

# The Narrative of Suffering and Resilience: Portrayal in Malika Amar Shaikh's *I Want to Destroy Myself: A Memoir*

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## Abstract

Malika Amar Shaikh's, *I Want to Destroy Myself: A Memoir* is a powerful account of her struggles in a patriarchal society. Originally written in Marathi as *Mala Uddhvasta Vhaychay* and later translated by Jerry Pinto, it exposes her personal battles with abuse, neglect, and despair, particularly in her marriage to Namdeo Dhasal. This paper examines her resilience and determination to reclaim her identity, focusing on gender issues and how personal narratives shape self-identity, supported by textual analysis.

**Keywords:** Freedom; Narrative; Resilience; Self; Struggle.

## Introduction

Malika Amar Shaikh (born 16 February 1957) is a prominent literary voice from Maharashtra who has scripted a position in the historical pages of Indian literature. A highly acclaimed Marathi female writer whose exceptional talent and dedication to her craft have not gone unnoticed, as she has received critical acclaim for her inspiring poetry collections and her contributions to short stories and essays. Her work is genuinely motivating and a testimonial to her extraordinary talent and proficiency in the world of literature.

*Mala Uddhvasta Vhaaychay* (*I Want to Destroy Myself...*) initially published in 1984, stirred the literary community by exposing her personal struggles and humiliating experiences at barely thirty years old. It is intriguing to consider how a work that had received such widespread acclaim swiftly faded away, only to resurface years later with incredible spirit. It went un-

noticed for a considerable amount of time until Jerry Pinto came across a copy in 2016 and decided to translate it. In this resurfaced version, Shaikh refuses to let discrimination and oppression silence her voice. Blending personal anecdotes with sharp political commentary, she exposes the pervasive influence of patriarchal hegemony. The work stands as a feminist testimony, portraying feminine sensibility and constructing notions of self and identity.

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Shaikh fearlessly bares her soul, revealing intimate and painful experiences while highlighting the socioeconomic realities of her society and the challenges of being a woman. Through her narrative, she captures the struggle and resilience required to carve out one's identity in a patriarchal world. Her exploration of cultural and societal structures illustrates their profound impact on one's sense of self. Women's life narratives, like hers, reflect the battle to dismantle the barriers of silence imposed by cultural and historical forces. According to Shougat Dasgupta,

*I Want to Destroy Myself*, as the title suggests, is a howl of pain. Shaikh is consumed by love. There is some artistic frustration, but she knows Dhasal was the greater poet. It is not Dhasal she is angry with; it is herself, for allowing herself to become subsumed by love. This then, as she says, is a story of defeat. But it is also a story of resilience, of turning defeat by virtue of survival into something that looks like victory. (Dasgupta, par. 7)

*I Want to Destroy Myself...* is a story of perseverance founded on a struggle that helps her to carve out an identity. She encountered a myriad of obstacles, such as inadequate education, instability, poverty, internal struggles, and gender-based discrimination. All of this, taken together, creates narratives of trauma, bravery, and new female subjectivities (Singh 56).

However, the question arises, why do people narrate their personal experiences? Our personal experiences are not just the result of our individual choices and actions; they are deeply influenced by the larger socio-cultural and historical forces that shape the world around us. The narrated experiences are not just mere entertainment but essential in shaping our understanding of the world. As we know, the self is dynamic, and by organising our experiences, we develop a more profound sense of self-awareness.

Realising one's true self is like a continuous journey where each experience, even the difficult ones, helps one to build a character. However, it is crucial to understand that these narratives don't arise in isolation; they are deeply shaped by the cultural and contextual landscapes that frame our lives. Therefore, for our stories to be fully comprehensible and relatable, they need to be coherent within our cultural schema.

