. Contemporary authors still struggle, using motifs of identity, resistance and empowerment, to

subvert structures of oppression and to transform the role of women both in death and in life through literature.

6. Feminist Consciousness in Indian English Literature

Indian English literature Feminist consciousness is a prominent aspect of the larger development of woman voice, since it does not only address the gender inequality, but also the issues of culture, tradition, class and postcolonial identity. As opposed to feminist discourse in the West, which is mostly preoccupied with personal independency as well as gender rights, Indian feminist literature usually indicates the overlapping of various societal frameworks that control the lives of women. These are the expectations of the family, religious standards, financial limitations and the remnants of colonialism. Consequently, the process of silence to voice in Indian English literature is very personal as well as communal, which makes it very unique in terms of experience, and context-specific.

Authors like Kamala Markandaya are very instrumental in the presentation of both hardships and strength of women in the traditional Indian culture. Her Nectar in a Sieve gives us the character of Rukmani who is bound by her poverty and social expectations and family obligations. Her outer voice is rather soft, but her inner strength and emotional stamina express a strong type of resistance. Markandaya, based on what Rukmani goes through, depicts the way that women, even in the most harsh circumstances, still have their sense of identity and agency that disputes the view of utter silence. On the same note, *Some Inner Fury* addresses the consciousness awakening of the female gender with respect to political and social transformation; it represents a heroine who slowly becomes aware of herself.

Shashi Deshpande is another important female author in the Indian feminist literature, the themes of her works are on conflicts and mental struggles of the middle classes and women. Her stories tend to demonstrate women who are struggling with societal pressures, marital stress, and finding themselves. In contrast to the previous ones, which focused on passive suffering, the characters created by Deshpande are active and do not want to accept their positions and roles as they are, but want to find their own identity. This is a change of silent suffering to active self-exploration which indicates the increasing impact of feminist ideas in Indian literature.

In a similar way, Bharati Mukherjee applies the concept of diasporic approach to feminist consciousness, addressing the issues of migrants, culture displacement, and identity change. Her works lead attention to the problems of women who have to maneuver in between worlds of cultures where conservative values turn out to be inconsistent with modern ambitions. Mukherjee uses her characters to illustrate the self-reinvention and voice-asserting process in new and, in many ways, hostile conditions. This aspect brings a worldly orientation to Indian feminist literature, which focuses on the dynamic and changing aspect of identity.

Themes of motherhood, domesticity, and social responsibility are also foregrounded in Indian English literature and they are not depicted as a limitation and restriction upon the women, but are instead depicted as complicated processes that define the identities of the women. Whereas motherhood is usually pictured as a place of power and emotional satisfaction, it is also represented as a place of loss and struggle. In the same vein, the domestic sphere as an arena of confinement is turned into a place of negotiation and a kind of resistance. Women characters do

not feel like they are rattling around these spaces, and they have to turn silence into expression, submission into assertion.

Moreover, the postcolonial situation contributes to the feminist consciousness in Indian literature. The voices of women are not only conditioned by patriarchy, but also historical and cultural traditions of the colonial rule. The double structure of oppression makes resistance a more sophisticated concept of women establishing their identities on the national and the gendered discourses. Consequently the Indian feminist writing also tends to exhibit a balance between tradition and modernity, and this balance points out these tensions and opportunities of this negotiation.

Through this, the feminist consciousness in Indian English literature is an important extension of the world movement of silence to voice. It adds variety to the discussion by embracing various cultural aspects and discussing the unity of gender, society, and history. Indian literature is still pushing the frontiers of feminist expression through the writings of different authors, providing a new perspective on the intricacies of women life, their constant quest of identity, agency and empowerment.

7. Key Themes in the Evolution of Feminist Consciousness

7.1. Silence to Voice

One of the greatest themes of the development of feminist consciousness in English literature is the process of passing silence to voice. In the past, women were not allowed the right to voice themselves, in literary works or even in society as a whole. The silence was not a literary blank, but a commentary on the system which marginalized them, keeping them out of intellectual, cultural, and political activity. In the early written works of literature, women were taken in male point of view, hence women were not able to express themselves relative to their experiences and identity. This imposed silence was a tool of control and strengthened patriarchal norms and limited women agency.

When feminist mentality started to develop, literature became an important arena through which this silence could be disrupted. Women writers also began to recover their voices and tell stories about themselves and express their inner worlds. This breaking of silence into voice is a change of invisibility into visibility, of objectification into subjectivity. Spoken, written and expressed words and acts become a way of protesting those structures that were formerly oppressing the identity of women. In the long run, this change has not merely redefined the images in literature but also helped to bring about social changes in the society at large as it proved women the right to express themselves and to be included in discussions.

7.2. Identity and Selfhood

Elucidation of identity and self is the main theme of feminist literature as it portrays the constant battle of women to establish themselves beyond the roles assigned by society. The identity of women in past literature traditions was also built mainly in reference to men, in the form of wives, mothers, or daughters. These roles diminished their personality and enclosed them in strict social norms. Consequently, the personal desires of women, their ambitions and their inner struggles were easily ignored or even repressed.

