



Judith Butler's Theory of Performativity: A Comparative Study of Deepa and Yukiko

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Abstract:

This study demonstrates how silence is culturally-created behaviour based on societal standards and patriarchal expectations, not an innately feminine trait. This study shows how women's behaviour is controlled by internalised constraint and obedience as forms of ideal feminine identity. *The Makioka Sisters* by Junichiro Tanizaki and *Independence* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are set in pre-war Japan and partition-era India. Using Judith Butler's theoretical framework of gender performativity, the study claims that behaviour eventually becomes natural through continuous behavioural regulation. Yukiko and Deepa demonstrate how actions are praised when they uphold family and social harmony and penalized when they deviate from social norms. Across different contexts, Yukiko and Deepa show silence functioning as a type of regulation that is comparable across all cultures and societies. This study shows patriarchal societies consistently accepting and normalizing women's silence, resulting in gendered performance of behaviour, by placing Yukiko and Deepa in a comparative analysis.

Keywords: gender performativity, silence, feminine identity, patriarchy, comparative literature, Judith Butler.

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Introduction

Historically, silence has been associated with women as an ideal quality as a part of their femininity. Patriarchy shapes women's behaviour through repetitive regulation in the form of approval or punishment. Women are punished in the form of disapproval until their behaviour aligns with ideal femininity approved by the society they live in. On the other hand, restraint and control are rewarded by patriarchal culture in the form of approval. Constant regulation shapes the conduct of women to the point where it becomes natural.

Independence (2022) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and *The Makioka Sisters* (1957) by Junichiro Tanizaki (translated from the Japanese to English by Edward G. Seidensticker, 2000) have been chosen for the study as the works are based on different geographical locations, in addition the novels highlight several differences in cultures and traditions. Despite all this, the novels work well in comparison of the characters chosen for the study, as the characters go through similar experiences in their treatment as women, which makes the novels an apt choice for the study of performativity.

Yukiko and Deepa are compared because they embody socially approved ideal feminine qualities. Despite cultural and geographical differences, they both experience situations where they both showcase silence as being an ideal trait. Silence is the focus in the study as it is considered an ideal feminine trait as per society's expectations. The paper's argument demonstrates that silence is not innate but is socially produced through a repetition of gendered regulation across cultures.

Widely known for the theory of performativity, Judith Butler is one of the most influential thinkers associated with gender studies and queer and feminist theories. Butler is an important figure in

contemporary literature and gender studies as she redefines gender as not being innate or fixed, but as a process of repetition of behaviours that are socially constructed and are based on cultural convention.

Judith Butler in her work *Gender Trouble* (1990) introduced the theory of gender performativity in which she argues that gender is created through the performance of socially approved actions repeatedly and thus is not an innate identity. According to Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble*, “If there is something right in Beauvoir's claim that one is born, but rather becomes a woman, it follows that woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification” (Butler 78).

From the quote above we can say that performing a particular gender is always a work in progress, as one is taught to continuously perform gender specific ideal behaviours. Butler states that gender in itself is not something that a person is born with but is a repetition and regulation of a particular type of socially accepted behavior as a result of which our gender is identified by everyone around us. It is not a feeling or an association but a conditioned process imbibed into us by the society based not on our biological constitution but by how society interprets biology through its own specific cultural norms.

The way in which a woman's repetition of gendered behavior by her conduct, posture, silence or behavior for which she is rewarded by her family and those around her through social approval is important to understand that society regulates constraint from a woman.

The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as a constituted social temporality. (Butler 214)

Furthermore, Butler states that a person's performativity of a certain gender trait also depends upon what traits the society deems fit for a certain gender. A person is punished and taught the 'correct behavior' if he or she performs otherwise and the repetition of such behavior that suits a certain gender is imbibed into him or her. Performance here, refers to the socially accepted behaviours, expressions, and gestures of a particular society which become the ideal traits of judgement of them. Gender as a result is not practiced and performed in a day, but is a 'stylized repetition of acts' (Butler 214) that is subconsciously practiced in and out every day.