Then, the most apparent query arises when referring to it as a "narrative of resilience": What exactly is resilience? The idea or concept of resilience is rooted in the Latin verb *resilire*, which means *to leap back*. As per the Oxford Dictionary of English, *resilience* means *being able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions* (Soanes & Stevenson 1498). The American Psychological Association defines *resilience* as "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress." (American Psychological Association). In other words, resilience is not just the ability to survive difficult circumstances but also the ability to recover and prosper in the face of adversity. Coping with stress and adversity can be an overwhelming task that most of us face at some point in our lives. It can come from various sources, such as familial or relationship problems, health issues, and financial concerns. Irrespective of the source, stress can profoundly impact physical health and mental well-being, leaving us feeling emotionally drained and socially disconnected. Resilience is not something that only a few people possess. It is a trait found in almost everyone and can be cultivated by anyone willing to put in the effort. It can be seen as a continuous process of growth and improvement. Recognising that resilience is not a destination but a continuing journey of personal growth and development is critical.

Shaikh has faced numerous hurdles throughout her life, from financial instability and gender inequality to limited access to education. She faced an uphill battle through every step. However, despite these obstacles, she never succumbed to defeat. She faced her stress and adversity head-on and rose above it. Shaikh discusses her marginalisation in her marriage. She was constantly subjected to mental and physical violence, Dhasal's illicit relationships with prostitutes, his contempt for household obligations, and his excessively condescending attitude towards her. She navigates through crises and balances negative and good emotions. Her resilience, on the other hand, is learned rather than innate. Throughout, the narrative emphasises her resilient spirit, which is essential to the autobiography's theme of resilience.

Her parents, Shahir Amar Shaikh and Kusum Jaykar played a crucial role

in her life. Deeply committed to communism, they believed in a classless society and rejected any form of discrimination based on caste or religion. As a result, she was raised in an environment free from the constraints of such divisive labels. From a young age, she had a profound love for literature; devouring plays to poetry in her spare time. Her father, a well-known Marathi folk singer and trade union leader, doted on her and pampered her as an ailing child. Despite being unwell from birth, she was enrolled in school, though the doctor had advised her parents to ensure she didn't cry until she turned fourteen. Throughout her childhood, she faced the challenges of being a sick child, often leaving her feeling isolated and alone. However, she found solace and companionship in the literary heroines of the novels she avidly read. She reflected on how these literary characters played a significant role in her life by giving her a sense of connection. It was like a foreshadowing of her destiny, in which she compares herself to the heroines of a tragic novel. She writes much later:

And so, I realized an unnamed desire from my childhood. I was now a heroine in a tragic novel. Sorrow would be my lifelong companion, its grip vice-like upon my wrist. (Shaikh 163)

At the tender age of seven, she stumbled upon a passion that would shape her life forever: poetry. It quickly became her preferred mode of self-expression, allowing her to articulate her innermost thoughts and emotions easily.

“Hirve, hirve gawat, phule bhovti jamat  
Jaate mi, maaghaari yete mi...ramat, gamat  
(In the green green foliage, the flowers dance  
There will I follow; there will I prance.)” (Shaikh 32)

Shaikh sketches a joyous phase of her life as a pampered child despite her health issues. She encapsulates her adolescent years in brilliant colours, full of joy and without care. In the words of Jerry Pinto, “Malika Amar Shaikh is describing the Garden of Eden that was her childhood” (Pinto 9). Her transformation from a buoyant youth to a resilient woman symbolizes her path towards self-realization and discovery. She poetically narrates,

The deep solemn rear of the sea dissolves me. Nothing remains. I am no one. And then suddenly I feel a deep yearning. A formless, limitless void...I am part of all this, this worldless, happy, huge, truth. I want to dissolve into it. (Shaikh 152)

She is straightforward and honest in communication and displays an absolute lack of hypocrisy, and remains grounded in her sense of self.

I peeled off the layers of deceit and falsity and hypocrisy from the self as one might peel a banana. My real femininity was now primitive, unashamed, intense, aggressive; but also, sensitive. (Shaikh 150-151)

She was aware that the world was never against her, but she could not shake off the feeling of being trapped in a reality of her own making, which caused her immense pain and suffering. She grappled with a sense of being exploited and mistreated by those around her, and the weight of this burden made it seem like there was no escape from the turmoil. Her hard-hitting narrative delves deeper into her inner thoughts and painful experiences. The loss of her father had left an indelible mark on her spirit, and she had been forced to confront a cruel and unforgiving reality. She writes:

With Bhai's departure came the days of darkness. Our lives were now like a stage when the performance is over, a deserted theatre when the viewers have departed. (Shaikh 48)

Her father's untimely passing had a hard impact on her family. His passing created an atmosphere of melancholy and muted emotions. She recalls the heavy weight of grief that settled over the household. The atmosphere was one of melancholy and muted emotions. Her mother experienced a breakdown and, somewhere, lost her personality. Not a single individual could fully comprehend the depth of her mother's anguish and misery.

