

“Silence, Trauma, and Female Resistance: A Comparative Content Analysis of Indian and Korean Women’s Literature”

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Abstract:

*The present research study explores the relationship between silence, trauma, and female resistance in selected Indian and Korean women’s literary texts, with particular reference to *That Long Silence* and *The Vegetarian*. The study investigates how patriarchal social structures shape women’s emotional lives through silence, domestic control, social expectation, and psychological pressure. Rather than treating silence only as passivity, the paper examines how it gradually becomes a form of survival, emotional withdrawal, and resistance within oppressive social environments. The research is based on qualitative comparative textual analysis using feminist literary criticism and trauma theory. Through close reading of the selected texts, the study analyses emotional suppression, psychological fragmentation, bodily alienation, domestic isolation, and subtle forms of female resistance. Comparative analysis has been used to understand both the shared and culturally distinct experiences represented in Indian and Korean women’s writing. The findings reveal that trauma in these literary works is largely psychological and develops through continuous emotional control, neglect, adjustment, and social pressure rather than through isolated acts of violence alone. Indian women’s literature mainly portrays emotional suffering within family-centred structures shaped by marriage, duty, and social honour, whereas Korean women’s literature more directly presents psychological alienation, bodily resistance, emotional detachment, and the pressure of social conformity. The study further finds that female resistance in these texts rarely appears through open rebellion; instead, it emerges quietly through silence, refusal, self-awareness, withdrawal, and narrative expression. This research study concludes that silence in women’s literature functions as a complex emotional and symbolic space where suffering and resistance exist together. Although the cultural contexts differ, both Indian and Korean women’s texts reveal how women negotiate patriarchal control while attempting to reclaim identity, emotional agency, and selfhood.*

Keywords: Women’s Literature, Silence-Trauma, Female Resistance, Feminist Literary Criticism, Comparative, Psychological Fragmentation, Narrative Agency, Indian Women’s literature, Korean Women’s Literature, Emotional Suppressions, Culture Representation



1.Introduction:

A woman stops eating meat and refuses to explain herself. Another sits through years of domestic routine speaking only when necessary, her silence thick with exhaustion rather than obedience. In both Indian and Korean women's literature, silence rarely means emptiness. It carries resentment, memory, fear, humiliation, and sometimes a quiet form of rebellion that language itself cannot contain. The women in these narratives are not merely unheard; they are trapped inside social structures where speaking openly often produces punishment rather than freedom.

In *The Vegetarian*, Yeong-hye's withdrawal from speech gradually becomes inseparable from her rejection of bodily and social control. Her silence unsettles everyone around her precisely because it cannot be managed or interpreted within patriarchal logic. A different kind of silence appears in *That Long Silence*, where Jaya's restrained domestic existence reveals how middle-class Indian womanhood is shaped through emotional suppression disguised as adjustment and duty. Neither text presents resistance through dramatic revolution. Instead, resistance emerges slowly — through refusal, emotional withdrawal, fractured narration, and the refusal to continue performing socially acceptable femininity.

Women's trauma in these literary traditions is often cumulative rather than spectacular. The damage does not always come from a single violent event; it develops through repetition: interrupted desires, controlled bodies, silenced anger, compulsory caregiving, and the constant demand for self-erasure. Indian women's writing frequently situates this trauma within family honour, marriage, caste-inflected expectations, and domestic responsibility. Korean women's literature, while also rooted in patriarchy, often portrays psychological fragmentation intensified by urban isolation, rigid beauty culture, and the pressure to maintain social conformity within highly disciplined modern spaces. The emotional atmosphere of these texts differs sharply. Indian narratives tend to depict endurance within suffocating domestic continuity, whereas Korean narratives more frequently move toward alienation, bodily estrangement, and psychological rupture.

This paper examines how silence functions not simply as victimhood but as a contested emotional and political space in selected Indian and Korean women's texts. Using comparative content analysis informed by feminist literary criticism and trauma theory, the study argues that silence in



these narratives operates simultaneously as injury and resistance. While Indian women's literature often portrays silence as an inherited survival mechanism within familial structures, Korean women's literature more aggressively associates silence with bodily refusal and social detachment. Reading these traditions together reveals how women across different Asian cultures negotiate oppression not through grand declarations, but through quieter acts of refusal that destabilise patriarchal expectations from within.

2.Objectives:

- ✓ To examine how silence operates as a psychological, emotional, and symbolic expression of trauma in selected Indian and Korean women's literary texts.
- ✓ To comparatively analyse the ways female characters transform emotional suppression and social marginalisation into subtle forms of resistance against patriarchal structures.

