Epitome : International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research
ISSN : 2395-6968

Tales of Silent Suffering in Amar Nath Prasad's "The Homeless House"

Gajanan Shankarrao Kale
Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
Indirabai Meghe Mahila
Mahavidyalaya, Near Irwin Square,
Camp post, Amaravati, Maharashtra.
PIN 444602
Email ID gajananraokale@gmail.com

ABSTRACT :

Amar Nath Prasad's free-verse poem, "The Homeless House" explores the patriarchal domination and the resulting plight of a young woman trapped in an oppressive marriage. This poem is part of a textbook, English for Competitive Examinations I & II, prepared for the syllabus of B.A. Part II , Semester IV of Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Maharashtra Through stark imagery and metaphor, the poem portrays the protagonist's emotional and physical confinement where the marital home becomes a "homeless house", a powerful symbol of alienation and her plights and persecutions. The poem imagines the themes of shattered dreams, lost freedom, and unfulfilled potential, amplifying the woman's suffering through the depiction of her dying child and the cold demeanor of her 'lifeless' husband. This paper analyzes Prasad's use of literary devices, such as the metaphor of the caged parrot and the withered flower to illuminate the destructive impact of conservative patriarchal traditions on a woman's life.

Amar Nath Prasad is an Indian poet and academic known for his metaphorical and socially conscious poetry that often contains themes of oppression, marginalization and human suffering. He is a prominent academic figure, heading the Department of English at J.P. University, Chapra.
Prasad's literary contribution is significant, with more than a dozen research papers and numerous poems published in various books, journals, magazines, and newspapers. Beyond his creative writing, he is the editor of the biannual journal, "Unheard Melody" , a Sarup & Sons Journal of English Literature. Dr. Prasad's extensive academic work includes authoring, editing and co-editing over thirty books of English literature. His published books include critical studies such as Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: A Critical Study, Indian Writing in English: Past and Present, and The Plays of Vijay Tendulkar: A Critical Exploration, as well as a Grammar book, A New Approach to English Grammar. Reflecting his linguistic versatility, he also writes in Hindi and Bhojpuri.

KEYWORDS:
Amar Nath Prasad, The Homeless House, Gender Oppression, Patriarchy, Alienation, Socially Conscious Poetry, Lost Freedom, Metaphor and Simile, Caged Parrot, Unfulfilled Desires

ISSN : 2395-6968

'The Homeless House' is a fervent indictment of the cruel conservative clutches of patriarchal domination that confine a woman both physically and emotionally. This poem forms part of Prasad's collection of poems entitled, *An Ark without Shore* (2022). The poem presents the protagonist's emotional distress, portraying her as "bitterly crying," "sighing, sometimes wailing" to such an extent that could "rend the heart of even a cruel criminal". Her weeping stems from her "shattered dream" and "uprooted fate. This poem is a deeply moving portrayal of a woman's sorrowful life trapped in a loveless and oppressive marriage. The poet uses simple yet powerful language to show how the woman's dreams of freedom and happiness have been shattered. Her tears, sighs and cries are so intense that even a hardened criminal would feel pity.

The protagonist of this poem once had a strong desire to live freely and joyfully, but her present situation is just the otherwise. In her husband's house, she is treated like an object, not a person. Her face is always covered, and she is not allowed to look out of the window. These lines reflect the suffocating control of patriarchal traditions. The poet compares her to a caged parrot and a morning flower plucked before it could bloom—both images showing how her spirit and youth have been crushed. On the other hand, the husband is described as a lifeless god, an unemployed man without joy, which adds to her misery. The woman's silence, her sunken eyes, and her sad gaze speak volumes about her sufferings. She was married at a very young age, before she could understand life or love. Now, she holds a weak and hungry child in her lap, who cries constantly and is close to death. This adds another layer of tragedy to her life.

The final line—"She is in the house / But a homeless house"—is especially powerful. It shows that although she lives in a physical home, she has no emotional shelter, no love, no peace. The

house is not a home for her. Through this poem, the poet gives voice to countless women who suffer silently in conservative households. The simplicity of the language makes the pain more real and relatable. The images and symbols of this poem leave a lasting impact on the reader's heart. The opening lines begin with a powerful image of a distressed woman:

"*Sitting alone*
She is bitterly crying
Sometimes sighing, sometimes
wailing
To such an extent
As to rend the heart of even a cruel
criminal.
She weeps upon her shattered
dream
Her uprooted fate
She remembers
How she possessed an ardent
desire
To live a life of freedom, joy"
(The Homeless House, 117)

Through these opening lines, the poet presents a woman in deep distress, whose tears and cries reflect the unbearable weight of her sorrow. Her pain is so intense that it could move even the

ISSN : 2395-6968

most heartless soul. It shows here the depth of her anguish. The theme centers on the loss of freedom, the collapse of youthful hope and the cruel reality of a life devoid of joy and dignity.