The first time she saw Namdeo Dhasal, she was immediately captivated by his raw energy and unwavering authenticity. There was an inexplicable magnetism to his demeanour and the energy he emanated, which had already garnered widespread recognition in the Marathi poetry community with his debut collection of verses, *Golpitha*. Shaikh sketches him as "masculine, maverick, sensitive, a poet to love and to love me." (Shaikh 69). She could not resist her feelings of love for Dhasal and impulsively agreed to marry him at the age of seventeen. She was too young, and her elder sister vehemently objected to the match. Despite their social status differences, she was determined to be with him. Upon receiving an invitation from Namdeo to visit his house, his family was left aghast and appalled by the living conditions they witnessed. Although mildly disheartened, she was not taken aback by the physical limitations and circumstances of the

chawl, as they were to be expected (Singh 58).

I was in my own world but Aai and Didi were horrified. That such a cosseted child should come to a place like this to live seemed incredible to them. And then our cultural backgrounds were so different. What if he were a poet? And much more of the same. (Shaikh 175)

There were stark differences between the families of Namdeo Dhasal and Shaikh regarding their cultural and educational backgrounds. Namdeo, being a Mahar by caste, was the only child of ignorant parents who could not distinguish between good and wrong. Despite his flaws and missteps, his parents did not seem to mind and even sometimes encouraged him. Namdeo was an impassioned revolutionary, always ready for a confrontation, which was a highly admired trait among the members of the Dalit Panther movement.

Even though Shaikh and Dhasal had only been acquainted for three months, her family approved of a wedding date set for June 1st. According to Shaikh, she had already given up her virginity to him at that point. As Dhasal told her, "It's fun to do it before the wedding. Afterwards, it becomes a matter of routine" (Shaikh 80). Furthermore, one night, after taking her out for a movie and supper and giving her first taste of alcohol, Dhasal asks, 'Giving?' 'What?' Shaikh responds. "'Your womanhood.' And before I could answer, he had his hand over my mouth." It hurt so much, Shaikh reports. "I wondered how anyone could get any joy out of this circus... But I liked surrendering my body to the man I loved" (Shaikh 80). The blurred lines of consent in their relationship raise questions about Dhasal's actions and shed light on societal norms and power dynamics that perpetuate such behaviour. This unsettling portrayal challenges readers to confront the complexities of sexual consent and its impact on individuals within intimate relationships.

Namdeo knew it would be pretty challenging for her to live in their 'terrible neighbourhood', prompting him to rent a house in Bandra (Singh 59). Their wedding was humble and unpretentious, with no lavishness or ostentation. Both Namdeo and his wife shared a preference for simplicity and modesty. However, when they relocated to Pune, Shaikh voiced her disappointment with the political party members who had taken up residence in their home. For a newlywed couple, the lack of privacy was challenging to navigate. Her experiences indicate that she was married to a man from a vastly different background than her own. After relocat-

ing to a new home, she shared personal insights about their relationship, highlighting the difficulties women can face in losing themselves in the illusion of matrimony. One of the most challenging aspects of this transition is the loss of the concept of “home” as these women embark on a new journey as someone’s spouse in an unfamiliar place.

On their wedding night, “[un]invited, a whole lot of Namdeo’s friends, poets, party functionaries and the like came over” (Shaikh 83). It was always up to Shaikh to keep the tea flowing because the visitors always seemed to stay. Dhasal, on the other hand, had a prominent aura and refused to relinquish the vivid existence he described in *Golpitha*, which was filled with scenes of brawls, wild parties and prostitution. He never changed, although it left her afflicted with venereal disease. She writes: “On both sides of my pubic area, boils erupted. Pus began to form inside... My body filled me with revulsion now” (Shaikh 127).

