Loneliness as Empowering and Enduring: Challenging the Concept of Loneliness in Adrienne Rich’s Song

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Abstract: Loneliness has become a significant concept in many of the literary works and it has its own dimensions to be comprehended. Loneliness can lead to emotional imbalance and individuals have to face the consequences of loneliness. Loneliness also paves the way for a positive and independent life. This paper attempts to explore how a woman challenges the concept of loneliness through her actions and determination in relation to the poem titled Song written by Adrienne Rich. It also analyses how a woman’s loneliness can be empowering and enduring for her survival.

Keywords: Empowering, loneliness, poet, speaker, woman.

Introduction

Adrienne Rich is considered to be a remarkable literary figure and her works have created a huge and powerful impact on the readers. She is regarded as one of the mostly celebrated poets of the twentieth century. The poem Song is published in Rich’s poetry collection Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972. This poetry collection has paved the way for a lot of discussions in relation to the problems encountered by women. It explores aspects like ‘quest for female identity’, ‘hardships faced by women’, ‘marriage’, ‘motherhood’, ‘woman’s consciousness’, etc. The poem titled Song discusses the realistic condition of a woman who is destined to lead an isolated life. Rich focuses on the concept of loneliness or isolation that happens in a woman’s life.

Challenging the Concept of Loneliness

The poem showcases the suffering of a woman who is moving through the path of loneliness and the poem can be regarded as a work based on the personal experience of Rich. The speaker of the poem “experiences loneliness on a daily basis” (S., & Rajaram 738). She strives hard to overcome her loneliness and thus, through her condition, instructs the whole world, how bold a woman has to be in a specific society.

A plethora of images are represented by the poet to suggest the loneliness encountered by the speaker. These images are also employed to signify concepts like ‘depression’ and ‘confusion’. The woman “accepts the loneliness which she is undergoing” and aspires to reach high, to match her own expectations of life, by overcoming all the obstacles and facing challenges (S., & Rajaram 738).

The speaker employs the picture of “an airplane”, which is “an inanimate object” to mention her aspect of “loneliness” (S., & Rajaram). It points to the fact that “women should always be firm” in achieving their goals (S., & Rajaram). Their mentality has to be shaped in such a way that they need to continue working when they fail once. The speaker mentions how women can be lonely inside and outside the family. She points to the fact that if women are destined to be lonely, then they have to choose their own methods to develop their personality and to reconstruct their own minds.

The speaker is depicted as a woman who is very strong, courageous, confident and determined. She is not ready to interact with her friends and therefore, she continues her journey. The woman moves on with her complete strength to reach her destination. She intends to explore each and every aspect of the universe by celebrating her loneliness. She has her own desires to achieve in her life, even though she is going through the state of loneliness.

Human beings normally need to communicate with each other so that one’s own feelings, problems, experiences, etc. can be shared. But the speaker is alone as there is no one to interact with her. The complete isolation of a woman is clearly witnessed here. There exists no affection, respect or concern for the woman. She is not surrounded by people. She has to survive and exist on her own. It is moreover evident, if the readers try to comprehend her poetic voyage:

If I’m lonely
it’s with the rowboat ice-fast on the shore
Loneliness is viewed in a positive way by the speaker. She begins to get “empowered” (S., & Rajaram 741). Loneliness adds more essence to her life by transforming her into a passionate woman. The speaker’s loneliness is therefore, a source of energy, positivity and warmth. Loneliness leads to continuity of life and improves performance of the individual day by day. The loneliness experienced by the woman is connected to her independence and self-awareness. She starts to realise the actual potential hidden within her.

The speaker’s loneliness helps her to establish her own identity. Loneliness doesn’t disappoint her or eliminate her space in the world. It is moreover, ‘empowering’ and ‘enduring’. The poet suggests loneliness as being ‘free’, ‘secure’ and ‘motivational’. Her loneliness forces her to become unique in terms of her actions. It guides her to face the problems of outer world. The speaker marks her as an example for all women, calling upon them to self-empower themselves in spite of the loneliness.

The speaker aspires to grab all the opportunities provided to her, by challenging her loneliness. Loneliness cannot defeat her as she considers it as a means to conquer the world. The language employed by the poet assists her to express her thought that she is a woman who exercises power. She becomes more creative and satisfied when she is alone. Loneliness of the woman also leads her to a realm of peace and harmony. Readers can interpret the work in such a way that women have to embark on their journey of believing in their true selves. Women have the ability to transform the universe by surviving alone and following their aspirations. A woman can contribute to her professional space when she is alone and she turns out to be active in terms of her personal life. Loneliness enhances her personal and professional growth.

The speaker considers loneliness to be the aspect that can break the normal conventions followed by society and it is a means of escape for her. Woman enjoys each and every moment of her life by existing in the state of loneliness. The identity of the woman is complete and meaningful because of the fact that she is alone. Loneliness doesn’t make her identity hidden or submerged and it has the potential to allow the woman to pursue her arena of liberty and dreams. Rich points to the fact that a systematic and flexible life can be led and it adds more beauty and rhythm to one’s own life. Here, loneliness fails to suppress the woman and never reduces the access to appropriate opportunities. Therefore, Rich focuses on the idea that loneliness can be challenged through various methods and it cannot destruct the identity of a woman. Loneliness empowers the woman to be more productive and enriches her identity to its fullest.

Conclusion

Rich gives prominence to the construction of perfect female identity in her poetic works. Woman derives an idea on how to give appropriate guidance for the various abilities hidden within her, to move forward. Rich’s poetic thoughts help women to follow their own interests and ways of life. As far as the present world scenario is concerned, women are highly liberated economically and professionally. Rich’s contributions to the literary world have a huge significance because the goal of society is to achieve actual positions and satisfy one’s own aspirations. Hence, this poem exemplifies the concept of challenging loneliness encountered by a woman, by celebrating loneliness and surviving with full energy, positivity and perseverance to reach greater heights, for a successful life.

References