3. Research Methodology:

This study is based on qualitative textual analysis of selected Indian and Korean women's literary works. The research mainly focuses on how women characters experience silence, trauma, emotional pressure, and resistance within patriarchal societies. Instead of using numerical data, the study closely reads the texts to understand emotions, relationships, behaviour, and social conditions presented in the narratives. The selected novels are analysed through the perspectives of feminist literary criticism and trauma theory. Special attention is given to scenes of emotional suppression, domestic conflict, psychological isolation, bodily control, and silent forms of resistance. The study also compares how cultural background influences women's experiences in Indian and Korean societies. A comparative approach is used to identify both similarities and differences in the portrayal of women's suffering and resistance. While Indian texts often connect female trauma with family responsibility and social tradition, Korean texts more frequently portray psychological alienation and emotional detachment within modern social structures.

4. Research Output:

A. Silence as a Gendered Experience:

Jaya in *That Long Silence* does not scream, protest loudly, or abandon her family. She continues cooking, writing occasionally, speaking carefully, and adjusting herself to the expectations around



her. Yet the silence surrounding her life feels heavy. It grows through years of interrupted thoughts, controlled emotions, and the constant pressure to become an “**ideal**” wife. Her silence is not natural calmness; it is something learned through repetition and compromise.

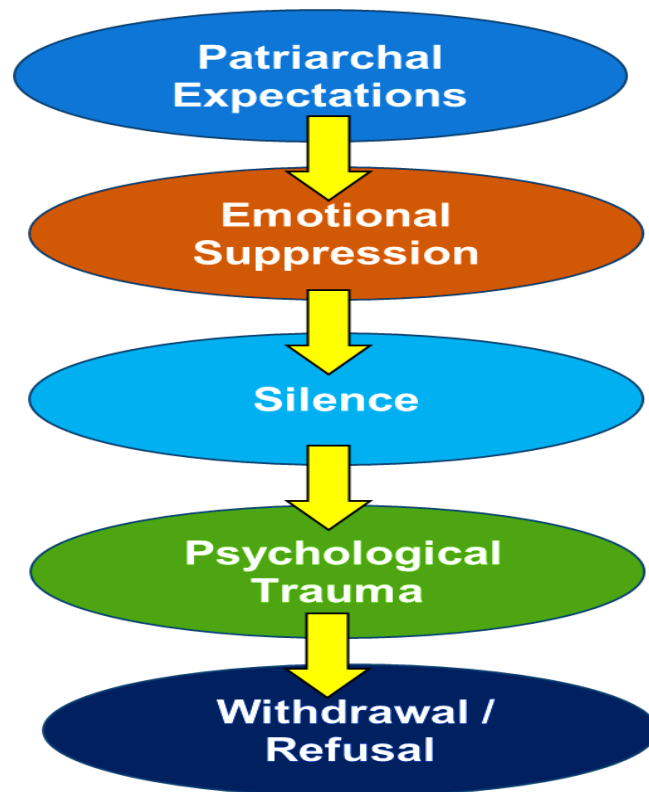
Table:1 Comparative representation of Silence in Indian women & Korean Women’s Literature

	Indian Women’s Literature	Korean Women’s Literature
1	Domestic silence	Psychological silence
2	Family honour and duty	Social pressure and conformity
3	Emotional endurance	Emotional detachment
4	Suppressed individuality	Bodily alienation
5	Silent adjustment	Silent refusal

Source: Analysis by Author

A different but equally disturbing silence appears in *The Vegetarian*. Yeong-hye slowly withdraws from conversation after deciding to stop eating meat. Her refusal to explain herself unsettles her family more than open rebellion would. The less she speaks, the more threatening she becomes to the social order around her. In this novel, silence turns into a form of bodily resistance. It breaks the expectation that women must remain emotionally available, obedient, and understandable at all times. Across Indian and Korean women’s literature, silence is rarely empty. It usually carries humiliation, exhaustion, fear, anger, or emotional isolation. Many women characters stay silent not because they have nothing to say, but because speaking openly often leads to judgement, punishment, or emotional dismissal. Silence becomes part of daily survival inside homes where obedience is treated as virtue and sacrifice is expected from women without question.