She narrates the suffering and traumatic experiences faced by Namdeo’s mother highlighting the experiences of Dalit women who are often marginalized and oppressed in Indian society. She vividly paints Namdeo’s mother’s struggle with silent suffering. She challenges the patriarchal system, which confines women to domestic responsibilities and prevents them from helping others. The sacrifices made by both women in Namdeo’s life become second nature to society, but the author emphasizes the need for equality in different phases of development. In a way, her narrative challenges societal norms regarding the perception and treatment of women and broadens her outlook concerning her perception, comprehension, and evaluation of issues that impact her life. The narrative provides a unique perspective on the experiences and struggles of women from diverse backgrounds and walks of life, highlighting the resilience of womanhood. This collectivity, or what Bakhtin calls the “heteroglossic” element of women’s autobiography, gave women autobiographers a sense of empowerment (Bakhtin 352).

Shaikh chronicles the dark phase of her life after tying the knot with Namdeo Dhasal. She writes with unabashed honesty her poignant and unfiltered account of her struggle. Dhasal was a remarkable individual known for his unwavering political activism and groundbreaking contributions to Marathi Literature. He was steadfastly committed to social justice and equality, as seen by his foundation of the Dalit Panther organisation and his compelling poetry. Unfortunately, although his poetic works brought to the fore the numerous struggles faced by Dalit women, including those who were coerced into engaging in sex work or subjected to oppression as

mothers, the poet himself was unable to treat his own spouse fairly. She reveals the stark contrast between his public persona as a champion of the oppressed and his private actions as a perpetrator of oppression within his household. Her narrative exposes the hypocrisy and contradictions within social activism, shedding light on the complexities of power dynamics and gender inequality even within seemingly progressive movements. Despite his unwavering devotion to providing aid and support to those in need within his family and the Kamathipura community, his comrades in the political party were notably apathetic or even antagonistic towards his wife's fundamental needs and well-being.

If there were no money for a political programme, our tape recorder, my ornaments, would all end up with the Marwadi [...] he owed everyone and I was caught in the trap of his indebtedness. (Shaikh 159)

A healthy marriage provides couples with psychological, emotional, social, economic and spiritual support that promotes quality of life in an individual life (Nwamadi 39). She describes the economic instability which she faced throughout most of her marriage. Socioeconomic status plays a vital role in marital stability which was absent throughout her marriage. She narrates an incident where Namdeo Dhasal had organized a fifteen-day study circle to which selected people had been invited. However, the sponsor abruptly withdrew at the last minute, leaving Namdeo in a quandary. He asked Shaikh for the jewellery her father had made for her, and she took it off and gave it to him without hesitation. Even though she was praised for her selflessness, nobody noticed the sentimental value of those precious pieces of jewellery. She highlights how Namdeo carelessly handled money and gave little thought to improving the family's condition.

If he got hold of two hundred rupees, he'd spend a hundred on books. I would sit with my head in my hands. No kerosene in the house, no provisions in the kitchen; could we eat books? (Shaikh 104)

In a way, she critiques his thought process as, according to him, the middle-class status was like a bourgeois dream. She had no idea where the money was coming from and where it was going. Namdeo harboured certain beliefs regarding women, evident in his actions towards his wife, Shaikh, which can be seen following the birth of their son. He became distant and no longer confided with her about his personal and political



life. He was rarely home, leaving her to shoulder the full responsibility of raising their son and caring for the household. She writes

When we ran out of rations, I would make a nice big pile of *Soviet Land* magazines and sell them. From the proceeds, I would buy tea, sugar, wheat and the other necessities of life. (Shaikh 102)