As feminist awareness grew, literature started to focus on the need to define oneself and to be independent. Women

characters express themselves more and more and challenge the conventional roles and attempt to create personal identities. This is usually done through a self discovery process where women grapple against both internal and external limitations to attain selfhood. The identity focus of feminist writing identifies the necessity to define women as the independent entities possessing their own ideas, feelings, and desires. It further defies the argument that the value of women is determined only by their relations with the other people, thus reinstating the concept of identity in more meaningful and empowering ways.

7.3. Resistance to Patriarchy

Feminist literature is characterized by resistance to patriarchy since it deals with the structures of power that have oppressed women in the past. The mechanisms of patriarchy are social, cultural and institutionalized, which means that the power of men is privileged, and women are not allowed freedom. This is commonly manifested in literature where women are depicted as lesser characters whose existence is governed by the society. Feminist authors attack such portrayals by showing the inequalities inherent in patriarchal structures and by giving other accounts that show the agency of women.

Literature is a strong place of resistance where women can challenge, challenge and overturn hegemonic values. This opposition can be in either form, which is subtle opposition to the oppressive systems or open opposition to these systems. Women can break the norms and declare themselves independent, or aim to change the circumstances of their life. Feminist literature through such representations not only shows how women are not treated fairly but also creates a vision of a change. Resistance does not, then, entail direct rebellion but encompasses all the little everyday forms of negotiation and assertion of self, which to a cumulative degree erode patriarchal power.

7.4. Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality plays a vital role in the modern feminist thought, as it focuses on the idea that women experience derives out of various and intersecting identities, such as race, class, culture, and sexuality. In contrast to the previous feminist strategies which usually centered on a certain concept of womanhood as a whole, intersectional feminism appreciates the fact that the issues of women are varied in nature and relative to context. This school of thought emphasizes the fact that gender is not to be perceived as something that exists alone but should be studied in the context of other social categories that promote power and privilege.

Intersectionality gives a more complex expression in literature of the world of women and their lives, their complexities, contradictions and the multi-layeredness that characterizes their lives. Authors are becoming more interested in the ways in which various types of oppression interlock and interact with one another to pose women with distinct challenges in different situations. An example can be given of how the lives of a woman living in postcolonial society can vary greatly to the life of a woman living in a Western one, because of the differences in culture, history, socio-economic statuses. Including elements of intersectionalism, the feminist literature expands its field of interest and becomes more comprehensive, allowing the previously marginalized groups to be voiced.

Moreover, intersectionality enhances the feminist

consciousness as it promotes more insight into diversity and unity among women. It debunks the naive stories, insisting on a more multifaceted approach to dealing with inequality. By doing that, contemporary feminist literature does not only give women a voice, but also makes sure that this voice is more than merely a singular experience but a multiplicity of experiences that bring about the modern world.

8. Conclusion

The development of feminism consciousness in the English literature is a deep-seated change in literary representation as well as social consciousness. Since the early times of silence and marginalization, women have over time become strong and able voices that can express themselves, their identities and ambitions. This movement of silence to voice is not just a literary change but a commentary on other larger changes in history, such as the emergence of feminist movements, better access to education, and a demand on gender equality. In this regard, literature has served as a reflector and the initiator, reflecting the plight of women, but at the same time, it has helped in their empowerment. As this research has shown, the history of the voice of literature is not a straight and smooth ride of women. The expression of feminist consciousness has been influenced by the different periods of time and cultural backgrounds. Although women were relegated to a passive role in the early literature, the subsequent literature started discussing their inner being and insisting on their distinctness. This change was preconditioned by the appearance of the feminist thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and it was extended by the period of modernism in investigating the depth of the psyche and playing with the freedom of the imagination. The feminist voices are more inclusive and varied in the modern literature and include such issues as identity, resistance, and intersectionality.

The works of the different authors in the different eras serve to denote that feminist expression is dynamic. Since the fact of resisting the early female characters is so subtle, the fact of making the statement of her identity in modern and contemporary literature is so emphasized, literature has been constantly adjusted to suit new voices and visions. Specifically, the presence of postcolonial and Indian writers of English has diversified the discussion with cultural peculiar experiences and issues. These stories allow showing that the process of voice and agency struggle is conditioned by various factors, such as social, economic, and historical circumstances. Besides, the main themes discussed in this paper silence to voice, identity, selfhood, resistance to patriarchy, and intersectionality explain the intricacy of the feminist consciousness. These themes demonstrate that the voice claim is not merely concerned with speaking but to reformulate the constructs which have historically muted women. Literature has enabled women to challenge, question common ideologies and even rebel against the oppressive systems and even envision other possibilities of living their lives. Writing itself is viewed as a source of resistance and women can take over the writing to regain their voices in literature. In summary, the silence to voice is a dynamic process, which is an ongoing one and still central to the feminist discourse. Although much has been accomplished, there is still a need to tackle the many inequalities that exist and give more voices to the marginalized. English literature has remained a critical arena of discussing these issues, which gives some understanding of the complicated nature of

gender, identity, and power. Feminist consciousness will definitely generate more literary expression that will further kick the boundaries and weaken the prevailing boundaries to establish more equality, freedom and social justice as the feminist consciousness is further developed.

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