Prasad employs vivid imagery and emotive language to bring the woman's suffering to life. The repetition of actions—crying, sighing, wailing—creates a rhythm of despair, while phrases like "shattered dream" and "uprooted fate" metaphorically express the destruction of her aspirations. The contrast between her past desire for freedom and her present sorrow heightens the emotional impact. The poet's use of hyperbole, such as her cries affecting even a cruel criminal, emphasizes the extremity of her pain. Through these techniques, the poet crafts a deeply empathetic and haunting portrayal of a woman forsaken by society and circumstances.

These lines also present her past life full of dreams and aspirations and the present life full of subjugation and oppression. Perhaps this is why she is crying and bitterly weeping in the dark corner of the house. It reminds us of some of the silent suffering women of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande, Mahasweta Devi and Arundhati Roy who have to bear the brunt of patriarchal domination in a very cruel and callous manner.

Here this woman character has very close similarities to Jaya, the protagonist of *That Long Silence* by Shashi Deshpande. Jaya is also an Indian middle class woman who has to carry the burden of social restrictions. The living condition that her family provided her with came in conflict with her Individualistic upbringing. Her family is not prepared to allow a female child to enjoy absolute freedom. Throughout the novel Jaya fails to understand whether she lives her own life or whether she lives for someone else. Her silence is symptomatic of alienation and

apprehension rooted in every woman's soul in different forms. Mrs. Deshpande makes her position regarding the status of women quite clear in her novels through the protagonists, inner and outer journey. In the words of the novelist:

> "*Unstill women get over the handicaps imposed by society, outside and inner conditioning, the human race will not realize its full potential."(Thambe,Usha,128)*

The second stanza is more figurative and highly suggestive. The poet has woven his feelings and thoughts in the fabric of some beautiful metaphors and other poetic devices. The poet says:

"*In the cruel conservative clutches*
Of the patriarchal domination
She feels like a little parrot
Kept mercilessly in the cage
No light..no rays
She was a morning flower
Sleeping carelessly in the sweet
bower
But plucked untimely
And thrown to a lifeless god
An unemployed boy
Devoid of mirth and joy"
(The Homeless House,117)

ISSN : 2395-6968

Here we find a deeply evocative portrayal of a woman's emotional and social confinement within a patriarchal structure. The poet uses rich metaphors and tender imagery to express her loss of freedom and identity. She is likened to a parrot trapped in a cage, a symbol of beauty and voice silenced by merciless control. The absence of light and rays suggests a life devoid of hope, joy or possibility.

Her earlier existence is described as that of a morning flower resting in a sweet bower—an image of innocence, natural grace, and carefree living. But this serenity is abruptly shattered when she is plucked untimely and cast into a lifeless reality, represented by a log—emotionally inert and unresponsive. The mention of an unemployed boy, devoid of mirth and joy, adds another layer of tragedy, implying that her suffering is not just personal but shared within a broken social framework. In the *Foreword* of the book, *An Ark without Shore* from where the present poem has been taken, S. John Peter Josheph rightly observes:

> "As a writer with deep sense of social consciousness , Prasad depicts the suffering and painful experience of women in the male dominated Indian society in poems like "An Ark without Shore" and "The Homeless House". The poems show how several married women feel fettered and are treated as slaves in their married life."
>
> (Foreword, *An Ark without Shore*, II)

About the origin of the poem "An Ark without Shore" and the consequent poem "The Homeless House", the poet in the Preface muses :

> "The *seed of the poem was planted in my heart when I was walking one day in the morning near Rajendra Sarovar , Chhapra situated beside the railway crossing. I saw the*

ISSN : 2395-6968

dead body of a woman on the railway track and all of a sudden an imaginative story took root in the soil of my tortured heart and consequently my pen gave the shape of the poem". (Prasad, Amar Nath,Preface, VII)

In "The Homeless House", the poet has successfully used some beautiful metaphors and similes and contrasts to highlight the transformation from innocence to despair. The tone is somber and reflective and the language is simple yet powerful, making the reader feel the weight of the woman's silent suffering. Through this verse, the poet explores the societal norms that rob women of their rights and privileges and pair them with partners who themselves are victims of a joyless existence. It is a moving lament, a quiet protest, and a call for empathy. Here we see that the poet has brilliantly used the images and symbols of 'cage and parrot', the 'plucking of flowers' and the 'lifeless god'. As a matter of fact, in any great piece of literary work, metaphors play a very vital role. A literary work without metaphor or other poetic devices is as worthless as a flower without fragrance or a bird without feathers. Metaphors and similes have long been regarded as the lifeblood of poetic expression, allowing poets to transcend literal language and evoke deeper emotional and intellectual resonance. These figures of speech do not merely embellish verse; they shape the very way meaning is conveyed and experienced. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable, in order to suggest a resemblance or symbolic meaning. Unlike a simile, which uses "like" or "as" to make a comparison, a metaphor asserts that one thing is another. For example, "Time is a thief." It means time takes things away from us, like a thief does. On the other hand, a simile makes a comparison between two things using 'like' or 'as'. For example, "He is as brave as a lion." Here it means he is very brave, like a lion.