She even mentions Dhasal's complete lack of emotional empathy for her as a husband. Shaikh, a young mother, had little sympathy or assistance from her husband. She resents that society has created an 'idealistic' view of motherhood. Shaikh's poignant reflection on the absence of eternal love for her child resonates deeply. The excruciating pain she endured during labour contractions, which left her close to comatose, shattered any illusions of a blissful maternal bond. Understandably, she refused to subject herself to such agonising bodily suffering again, especially when Dhasal, her child's father, seemed indifferent to her plight. Namdeo, an entirely different guy, became a masculine chauvinist, a missing spouse and father who dabbled in drinking, womanising, and violence. She longed for the days when they were filled with love and affection, but now all she could see was a monster in her husband. The emotional and physical scars left her questioning her worth and trapped in a cycle of fear and despair. She had once admired his boundless passion and an optimistic view of life, and his idealism initially enticed her towards him. Despite her attempts to hold on to her ideals and dreams, he seemed unrelenting in his efforts to crush them at every turn. He had assaulted and tried to keep her apart from her only son. Her soul was fractured, and she felt helpless. She deliberates, "My mind, my body, my spirit was devastated. Each moment was like a death" (Shaikh 119).

The issue of violence, regardless of its form, is a severe social and psychological problem whose repercussions are grave and far-reaching, impacting not only the victim but also the perpetrator. Domestic violence can manifest in various forms, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. The abuser often manipulates and controls their victims through fear and intimidation, leaving lasting psychological scars. This pervasive issue transcends socio-economic boundaries and cultural norms, affecting individuals from all walks of life. Domestic violence manifests as physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, either active or passive. Victims often endure low self-esteem and negative emotions like anxiety and despair, resulting in physical and psychological harm, long-term stress, and threats to their safety (Browne & Herbert, 8-9).

She describes how her perspective on marriage has evolved. She described herself as a hopeless romantic who searched for love but was met with a mirage in the heart of the desert. She also describes how society has tolerated domestic violence as a normal part of life. She recounts an instance in which Namdeo raised his hand at her. She went to the police station to file a report about Namdeo hitting her, and she needed protection. 'So, are you planning a second marriage?' was the dismissive reply. She writes,

I felt like hitting him but I also wanted to hit myself for having come to the wrong place. This is the ugly face of patriarchal culture. How could this filthy impotent system ensure justice for me? (Shaikh 167)

Throughout her arduous journey, she has skilfully navigated a path of introspection and self-discovery. Her experiences with painful circumstances and distressing situations sometimes threatened to overwhelm her, but she overcame those moments with unwavering resilience. Her story is an internal struggle that raged within her for years. She finally achieves a feeling of self-realisation through self-employment, which also provides her with some economic independence. She emphasises the need for a woman to be financially independent to establish her social niche. Her emphasis on the value of money, which may occasionally hinder happiness, is evident throughout the narrative.

As soon as I got to Mumbai, I began to look for a job. I searched for a long time until Dadasaheb Rupwate got me a job in eight days. Film City...the first step of my dream ladder. (Shaikh 131)

Her road to self-liberation began with her rejection of the notion of males as the supreme authority. Namdeo used his patriarchal authority to separate her from her child - the worst thing anyone can do to a mother. The depths of her love and resilience pushed her to fight back against the heart-wrenching brutality inflicted upon her by Namdeo.

After three or four years of torture, I decided to overthrow those inhibitions, to do away with my shyness and sacrifices. I had not slept well in years. There was a poisonous reality standing in the middle of my life with its arms stretched out. (Shaikh 161)

She fought back against the brutality inflicted on her by her spouse. She stood up to abusive behaviour. She refused to be a victim of patriarchal hegemony and instead chose to fight for her rights. Through her struggle against oppression and silent suffering, she emerged victorious with

a hopeful outlook on life. Although it was difficult for her to distance herself from her child, she recognised that it was necessary to assert her dignity and protect her wellbeing. Despite facing restless nights without food and experiencing moments of despair, she remained steadfast in her commitment to her self-worth and never once considered returning to her husband. Her unwavering determination is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. She writes, "Not just Namdeo, the social system in which we live was also responsible for what I had to suffer" (Shaikh 195).