Fig: 1 Conceptual Flow of Silence & Resistance

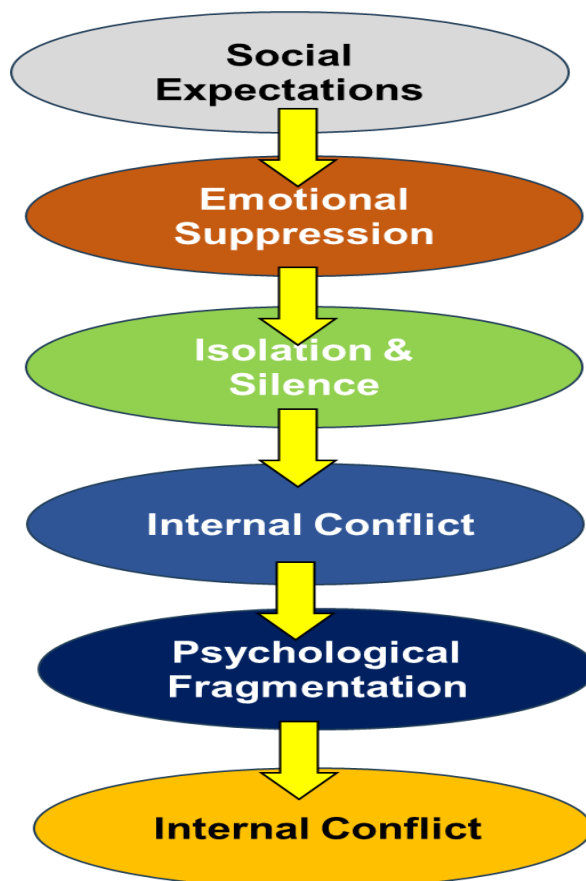


Indian literary narratives often connect silence with domestic responsibility and family honour. Women suppress personal desires to maintain relationships and social respectability. Their emotional pain remains hidden behind routine domestic life. Korean women's literature, on the other hand, frequently portrays silence through psychological withdrawal and emotional detachment. Women appear surrounded by people, yet remain deeply isolated within rigid social expectations and modern urban pressure. Here, what makes these texts powerful is that silence eventually begins to function as resistance. Some women stop explaining themselves. Some emotionally withdraw. Others reject social roles quietly rather than dramatically. These acts may appear small, but they disturb patriarchal systems built on female compliance.

B.Trauma and Psychological Fragmentation:

The women in these novels are not always beaten or physically tortured. Sometimes their suffering grows quietly through ordinary daily life. A woman is ignored when she speaks. Her opinions are treated as unimportant. She adjusts constantly for others until she slowly loses connection with herself. This repeated emotional pressure becomes a form of trauma. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya feels trapped inside a life where silence is expected from her more than honesty. She performs the role of a "good wife," but internally she feels isolated and emotionally exhausted. Her trauma does not come from one dramatic incident.

Fig:2 Trauma Progression Under Narratives of Women's Literary:



It develops slowly through years of compromise, emotional neglect, and suppressed frustration. She remains physically present within her family, yet mentally distant from the people around her. A sharper psychological breakdown appears in *The Vegetarian*. Yeong-hye's refusal to eat meat gradually turns into a rejection of social control itself. Her body becomes the centre of conflict. Family members try to discipline, correct, and control her behaviour because her choices challenge accepted social norms. As the pressure increases, her emotional condition becomes more unstable. Trauma in this text appears through bodily alienation, fear, and psychological collapse.

Table:2 Trauma Comparative View:



	Indian Women's Texts	Korean Women's Texts
1	Trauma linked with marriage and family duty	Trauma linked with social conformity
2	Emotional sacrifice	Psychological isolation
3	Silent endurance	Bodily alienation
4	Domestic pressure	Urban and social pressure
5	Hidden suffering	Visible mental breakdown

Source: Analysis by Author

Here, in **Table:2** observation exploring the trauma experienced by women in these narratives is deeply psychological. It develops not only from violence, but from continuous emotional control, neglect, and the pressure to become the kind of woman society expects. Indian women's literature often connects trauma with marriage, family duty, and emotional sacrifice. Many female characters are expected to tolerate dissatisfaction silently in order to protect social respectability. Their pain remains hidden beneath routine domestic life. Korean women's literature, however, frequently portrays trauma through emotional isolation, social pressure, beauty expectations, and the intense need to appear socially perfect. The emotional atmosphere feels colder and more psychologically fragmented. These literary works show that trauma is not always sudden. Sometimes it grows through repetition — through constant control, emotional dismissal, and the denial of personal freedom. Over time, women begin to feel disconnected from their own desires, emotions, and identities. Psychological fragmentation in these texts therefore reflects the long-term impact of patriarchal pressure on women's inner lives.

