Representation of the character of men and women in Poetry – A Critical Discourse Analysis of Robert Browning's Poems

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Abstract- The paper focuses on the linguistics analysis of male and female representation in Robert Browning's poems "Porphyria's Lover' and "My Last Duchess". The study is based on the critical discourse analysis serves as the theoretical standpoints for the general analysis. The aim of this paper is to reveal the philosophy of Browning and provides of his poetry. He has given the meaning of human life through these poems. His poetry is like a room or cabinet of interest. Browning is of the view that to acquire the power is the aim of life. He realized that the power of knowledge was not enough unless it is followed by love.

Index Terms- Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender, Representation, Power, Language.

I. INTRODUCTION

Discourse is a broad term with different definitions which have different meanings. Discourse is related with the study of study of meaning beyond the sentence. Critical Discourse Analysis stalks from the critical theory of language. Critical Discourse Analysis is related to the use of language as a phenomenon of social structure. Specific historical context is also included in the social structure. The roots of Critical Discourse Analysis lie in Sociolinguistics, Applied linguistics, Pragmatics, Textlinguistics and classical Rhetoric. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997) "Critical Discourse Analysis can be seen as language as social practice". The context of language is considered as very crucial. Through Critical Discourse Analysis language can be used in writing and speech as a form of social practice.

Critical Discourse Analysis is related to the" power". It is observed that power is a main part in the social life. Discursive differences can be negotiated in the text. They are ruled by differences in power which can be determined by genre and by discourse. Therefore, texts are used to show the different ideologies and discourses for dominance. Power is related to effects of difference and relations of differences in the social structures. Language is used to challenge the power because power is not derived from language. Power can be signaled by the control of a person in a social context or the genre of a text. Power can be challenged or exercised within the genres related with the given social context. According to Dijk (1998) Critical Discourse Analysis is concerned with analyzing and studying texts. Texts can be in the written or spoken form. These types of texts can be used to reveal the dominance, bias, discursive

sources of power and inequality. Through critical discourse analysis, it can be examines how to maintain and reproduce these discursive sources within the political, historical and social contexts.

To expose the representation of the character of men and women, it is valuable to study Browning, as he is considered as the most important poet of the Victorian age. He writes about the power of gender in his poems. Furthermore, this study tried to find out the representation of gender in the text (poetry). Through Critical Discourse Analysis both the transparent and hidden political as well as social values and norms can be uncovered. The use of Critical Discourse Analysis grabs the attention of many researchers to investigate the textbooks from different points of view like ethnicity, gender representation or cultural factors.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Representation is one of the significant areas in postmodern studies. It has been studied from multiple and diverse viewpoints by adopting different theoretical standpoints. In recent times postcolonial, gender, cultural and anthropological studies have done the research in this area more significant and revealing. It is an act of stating and restating an opinion that would let the people to represent themselves instead of being represented/misrepresented by those in authority. According to Hall, "Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer* to either the 'real' world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events"(1997:17). Hall proposes two diverse ways, operating in the system of representation. The first one deals with the direct suggestiveness of the object of representation with a set of concepts and beliefs within the mind of people. It refers about the dependency of meanings on the basis of free associations. The second system deals with language in order to produce and convey meanings. For Hall language is comprised of words, both written and their utterances, images, music and any kind of facial expressions.

For Feminist writers and theorists' the issues regarding representation occupy a very high place. Feminist scholars revolted against the stereotypical representation of the female gender by male in media, art and literature. Carter and Steiner state about the stereotypical representation of female gender and its motif, "The concern was that the sexist messages of these media forms socialized people, especially children, into thinking

that dichotomized and hierarchical sex-role stereotypes were 'natural' and 'normal'" (2004: 2).

Berger puts forward that women are conscious about constant surveillance of male dominance, which makes them critical towards themselves. In this way, women are both inspector and the inspected, which converts herself merely into an object. Berger articulates, "Women are depicted in quite a different way to men – not because the feminine is different from the masculine – but because the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him" (1972: 64).

Wolf is one of the greatest advocates of feminism having her strong faith in the fact that the ideal image of a female and her beauty is a kind of weapon directed towards the progress and advancement of women. Throughout the nineteenth century, especially in the Victorian era, women had to confront with the ideal image how she should look like. Feminist started a movement against the social myths or stereotypes associated with femininity and female ideals of beauty. Wolf says :

As the economy, law, religion, sexual mores, education, and culture were forcibly opened up to include women more fairly, a private reality colonized female consciousness. By using ideas about "beauty," it reconstructed an alternative female world with its own laws, economy, religion, sexuality, education, and culture, each element as repressive as any that had gone before" (1991: 16).