Gender performativity is very different from performance or acting. It does not work in a way that you like a particular gender today so you can act it; neither does it work in the way that you perform a particular gender's traits and it will become your true gender. When a person actually engages in the act of performativity, they use speech that binds them in a way that instigates future actions. Gender performativity says that the repeated action we do or engage in are not actually our hidden self but in fact is the 'self'. While acting is a conscious performance that is recreated or carried out to extract some sort of reaction from the audience, gender performativity is enforced on people as ideal behaviours which are deemed socially and culturally correct by the society in which they live in. With repetitive regulations on their behavior, gender performativity becomes not a conscious performance but a part of their subconscious and thus, personality. "Gender ought not to be

construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler 179).

Femininity is also a type of gender. And as stated above, femininity too is regulated by repetitive actions and behaviours. One of the major ideals of feminine behavior is practicing constraint. It does not come natural to anyone and so it is enforced upon women. If a little girl gets angry then she cries and has an outburst. If this kind of behavior is unacceptable to her family, then she is told to refrain from screaming and getting angry. This lesson is repeated until the girl learns to restrain herself in similar situations. As a result of repetitive regulation, the girl, now a grown woman quietly calms herself in the same situation she got angry as a child and is rewarded by her family when they tell her that she is a good girl, respects her family members and their values and will be a good wife to her husband. It is important to understand here that femininity is not chosen by women but is actually internalized into them by those around them.

Gender performativity is a great theory to analyze fictional characters. Normally, in novels, a character's thoughts, behaviours, routines, habits and many more aspects are mentioned which the theory of performativity analyzes in humans. Novels also focus on repetition of behavior and actions which is essential to use performativity as a tool. There are numerous narrative examples in literature that can directly link to the theory of performativity like familial conversations between the characters, gestures, emotional restraints and so on.

When characters showcase socially acceptable behaviours and actions then they are rewarded by the other characters that are part of their community. However, if they engage in behaviours that go against family values and endanger their family's reputation then they are disciplined in some

way. To analyze this, the character of Yukiko from the novel *The Makioka Sisters* is ideal as she is described as a shy, feminine and seldom voicing her opinions in front of her family members or to anyone in general. Similarly, the character of Deepa from the novel *Independence* is also ideal as she is described as a devout daughter who is expected to marry rich because of her beauty and get the family out of poverty. A comparative analysis of both these characters reveals how gender performativity is regulated by the ones we live around.

Analysis of Performativity through Yukiko

The one quality that consistently comes up in Yukiko's behavior is silence. She maintains silence over voicing her own thoughts and opinions about a lot of subjects. She stays silent when her two sisters Taeko and Sachiko are discussing about a marriage prospect for her even when it is hinted that she may have overheard their conversation. When the newspaper incident happened Yukiko silently blamed herself and Tatsuo (Yukiko's brother-in-law) for it. Herself, for not already being married and Tatsuo for trying to clean up the misunderstanding that the false report in the newspaper caused. Nevertheless, in order to maintain harmony in her family so that neither Tatsuo and his family nor Taeko gets upset, Yukiko resorts to staying silent and hides the fact from her family that she actually felt her self-respect diminishing because of it. "For all her self-confidence, Yukiko presently found marriage withdrawing into the distance. Whatever she may have felt in private, she continued to insist that the incident had done her little harm, and there was happily no bad feeling between the sisters" (Tanizaki 13).

Shortly after Yukiko's father's death, her brother-in-law Tatsuo became the head of the Makioka household (this refers to the entire Makioka family where the oldest daughter's husband becomes the patriarchal head of the entire family). He decided that his foremost duty should be marrying

Yukiko off. Yukiko did not like the marriage prospect that he had chosen for her but because of her repetitive pattern of not voicing her opinions and concerns she gave very vague answers. This entire ordeal led to a huge misunderstanding as a consequence. Silence is a shortcoming just for Yukiko and not for her family because she always gets the short end of the stick because of it and her family on the other hand thrive on the knowledge that she is submissive. Yukiko's silence on so many occasions shows how it has become a habit for her. This behavior also defines her femininity and she is valued for this trait by her family members to the point that they think her silence on her life's major decisions, like marriage, is an acceptance of whatever they choose for her will be correct.