Aristotle, in his *Poetics,* emphasized the importance of metaphor as a mark of genius, stating that "the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor." He saw it not just as ornamentation but as a cognitive tool that reveals hidden connections. T.S. Eliot, too, recognized the transformative power of metaphor, arguing that poetry is not the expression of personality but an escape from it—achieved through the objective correlative, a concept deeply tied to metaphorical construction. Cleanth Brooks, a leading New Critic, viewed metaphor as central to poetic meaning, asserting that the language of poetry is the language of paradox, and that metaphor is the mechanism through which such paradoxes are resolved and enriched.

In modern criticism, scholars like I.A. Richards and Northrop Frye have explored how metaphors and similes function not only as aesthetic devices but as structural elements of thought. Richards, in his theory of the "tenor" and "vehicle," dissected the anatomy of metaphor to show how meaning is transferred and transformed. Frye, in his archetypal criticism, saw metaphor as a bridge between the literal and the mythic, enabling poetry to tap into universal patterns of human feelings . In brief metaphors and similes are not mere flourishes; they are the soul of poetic language. They allow poets to compress vast experiences into a single image, to suggest what cannot be said directly. Their role is both artistic and philosophical, shaping not only how poetry sounds but how it thinks. Based on these critical musings, the poetry of Amar Nath Prasad stands well. He never expresses his feelings and thoughts in a dry and monotonous way, rather knows the art of adding flavour which appeals to all alike.

The last stanza of the poem is even more appealing and figurative. The images of bud, flower and homeless house are very evocative :

"*Her sunken eyes. Her taciturnity,*

Her terrible gaze

Tell the tale of an unhappy marriage.

In a tender pre-mature age...

The bud is withered before it blooms.

She has in her lap

A hungry, weak child

Very rough, not mild

Slowly but steadily crying

On the verge of dying

She is in the house

But a homeless house."

(The Homeless House,118)

This stanza acts as a devastating summation of feminine tragedy and domestic despair, moving beyond description to deliver the poem's profound thematic analysis .The poet immediately uses imagery—"Her sunken eyes. Her taciturnity / her terrible gaze"—to transform the woman's physical appearance into a narrative of profound suffering. Her silence or taciturnity is not passive but a terribly active form of pain explicitly which shows her "unhappy marriage." The theme of lost wishes and dreams is rendered through a powerful, conventional metaphor in the

ISSN : 2395-6968

lines, "A bud is withered before it blooms." This comparison tells the tragedy of a life crushed in its tender pre-mature age, suggesting thwarted youth and promise. This personal sorrow is then intensified by the introduction of the child—a living symbol of the marriage's broken legacy. The child is described using brutally honest, tactile phrases like ,"Very rough, not mild" and heart-wrenching condition : "Slowly but steadily crying / On the verge of dying." The deliberate enjambment and heavy pauses (Caesura) breaks throughout the stanza. It reflects the halting, burdensome rhythm of the woman's life and her slow decline.

Ultimately, the poet reserves the most powerful device for the final lines: "She is in the house / But a homeless house." This paradox or oxymoron sums up the whole plights and persecutions of the deserted woman through the symbolism of home and house. It highlights the devastating chasm between the physical shelter (the house) and the spiritual or emotional security it should provide (a home). The final image is one of existential displacement—the woman is trapped in a domestic setting that offers no solace, underscoring that home is defined not by structure, but by love, safety, and happiness, all of which have been tragically stripped away. We know that there is a great difference between the words 'home 'and ‘house’. The house denotes the structure, bricks or outward appearance; but the term home suggests love and emotions, attachment and feelings to all the members of the family. We may differentiate these two terms by the following couplets: “A house is made of walls and beams/ but a home is made of love and dreams.” In other words we may say that a house is made by ‘hand’ but a home is made by ‘heart’. Thus the forsaken woman lives in a house made by ‘hand’ where she utterly lacks the elements of ‘heart' which is the soul of the structured house.

ISSN : 2395-6968

This poem by Amarnath Prasad reminds us of the well known poem, "Introduction" by Kamala Das. She asserts boldly and very candidly that after her marriage, she has to lead a life of slavery in her husband's new house. She has to live in restrictions posed by the conservative men of the family. Kamala Das felt suffocated in this new life where there is no liberty and individual identity. But she had a rebellious mind and so she used to wear a shirt and her brother's trousers. She also cut her hair short and ignored the womanliness. But all these were against the wishes of the family. The conservative men forbade her again and again, saying:

"*....Dress in sarees, be girl,*

Be wife, they said. Be embroider, be cook,

Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in, oh

Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit

On walls or peep in through our lace draped windows.(Das, Kamala,p.273).