As she expounded on Namdeo's political ideologies, she is able to highlight the concepts of 'masculinity' that were firmly embedded into the Dalit Panther Movement of the 1970s. She highlights Namdeo's politics touching on the prevailing notions of 'masculinity' seen in the Dalit Panther Movement during the 1970s. Women were frequently relegated to 'mothers' and 'wives' roles and were not given equal attention. Men were usually seen as the focal point and hero in any endeavour, while women were seen as facilitators of their success. She depicts how her identity was lost. Despite being a poet, she was primarily addressed as Namdeo Dhasal's wife. Additionally, she shares how she was silenced and even subjected to physical abuse for daring to speak out about their political and personal lives, underscoring that her role as a wife and woman was constantly emphasized. She writes:

I was a 'poetess'. I was made aware of my femaleness. This angered me greatly. Namdeo Dhasal's wife, was this my only identity? Why? (Shaikh 173)

As Simone de Beauvoir asserts in *The Second Sex*, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (293), underscoring how Shaikh's identity is shaped not by essence but by social constructs that continually reduce her to someone's wife.

Through her work, she emphasises how men and women, two facets of humanity, are incomplete without the other. However, a woman must always please the male ego by suppressing herself and accepting the man's supremacy. A woman must constantly sacrifice her family, goals, herself, and individuality for a relationship to thrive. She emphasises how society operates as a barrier to women's independence, preventing them from acting independently. This resonates with Judith Butler's argument in her essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" that "gender is in no way a stable identity

or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (519). Shaikh’s refusal to perform emotional labor and domestic conformity challenges these repetitive acts and norms.

Shaikh offers a captivating and nuanced perspective on Dhasal, skilfully portraying his complex character without vilifying him. Nevertheless, she does shed light on his evil tendencies, highlighting a disconnect between his professed values and actual behaviour. It is clear that Shaikh’s relationship with Dhasal was fraught with pain and difficulty, and she bravely shares her own story of struggle and heartbreak. To his credit, Namdeo commendably supports her right to speak her truth. Despite the artistic disagreement, she recognizes the poetic talent of Dhasal and even considers him a superior poet. While she does not resent him, Shaikh expresses disappointment in herself for falling in love with him. Ultimately, her story is one of defeat, but it is also an inspiring tale of overcoming adversity and persevering to achieve a measure of success.

She describes how her situation and suffering made her devoid of self-confidence. There was a period she was drifting away from everyone, and her creative output had almost stagnated. She portrays her loneliness through the late walk through the empty, deserted street. She consistently tries to escape the prison created by herself and society. To break it, she got indulged in drinking beer and smoking cigarettes. In a way, she subconsciously was destroying herself.

She was defeated at every turn. Nevertheless, despite all the defeats, she never stopped loving life. She alludes to the famous painter Vincent Van Gogh’s life and his struggles. She read a book about him with the line, “I never try to free myself from sorrow because very often it is sorrow that allows an artist to express himself with all his power” (Shaikh 149). However, all this defeat made her rich in experience. It made her realise her strengths and her limitations. In a way, she got to know more about herself. She started turning into a rebel. She became hot-tempered and obstinate. She learnt the harsh reality of happiness not being served on the plate but fighting for it and taking it as a challenge. She started living her life according to her own choices. She describes how she would go to the pictures even when starving.

I watched Satyajit Ray’s *Shatranj ke Khiladi* alone in an empty theatre. I wept through *Sahib, Biwi aur Ghulam*, *Bandini*, and *Pyasa*. I spent two days in a state of distress after each one. My loneliness

was my only companion. (Shaikh 170)

Sharing vulnerable experiences and opening up about one's struggle is challenging, but keeping it to oneself can ultimately lead to more harm than good. Shaikh has been able to share her personal journey towards discovering her true self. It involved a shift from naivety and passivity to a deeper understanding of her identity. Our identity is a multifaceted construct moulded by various elements, including our self-image in relation to those around us, communal beliefs, and societal standards. This dynamic interplay resonates with Rosi Braidotti's notion of the subject as "not a monolithic essence defined once and for all but rather the site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences, defined by overlapping variables such as class, race, age, lifestyle, sexual preference, and others,"(4).