There has always been a habitual restraint in Yukiko. "It was one of Yukiko's shortcomings that she seldom said enough to make herself understood" (Tanizaki 11). But one of the major hurdles, that pattern of silence has brought for her, is the difficulties she has to face in marriage negotiations because they end up failing. Firstly, she loses a lot of good prospects throughout the novel because all the marriage negotiation decisions are taken by her sisters and their families. Secondly, even when they try to actively include her in their discussions, she still has this chronic pattern of silence that her family has to take such important decisions on their own. Because of this, her family's desire to cling to the past causes them to pass up numerous excellent marriage opportunities. Yukiko's silence is seen as refinement in her character so it is interpreted as her femininity by her family and her trust in them that whatever they chose for her will be the best for her is looked upon with approval. Except for one or two instances in the entire novel, marriage discussions always largely seem to happen around Yukiko, not with her. "Yukiko's dislike for the telephone was no secret, and when—rarely—there was a call for her she usually had someone else do the talking

and went to the telephone herself only on very special occasions. No one had objected up to now, but this was one of those special occasions” (Tanizaki 434-435).

Yukiko’s hesitation is not because she is incapable but is regulated silence so that she does not tarnish her family’s reputation. As a consequence of this, marriage negotiations never went over *miai* (a formal match-making interview between a man and a woman, often facilitated by parents or match-makers) for Yukiko, because that is when prospects see Yukiko in person and she is judged socially. Yukiko’s silence, hesitation and shyness is read as dullness, thus impacting her marriage negotiations negatively.

Sachiko (Yukiko’s sister) interprets Yukiko’s silence as her loneliness of not having her own family over marriage negotiations turning out to be a failure again and again. Due to this assumption she lets go of her motherly duties of Etsuko, her daughter, and lets Yukiko take over the household duties and Etsuko’s responsibilities thinking that it will ease Yukiko’s loneliness and despair as it is socially accepted that sisters can take care of their nieces and nephews. Sachiko also interprets Yukiko’s silence as her shyness and femininity and protects her by justifying her behavior as Yukiko duty towards her elders whenever marriage negotiations fall through. Taeko takes advantage of Yukiko’s silence on her wrongdoings and disregards her feelings and emotions which ultimately leads to Taeko’s abandonment by her family. All through the novel Yukiko’s silence makes people misinterpret her actions and intentions. People who know Yukiko also misinterpret her silence as being no more than a blank canvas which can be painted over however one wants to. This ultimately shows how a repetitive pattern of maintaining silence leads to being socially rewarded for being feminine but also results in being tormented by being misinterpreted time and again.

Analysis of Performativity through Deepa

The other character under analysis is Deepa. First and foremost, Deepa is described as a beauty in *Independence*. She is not only a beauty but is also virtuous, obedient and hardworking which makes her feminine and likable by everyone around her. She values her family and is particularly fond of her mother. “Deepa. The eldest prettiest favourite to whom Bina (Deepa’s mother) gives the biggest sweet, the best sari at Durga Puja time, who sleeps beside her when Baba goes to Calcutta” (Divakaruni 10). Deepa is liked by all and not only is she beautiful, but she also has an irresistible charm that no one can ignore. These qualities make her appreciated by her family and a good prospect for marriage. Her family is quite poor and their high hopes are riding on her shoulders that one day she will marry into a rich household and get them out of poverty. Her mother is quite sure that she will find a quite suitable husband because of her beauty, abides her family values and never goes against her elders. Deepa’s irresistible charm and values are what make her feminine and these qualities are approved by the society she lives in. Especially her mother Bina who favours her the most out of her three daughters because she is compliant and always listens to Bina. Deepa’s worth is calculated by her beauty and compliant behavior as it is much appreciated that does not challenge her mother’s authority and works hard to make money alongside her mother.