Wolf hints that these myths of beauty are still able to make their existence possible in the form of an idealized stereotypical feminine image created by male for the currency of power and dominance in social order. Max Weber, who classifies power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance…" (1978, 53).

In a quiet similar way, but theoretically in a different background, Michel Foucault has proposed the over empowering nature of power, and he states this, "if we speak of the structures or the mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others" (1983, 217). Foucault further defines the nature of power as:

Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. Consequently, there is no face to face confrontation of power and freedom which is mutually exclusive (freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised), but a much more complicated interplay. In this game freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power. (982: 221)

Foucault linked power with freedom, which offers an intricate play of power and freedom.

Victorian age is a complex and revolutionary era which is dominated by patriarchal standards of morality and aesthetics. The emergence of middle class and advancement in diverse fields of science and anthropology was confronting conservativeness of Victorian standards of morality. The restlessness and uncertainty of the age was depicted in the arts and literature of the time, which offers a double vision of reality. Moral standards and desires both are having their depiction in the David G. Riede (2005) commented: "Poetry became… a hoped-for means of universalizing middle-class values, and especially of extending them to the lower classes—the majority of the British population, which was becoming increasingly restive and influential with the gradual spread of democracy." (p.426)

Beauvoir states that men in male dominated society have gained the position of transcendent subject, whereas woman is regarded as another. She suggests these ideas in The Second Sex.

"She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other" (Beauvoir, xxii)

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this descriptive research paper is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which paves the way for analytical study of the ways in which power relations and unjustified dominance manage to retain their currency. The researcher will employ CDA to investigate the representation of the characters of male and female in Robert Browning's poetry. It will allow to dig deep into the phenomenon and critically investigate it from multiple view points by unveiling the interconnection between the discourses of power and male dominance. CDA welcomes multiplicity of interpretations and gives the liberty to study the use of power in terms of both language and theory.

IV. ANALYSIS

Through the discourse of Robert browning's poems "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess" it has been observed that both poems are very similar to each other. Both poems are based on the feelings and behavior of men who were mentally disturbed because they feel insecure from women's power. They had a strong relationship with a strong woman who, love their men, but their men ended the story by killing their women. They feel very happy after committing the murder. The most captivating similarity between the poems is that, the writer has given power to the male on the bases of gender. In these poems initially the women have the power, but men took this power by killing the women. The men used murder as a tool to get the power. In Prophyria's Lover the man is distrustful. He has a lower social status than women. The man in this poem is behaving like an abnormal person as the storm is going on and he is sitting in his cottage without any heat. Through the discourse of this poem it has been observed that the man in this poem is feeling insecure because of women's power.

So, he killed the woman to get the power. In My Last Duchess the main character of this poem is understated. The main character of this poem is Duke. He also killed his wife. The most interesting predictor of his madness is his tune and the way he describes. The way he reveals himself to the reader is very strange i.e. The marriage broker and his use of humility. He also has a problem with the behavior of his wife. He treats with his wife like an animal which seems cruel to the reader.

Both men and woman hold power, but there is a difference between the powers that they have. Power may be defined in different ways. He defined power in his poems in two ways. The first kind of power is of man, the ability to control over other. The Second kind of power is of a woman, is the ability and

freedom to do what one wants to do which means that the women what wants? Is only freedom, not control over other. Only because of this they receive the sympathy of their readers

Through the discourse of these poems it has been observed that Robert expressed his feelings through his writing. He is supporting his gender by giving the power on the bases of gender. No doubt, Robert has given power to the both genders. But, there are two types of power which have been found in his poems. The first power is found in the men. Who want to control others according to their desires. Men want to control the behavior of women as they are threatened and offended by it. Another type of power is related with the women. Through this power women can do anything what they want to do. They don't want to control the behavior of their life partners. They just want to spend a free life. Both powers have its own significance because the power of both genders reflects the value of their character.

V.   CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of his poem, it is concluded that Robert Browning wants to convey that women have more importance in the society. He is presenting both genders in such a way that men are feeling as a slave of women and they had not high status in their societies. That's why they killed women to gain the higher status in the society. Furthermore, the text of his poems adopting the discourse of advertising and marking by exploiting the male gender.

He is giving importance to the women. No doubt, she has been killed by men, but it is not men who win the race of his life, it is the women who seem to win.

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