Shaikh's evolving self is forged in the tension between gender, caste, memory, and resistance. demonstrating that personal identity is not static but is continually reconstituted through social and political tensions. It is a powerful declaration of self, which can bring about a sense of liberation. She discovered that writing can be a therapeutic process that helps individuals heal and reflect on their experiences. In a conversation with Mithila Phadke, she opines:

I need to express it immediately, or I don't feel at peace. I cannot keep it all bottled up inside. I react very quickly to things. You can say this might be a sort of self-defence mechanism that I have ... If I hadn't written about what was taking place in my life at that point of time I would have suffocated. Writing is my means of expression. Like I smile, cry or sing, I write. It is part of me. (12)

Her writing is simple yet powerful. Her use of fragmented sentences, almost as if she is trying to teach, captivates readers. Nonetheless, her autobiography is noteworthy for the way she tackled essential issues surrounding women's rights and writings, subjects that often get lost amid endless debates. Her self-portrait emerges slowly over the course of the narrative. Her close relationship with her husband clearly impacted how she saw herself and her place in the world, as their lives are typically intertwined. Despite this, she maintained a steadfast sense of integrity, humility, and bravery throughout her journey. She was never afraid to share her struggles and vulnerabilities, which made her narrative all the more powerful and relatable. She tells some of the experiences with a bitter tone, even though she is not resigned to her agony. She endured a plethora of

difficulties, both internal and external, that had a profound impact on her mental and emotional well-being.

These challenges testify to the ongoing power struggle between the patriarchal system and women's agency. Her unwavering resilience helps her to break the shackles of societal and cultural constraints and to attain self-realization. Through her struggles, she realised she had no other option, but to fight against the oppressive patriarchal mindset. Her autobiography serves as a form of resistance against the patriarchal system that oppressed her for so long. It is a powerful display of her resilience in the face of adversity. Her narrative clearly illustrates that women can fight for their rights and freedom in a world still dominated by patriarchal norms. It is a narrative of an [extra] ordinary woman navigating a complicated world, struggling for dignity, in the quest for her own self and identity.

At first glance, her situation may appear negative on a superficial level, but delving deeper, one witnesses the determination and fortitude that Shaikh embodies. She steadfastly refuses to allow any obstacle, whether a person or circumstance, to impede her progress. Her perspective towards life encompasses a complex amalgamation of apprehension and indignation. However, this intricate outlook is firmly rooted in an unwavering determination to persist and thrive despite any obstacles encountered along the way. Resilience is the driving force that underpins Shaikh's account, shaping and defining her consciousness and existence. Her narrative is not limited to her individual experience but instead encompasses a broader interpretation of resilience which keeps her story relevant and alive. Her voice remains strong and independent, focusing on her experiences and her distinctive viewpoint of the world.

Her remarkable strength of character showcases her beliefs and values. At the same time, her independent and critical thinking allows her to set her narrative with a remarkable level of transparency and willingness to discuss her flaws and shortcomings without any hesitation openly. Through her candid and vividly detailed descriptions, she makes the readers part of her journey, showcasing her struggles. At the same time, she realizes her entitlement and acknowledges her privileged status by saying: "Because I could write, I have chosen to, ignoring the possibility that I will be mocked or laughed at. What do those who cannot write, do? And what can I do for them?" (Shaikh 173)

Shaikh's journey reflects the existential struggle of a woman navigating patriarchal structures where she is persistently defined in relation to her

husband. The feminist theories of Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and Rosi Braidotti help illuminate her resistance and transformation. Her autobiography becomes a performative space where imposed identities are subverted, and a fluid, dynamic self is forged through personal pain and socio-political awareness.

To conclude, the narrative is exceptionally noteworthy for its intriguing self-depiction, the captivating portrayal of her husband, the captivating style of narration, and the inartificial dialect. Life has been a continuous battle for her, and she stood tall, writing her own songs and weaving the scarred words on the fabric of life. The traumas she experienced helped in the emergence of a resilient self, and by penning down her autobiography, she realised how much she changed as a person. Her distinctive style and method of narration highlight that writing was a form of catharsis for her. The narrative reveals the nuances of her struggle and how her resilience paves the way to finding her true self. It also highlights gender issues and narrative voices, hoping that more women will leave the prison they created for themselves. She writes:

I hope this book will help at least one woman find her face, that it might help her find her way out of her circumscribed and stuffy world. For this one woman's sake, I am willing to bear whatever criticism patriarchal society heaps upon me. (Shaikh 200)

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