Prasad's poem seems to be also influenced by Sylvia Plath who writes about sadness, motherhood, and mental struggle. Her poems are full of strong feelings and dark thoughts. Like Prasad's woman, Plath's speakers often feel trapped and hopeless. Her poem "Metaphors" shows the burden of pregnancy, and "Daddy" expresses anger and grief. Her words are sharp and emotional.Anne Sexton also writes about women who feel lost and broken. She uses simple language to show deep pain. Her poem "Her Kind" talks about women who do not fit into society's rules. Like Prasad's woman, Sexton's speaker feels like she does not belong. Similarly, Adrienne Rich writes about women's roles in society and the struggle to be free. Her poems are thoughtful and strong. She shows how women are often silenced and pushed aside. Like Prasad, she wants to give voice to women's suffering. All these poets, in their own way, speak about the

ISSN : 2395-6968

pain, silence, and strength of women. They use different styles, but their message is similar. They want the world to see how women suffer, and how they survive.

It is interesting to note that despite their fifty percent population. Indian women have been suffering from the sting of gender discrimination. Even today we see that from the cradle to the grave, women of our country have to abide by the rules and regulations mostly framed by patriarchal domination. In every sphere of life including the financial matter, this persecuted lot is governed and controlled by the so-called male hegemony. They are treated step motherly in the family and they are always given the task of all the household responsibilities like cooking, washing, brooming, rearing children and even observing religious fasting for the sake of their husband, children and house. The root of all these miseries faced by women lies in our past history and legends particularly the religious epics and scriptures which lay much stress on the submissiveness of the women to men. The great sage Manu, the law giver argues the superiority of men over women. He says that even if the husband is a man of bad nature or disloyal to his wife, he must be worshiped as a god by his wife.(Manusmriti,178).The Bible says that wives should be subject to their husbands:

> "*Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husband."*
>
> *(The Bible: Ephesians, 5:22-24).*

ISSN : 2395-6968

Saint Paul was also dead against freedom and equality of women. He was of the opinion: "*Let a woman learn in silence with full submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over man, she is to keep silent".*

(St. Paul, Timothy, 2:11-12)

Manu, the law maker and the writer of Manusmriti divided the Indian society in four varnas—Brahmins, Kshtriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras and the position of women, according to this book, is equal to those of Shudras and so like Shudras, the women were also devied various religious privileges. But in the Vedic era, the condition of women was to some extent satisfactory. Most of them like Savitri , Apala, Lilawati, Ansuiya and Arundhati were quite versed in various branches of knowledge and it is believed that the most of the parts of *Atharvaveda* have been written by these women scholars.

Apart from the above religious restrictions imposed on the women by men, some political, historical and cultural factors also made the women subservient to male hegemony. In the middle period, we often see the repeated invasions by foreign rulers. During the war, the sons generally took part and the girls who were supposed to be weaker than boys were debarred from war. So sons were preferred to girls. The Sati system the purdah system the child marriage and ban on widow marriage and ban on widow marriage are some of the other causes that lowered the status of women.

To sum up , Amarnath Prasad's poem, "The Homeless House," is a realistic poem depicting the subjugation and oppression of women under patriarchal society. The critical study shows that this poem isn't just about one person's sadness; it's a deep criticism of the social rules that keep

ISSN : 2395-6968

women trapped. The main idea of the "homeless house" captures this perfectly: a real home that should be a safe place has instead become a mental prison where the wife has lost her identity and her spirit.

Works Cited:

Prasad, Amar Nath. "The Homeless House". *An Ark without Shore* . Raipur: Aditi Publication.2022. P.19-20.

Board of Editors. "The Homeless House". *English for Competitive Examination*. Textbook for B.A. Part II , Sem. III & IV.(Sant Gadge Baba Amaravati University, Amaravati.). Jalgaon: Prashant Publications. 2025. P.116

Saint Paul. *Holy Bible* . Timothy, 2:11-12). Crossway Books.2018.

Thambe, Usha."Shashi Deshpande as a Feminist and Novelist". *Indian English Fiction.* Delhi : B R Publishing Corporation, 1994, p-128.

Das, Kamala. "An Introduction". V.K.Gokak edited book, *The Golden Treasury of Indo Anglian Poetry*.New Delhi : Sahitya Akademy. 2005, P.272.

Manu. *Manusmriti.* Varanasi: Thakur Prasad Book. Chapter 5. 1997. P.198.

ISSN : 2395-6968