As a result of her position Deepa is favoured over her sisters by her mother a lot of times, she is expected to sacrifice her personal choices. Being an elder daughter makes her sacrifices an unspoken obligation as the women are considered the honour of a family and they are expected to shoulder the family’s respect and duties. Deepa and her younger sister Jamini (Deepa’s sister) have beautiful voices. However, because Deepa is praised for her obedience, beauty and hard work by her parents, Jamini expects Deepa to let go of her hobby of singing so that Jamini can have at least

one different quality for which she can be praised. “Deepa is also a good singer. But she stopped practicing after Jamini said, Let me at least have this one thing” (Divakaruni 26). Jamini doesn’t think it is imperative to ask Deepa whether she actually wanted to pursue singing as a hobby or a career. Deepa’s silent acceptance of her sister’s request robs Deepa of her longing to pursue singing. Deepa’s silent sacrifice is interpreted as her sororal duty towards Jamini as an elder sister and this benefits Jamini who gets praised for her beautiful voice. Another instance where Deepa showcases her femininity by hiding her discomfort on seeing anything painful was when she accepted Raza’s (Deepa’s father’s friend, later marries Deepa) invitation to visit the clinic. The fact that she is silent on her discomfort is interpreted as her femininity as a prospective partner would approve of her obedience and an interest in his interests. “But Deepa who cannot stand the stench of sickness, who has always hated the sight of blood, looks at Raza and says she cannot wait” (Divakaruni 31). Deepa unintentionally hides her aversion to the sight of blood and tells Raza that she cannot wait to accompany him. This shows how Deepa functions by conforming to social expectations of a good wife, be it showcasing her femininity while also falling into her habitual submissive role in front of Raza because that is how she is expected to behave by everyone who knows her. This nature in women is expected to make men like them and eventually consider them to be a good marriage prospect. This behavior works in favour of Raza as he does not have to be considerate of Deepa’s aversion as he is unaware of it. Silence and the repeated behavioral patterns of bending over backwards constructs a path in such a way where men benefit from it by removing their adjustment all the way to zero.

Being the most favoured daughter does not end well for Deepa later. Where on one hand she was rewarded for her femininity with her mother’s favour and approval, on the other hand she was abandoned by the same mother for overstepping the socially approved boundaries of femininity.

Deepa not only loses her precious relationships but also her agency to make her own decisions. Abdullah (Raza's friend) says,

'I know a small *masjid* (a place of worship) in North Calcutta. The mullah is a friend, very discreet. Raza will take you there for conversion. The actual *nikah* (wedding ceremony) should take place in the Park Circus mosque. Raza will invite the league members for the celebration. The League is becoming more powerful each day, more dangerous. But once you are one of them, once they have eaten your salt, you will be safe.' He adds, devastatingly, 'If your father knew the problem you have created, this is what he would advise, too'. (Divakaruni 121)

After being kicked out of her home Deepa takes shelter in the nurse's home in Calcutta who worked in her father's clinic. Due to rising communal tensions, Raza's uncle Abdullah strongly advises Deepa to convert from Hinduism to Islam. Deepa is not involved in any way in the process of coming to this decision. It is the people around her, who think they want the best for her, take this decision by themselves. No one around her asks for her opinion because it is socially approved when women just accept and do what is being decided for them, especially in a crisis-driven situation. This particular moment in the novel shows how Deepa loses her agency and is told to do something life-changing without being asked for her opinion on the matter. This snatching of agency benefits Raza as he is an important person in his community and his relationship with a Hindu woman will harm him. It also benefits the patriarchal society as women are trained to be silent on matters that are deemed important for the proper functioning of the society. Also, they are expected to be compliant and not primary decision-makers.

One thing that links Deepa and Yukiko is the societal expectations of them. Both women are expected to display habituated behaviours that are socially approved by the societies they live in.