C. Female Resistance and Narrative Agency:

The women in these literary works do not always resist through open confrontation. Most of them are ordinary women living inside restrictive families and social systems where direct rebellion is difficult. Their resistance appears quietly. Sometimes they stop explaining themselves. Sometimes they emotionally withdraw. Sometimes they begin questioning the roles forced upon them. These small acts become important because they challenge expectations that women must

always remain obedient, patient, and self-sacrificing. In That Long Silence, Jaya's resistance begins internally. She starts reflecting on her own life, her silence, and the compromises she has made as a wife and mother. The act of thinking honestly about her condition becomes powerful because she no longer fully accepts the identity society has created for her. Her narration itself becomes resistance. By telling her story, she gives value to emotions and experiences that are usually ignored within patriarchal family structures.

Fig:3 For of Female Resistance:



A more unsettling form of resistance appears in *The Vegetarian*. Yeong-hye refuses social expectations through her body. She stops behaving in ways considered normal by her family and society. Her silence and refusal disturb people because they cannot easily control or understand her anymore. What appears to others as abnormal behaviour becomes her attempt to escape a system that constantly regulates women's choices, desires, and bodies.

Table:3 Comparative Representation of Resistance:



	Indian Women’s Literature	Korean Women’s Literature
1	Internal questioning	Bodily refusal
2	Emotional self-awareness	Psychological withdrawal
3	Resistance within family roles	Rejection of social norms
4	Silent endurance	Silent disruption
5	Narrative expression	Emotional detachment

Source: Analysis by Author

Indian women’s literature often portrays resistance through emotional awareness and gradual self-recognition. Women may continue living within the same social structure, but internally they begin rejecting unequal expectations. Korean women’s literature frequently presents resistance through emotional detachment, bodily refusal, or psychological withdrawal. The resistance feels harsher and more self-destructive because the emotional pressure surrounding women is shown more intensely. These analytical texts suggest that resistance is deeply connected with suffering. The women resist because they are emotionally exhausted from years of silence, control, and suppression. Their resistance does not always bring freedom or social change. In many cases, it creates loneliness, conflict, or psychological breakdown. Yet even quiet refusal becomes meaningful because it disrupts the patriarchal belief that women will always silently accept their condition.

D. Comparative Analysis:

When Indian and Korean women’s literary texts are read together, an interesting similarity becomes visible. The cultural backgrounds are different, yet women in both traditions struggle with expectations that demand silence, patience, sacrifice, and emotional control. Society repeatedly teaches women to adjust themselves for the comfort of others. Because of this, many female characters slowly lose the freedom to express anger, desire, frustration, or individuality openly. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya’s life reflects the emotional burden carried by many women within traditional family structures. She continues performing her duties as a wife and mother, but internally she feels emotionally empty and disconnected. Her silence develops from years of adjustment and compromise. She does not openly rebel because maintaining family stability is considered more important than personal happiness. Indian women’s literature often presents this kind of suffering quietly. The pain remains hidden behind everyday domestic routine.

Table:4 Comparative Analysis of Indian & Korean Women’s Literature

	Indian Women’s Literature	Korean Women’s Literature
1	Domestic emotional pressure	Psychological and social pressure
2	Silence linked with adjustment	Silence linked with withdrawal
3	Family-centred identity	Individual emotional isolation
4	Endurance within relationships	Emotional and bodily rejection
5	Quiet survival	Psychological rupture

A different emotional atmosphere appears in *The Vegetarian*. Yeong-hye’s refusal to behave according to social expectations creates discomfort and hostility within her family. Her silence feels colder and more psychologically disturbing. Korean women’s literature frequently portrays women living under pressure to appear socially perfect, emotionally controlled, and physically acceptable. As a result, trauma in these texts often affects the body as well as the mind. Women begin feeling alienated not only from society but also from themselves. Another noticeable difference lies in the way relationships function in these literary traditions. Indian narratives usually keep women emotionally connected to family structures even during conflict. The female characters continue negotiating their identities within marriage, caregiving, and social responsibility. Korean narratives, however, often portray emotional isolation more intensely. Women appear surrounded by people yet remain psychologically alone. This loneliness creates a stronger sense of emotional fragmentation.