When in compliance of staying within their accepted boundaries, they are rewarded by approval and punished if they step over them. While culture sets apart what is specifically being expected of them, they are both approved for the silence that habitually takes over them. Their silence over some situations is misinterpreted as their own choice but not as a sacrifice. Their repeated silence persists because their behavior has been continually regulated by the society they live in so that they conform to the bounds both Yukiko and Deepa are supposed to be in to be approved by the society. Society expects from both of them that they display the habituated feminine behavior that they have been taught over the years. "Sachiko knew Yukiko's answer without asking: Yukiko had had enough of the east-country; Mimaki should take her to Nara. Near though they were, they knew little of the Yamato ruins and monuments. Yukiko had never seen the wall paintings at the Horyuji Temple, for instance" (Tanizaki 556).

Yukiko is also rewarded for her silence. Sachiko believes she knows her shy sister well enough to answer for her when Mimaki (Yukiko's fiancé) asks Yukiko about her honeymoon choices. Yukiko finally gets married after years of patience. She never blamed Taeko for the delay and her actual thoughts are seldom mentioned in the novel. Yukiko's silence functions as maintaining harmony between the two families which makes decision making easier for the families and Yukiko is also rewarded with the future she deserves. Although in a different context, Deepa's silence is also socially rewarded like Yukiko.

'There is one way. After the mourning period ends, four months the mullah says, you could remarry. If your new husband is trusted by the government, if he is powerful enough and willing to accompany you, you will be allowed to go to India.' (Divakaruni 219-220)

In this quote, Abdullah is telling Deepa that she can visit India if her husband accompanies her, implying that she marries Abdullah. Here, Deepa's practiced restraint works in her favour as she

is seen as compliant and vulnerable who needs to be accepted and protected by Abdullah. She not only succeeds in gaining Abdullah's trust, but her silence also showcases her as an ideal wife whom society approves of. Silence is seen as an ideal quality and a part of femininity in women. Because of this, women are rewarded in the form of acceptance by the society they live in.

Silence functions the same across different cultures as the very same silence that sometimes protected Deepa and Yukiko, also harmed the both of them. Outwardly even though silence is accepted as an ideal quality in women by the society, sometimes it also harms women inwardly. Yukiko's silence is interpreted by others as her having no opinions at all and compliant. People around her generally talk for her rather than talk to her, which takes away her freedom of expression. Even though her shyness and passive nature are seen as feminine, these qualities are still considered a hindrance during her marriage negotiations. Deepa goes through a similar experience when the discussion about her religious conversion takes place. She is not consulted about the topic but is rather told that it is imperative for her to change her identity. This decision made by others for her does not serve Deepa, rather the society in which they live so that everyone is seen as abiding citizens. Now it can be seen that in both Deepa and Yukiko's case, the very same silence that was rewarding them, now punishes by removing their agency. This shows that silence is not a choice but is a socially engineered pattern that is imbibed in females through repetition with the help of reward and restraint. This habituated silence results in exploitation of females in patriarchal society regardless of any cultural background.

The Makioka Sisters is set in pre-war Japan while *Independence* is set during the time India was struggling for independence and after it. While Japan is a homogenous country, India is heavily a culturally diverse country. Despite the above-mentioned differences, the women of these societies are expected to behave according to what is expected of them. Both these societies expect women

to maintain patriarchy by putting their own desires second and prioritizing the needs of their family and maintaining harmony among the family members. This is considered normal for women and is expected of them resulting in this behavior becoming repetitive due to its enforcement. If women continue to silently act this way, then they are rewarded by acknowledgement and approval and if they stray from it then they are punished in the form of disapproval. This explanation is clearly visible in the comparative analysis of Yukiko and Deepa.

Silence first earns approval

At times responsibilities are taken up silently which becomes a virtue if that behavior is accepted by the society. In *The Makioka Sisters* when Yukiko starts living in Ashiya longer, she takes on the responsibility of Etsuko. She silently takes on the duties of the child quietly as she feels that because of the loss of her father she has to live in her sister's house, so she should take on some household responsibilities so that she is not a burden to anyone. She obediently going on about her days taking care of Etsuko and fulfilling her responsibilities makes her family take notice of her dedication towards household duties. This silence is observed by her family as Yukiko's virtue which also becomes an example that she will become a good mother in future.

Similarly, in *Independence* when Deepa's father dies and the family is left with no means of earning, she obediently takes on the role of the breadwinner and starts the business of selling her mother's quilts in the new market. Without anyone asking her to do so, she silently resolves to get her family out of the financial distress they had been facing, a resolve which she succeeds in achieving. Deepa's family is finally relieved of the strain that their financial position was putting them in as a result of her quiet resolve. Even though there is a difference in cultures in both novels, both Yukiko and Deepa display their silence in a way that it is observed as a virtuous quality.

Both women are willing to fulfil their family expectations without showing any resistance upfront. This behaviour is perceived as their femininity. When their society approves such behaviour, with time it naturally becomes an extension of femininity rather than being a personal quality. In the end when this behaviour becomes an expectation from women, it gives other greater control over the choices of women than before.

Silence becomes a mechanism for control

Silence is not always treated as a personal quality but most of the time becomes a device through which women's lives can be controlled. Talks about Yukiko's marriage alliance shows how she is part of it but not actually has agency over her choices. Whenever a marriage prospect comes around for Yukiko, her family first makes it a point not to involve her at first. After going through all the necessary screening, when it finally comes to the point of *miai*, Yukiko is made a part of the process and then too, only as a bystander. All the necessary decisions about Yukiko are taken around her rather than with her. This loss of agency through silence only works in the favour of her family as they screen out the prospects that don't match her status which eventually has nothing to do for Yukiko's personal happiness.

In Deepa's case she was too made a bystander in the conversation about changing her religion, an aspect which dictated her identity since the day she was born. She is made a part of the discussion about it but she is not asked about her opinion on the matter, neither is she given any choice. In this situation, where the people around her take control of Deepa's voice, are the only ones who benefit from this as they have a bigger cause to fulfill for which they have to protect themselves.

In both cases people around Deepa and Yukiko benefit from taking over their agency as participation of both women is limited in decisions that affect their lives personally. Repeated

silence makes people take over their agency and silence becomes a trait that is valued by the society. Over time silence becomes a habit in women's conduct when such expectations are reinforced.

Silence becomes internalized discipline

When Yukiko and Deepa' portray silence as a form of repeatedly practiced behavior, it is interpreted as discipline by others around them. Yukiko stays silent during her mias. This silence is not a reaction to a particular situation but is a habitual conduct. Her repeated behaviour of staying silent in all such similar situations are perceived as a natural aspect to her personality. Instead this kind of behaviour is a result of the familial expectations surrounding her. This behavior of Yukiko shows how her discipline is practiced over the years to stay silent making it an acceptable social conduct.

Similarly, despite differences in cultural setting, discipline in Deepa is enforced in the form of silence. After Raza dies, Mamoon forces Deepa to come into a marriage alliance with him. To escape this situation and herself from Mamoon, she plans to leave Bangladesh and rejoin her family in India. Deepa relies on silence and restraint when she secretly prepares to run away from Bangladesh instead of openly confronting Mamoon. She negotiates with a threatening situation and protecting herself by relying on silence and constraint because it eventually became her habitual conduct. This way Deepa quietly executes her plan of leaving Bangladesh without any threat of Mamoon finding out which works in her favor as she is able to protect herself.

Deepa and Yukiko use silence for completely different purposes and situations but their actions demonstrate that when expectations are repeated they make women practice restraint as a natural

mode of conduct. Their restraint or silence is not a conscious choice or an act but repetition eventually turned it into a natural feminine trait.

Silence is mistaken for consent

While silence can be interpreted as a virtue, sometimes the same silence can also be mistaken for consent. In *The Makioka Sisters*, just after Yukiko's father's death when Tatsuo (Yukiko's brother-in-law) became the head of Makioka family, he decided that it was his most important responsibility that Yukiko gets married. He found a match for her that he deemed good. Yukiko did not like him but did not say anything. Misunderstanding her silence for consent, he moved forward with the marriage negotiations. Yukiko's silence which got interpreted to consent led to a huge rift between Yukiko and her elders. Because Yukiko later was adamant on not marrying that match, her family members disapproved of her behavior. In this situation silence became a punishment for Yukiko and put her in an unredeemable position because misinterpretation of her silence took away her agency as well as credibility.