At the same time, both traditions show how patriarchal systems gradually damage women’s sense of self. Trauma does not always emerge through physical violence. It grows through repeated emotional dismissal, silence, social pressure, and the constant expectation that women must prioritise others over themselves. Over time, many characters begin feeling emotionally absent from their own lives. The most striking similarity between these texts is the nature of resistance. The women rarely become dramatic revolutionaries. Their resistance appears quietly and indirectly. Some stop speaking openly. Some emotionally withdraw from relationships. Others begin questioning the roles imposed upon them. In both Indian and Korean literature, silence becomes more than suffering; it slowly turns into a subtle form of resistance against patriarchal



control. There is also a difference in tone between the two literary traditions. Indian women’s literature often focuses on endurance and emotional continuation. Women continue living within restrictive systems despite inner suffering. Korean women’s literature more frequently moves toward psychological rupture, bodily rejection, or emotional collapse. One tradition emphasises silent survival, while the other more openly portrays emotional breakdown. These literary works reveal that silence is deeply complex. It can express fear, exhaustion, adjustment, resistance, or emotional protection at the same time. The comparison between Indian and Korean women’s literature therefore helps in understanding how women across different cultures experience trauma differently, yet continue searching for identity and agency within oppressive social systems.

E. Differences Analysis of Indian & Korean Women’s Literature:

Although both Indian and Korean women’s literature explore female suffering and patriarchal control, the emotional atmosphere and cultural focus of these texts are quite different. The struggles faced by women are shaped by different social realities, family systems, and cultural expectations.

Table:5 Analysis of Major Differences between Indian & Korean Women’s Literature

	Indian Women’s Literature	Korean Women’s Literature
1	Focus on family duty and social tradition	Focus on social pressure and perfectionism
2	Emotional suffering within domestic life	Psychological isolation and bodily alienation
3	Gradual emotional awakening	Intense psychological breakdown
4	Women remain tied to family roles	Women appear emotionally detached
5	Silence as endurance	Silence as withdrawal and refusal

In Indian women’s literature, trauma is often connected with family responsibility, marriage, social honour, and traditional expectations. Many female characters continue living within family structures even when they feel emotionally exhausted. Society expects them to adjust, sacrifice, and maintain relationships at any cost. Because of this, Indian narratives usually focus more on emotional suffering within domestic life. The pain develops slowly through silence, compromise, and social pressure.



Korean women's literature presents a more psychologically intense and socially isolated world. Women are often shown struggling with perfectionism, beauty standards, emotional control, and the pressure to fit into modern social systems. In *The Vegetarian*, the female body itself becomes a site of conflict and resistance. The body is observed, controlled, and judged by society. As a result, Korean literary texts frequently portray emotional detachment, bodily alienation, and psychological breakdown more directly.

Another major difference appears in the narrative tone. Indian literary narratives often move gradually. Women silently endure emotional pain before slowly recognising their own dissatisfaction and identity crisis. The emotional movement feels restrained and internally layered. In contrast, Korean narratives tend to portray sharper psychological disturbance. Emotional collapse, isolation, and existential loneliness appear more openly and intensely. Relationships are also portrayed differently in the two traditions. Indian women characters usually remain deeply connected to family structures even during emotional conflict. Their identity is strongly tied to marriage, motherhood, and domestic roles. Korean women characters, however, are often portrayed as emotionally isolated individuals, even when surrounded by family or society. This creates a colder and more fragmented emotional atmosphere. These differences show that women's trauma does not appear in exactly the same way across cultures. Indian literature often highlights silent endurance within traditional social systems, whereas Korean literature more frequently portrays psychological rupture and bodily resistance within modern social pressure. Even so, both traditions reveal how patriarchal expectations deeply affect women's emotional lives and sense of identity.

5. Conclusion:

The study shows that silence in Indian and Korean women's literature is not simply a sign of weakness. In many of the selected texts, silence grows from emotional pressure, social expectations, and the continuous control imposed on women within patriarchal systems. The analysis indicates that trauma is often psychological and develops slowly through everyday experiences such as neglect, suppression, adjustment, and emotional isolation rather than through a single violent event. The comparison also highlights an important cultural difference between the two literary traditions. Indian women's literature mainly presents women struggling within family-centred responsibilities and traditional social expectations, while Korean women's literature more strongly portrays psychological alienation, bodily control, and emotional breakdown within modern social environments. Even with these differences, both traditions reveal



similar patterns of female suffering and silent resistance. Another important finding is that resistance in these literary works is usually subtle and deeply personal. Women rarely oppose patriarchy through open rebellion. Instead, resistance appears through silence, withdrawal, self-awareness, refusal, and emotional survival. These texts therefore not only represent women's suffering but also expose the hidden emotional consequences of patriarchal culture and the quiet ways women attempt to reclaim identity and agency.

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