On the other hand in the novel *Independence*, Deepa's silence also gets mistaken for consent when Jamini asks Deepa not to pursue singing so that Jamini could have sole ownership among the three sisters over that talent. Deepa does not say anything but later when she gets an opportunity to sing at a radio station she takes it which shows that while her silence was interpreted as a consent, she just chose it as a form of sacrifice at that point. But later in the face of opportunity, she took it.

While Yukiko's silence made her go against her family and risk disapproval, Deepa's silence made her sacrifice her passion for music. Their silent behaviours ended up being misinterpreted by their families.

Coming from different cultures and having different historical backgrounds, Yukiko and Deepa are analyzed under the lens of silence as a behavior which is practiced repeatedly so that it is displayed in a way that benefits those around them. This practiced behavior then earns them approval if it benefits the society they live in or disapproval if it doesn't benefit it. Silence is taught to these women by the act of regulation of behavior that suits their femininity and this directly links to gender performativity. When Deepa and Yukiko behaved in the way that displayed their femininity, their behavior was approved in the form of acceptance and when they strayed from that kind of behavior, they were punished in the form of disapproval. The same silence that rewarded them also controlled them in some situations where they lost their agency to voice their opinions on their own because others took away their voices. The silence of Yukiko and Deepa also got interpreted as a consent which not only takes away their agency but also benefits the people around them as it is socially convenient for them to interpret it according to their opinions and needs.

Conclusion

To sum up this paper proves that silence is produced in women through constraint. It is not innate and is imbibed in women by society through repetition. Thus, this paper clearly aligns with Butler's theory of gender performativity demonstrating that gender is not innate but is constituted through performativity. If men or women do not display the socially accepted behaviours, then they are repeatedly regulated by the society they live in. Silence is accepted and encouraged as a normative quality of an ideal woman. This paper analyzing the characters of Yukiko and Deepa demonstrates silence in different ways which shows how they embody gender performativity. The analysis of both of them together shows that despite different cultures, silence is a shared mechanism and society functions to enable silence in women.

Reading Yukiko or Deepa alone is not sufficient as they represent one particular culture individually. Reading them together gives the information on how different cultures treat women, how patriarchy is enabled and how these two mechanisms are similar or different in different cultures. Using the same logic on how silence is produced in women as a form of constraint through the approval or disapproval of their behaviours, a similarity in the treatment of Yukiko and Deepa is seen despite belonging to different cultures. Yukiko and Deepa are analyzed by highlighting how silence is expected of them and is rewarded when it is approved in their behavior. Sometimes silence is misunderstood as consent by the society when it needs to be benefitted and other times it can be controlling for the same reason. The comparison showcases that culturally and geographically both novels are different, yet both societies navigate through repeated approval and disapproval. The study therefore demonstrates a shared mechanism of gender regulation than a mere similarity between the characters.

This paper argues that femininity is regulated in women through subtle disciplinary practices. As silence is accepted as one of the foremost traits of an ideal woman, it is regulated by passive repetition of behaviours; the conducts which are socially accepted of a woman. These behaviours are conditioned through reward and punishment until they are fully imbibed. Theory needs literature as a backbone to showcase how it actually works. Through literature people get a clear idea of how a theory works and can be interpreted by them. Art is an imitation of the society we live in; we understand how society treats real women through fictional women. Not only that, we also get to understand how feminist theories are actually applicable in reality through the help of fiction.

Silence in a woman is not an absence of thought or a weakness of personal temperament, but a socially embedded behavior that serves patriarchal needs. Through a critical reading of Yukiko

and Deepa we understand how silence is observed, regulated and rewarded in different cultures. This opens new doors for further reading of this mechanism in other literary contexts and cultures.

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