

# Linguistic Aspects of Communication Between Mothers and Daughters in Modern Hindi (Evidence from Krishna Sobti's Stories)

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**Abstract—**In the modern world, the hierarchical social structures of a traditional society (including the extended family) are undergoing serious changes, which are reflected on the communicative level. The paper considers one of the aspects of communication between mothers and adult daughters: the second person pronouns and corresponding verbal forms that they use. Due to the fact that in Hindi one of the key characteristics of these language units is the degree of politeness (intimate, neutral or honorific), examination of these units' behavior in the texts allows us to draw conclusions about the features of the hierarchical relations between the participants of communication. The study is based on the two stories by Krishna Sobti (a classic of contemporary Hindi literature), reflecting problems faced by women from different strata of Indian society.

**Keywords—**Hindi literature; women writing; subordination system; family communication; personal pronouns

## I. INTRODUCTION

The paper presents an attempt to analyze strategies and particular aspects of communication between a mother and an adult daughter in modern Hindi on the basis of stories “To hell with you, Mitro!” (*Mitro marjānī*, 1966) and “Listen, girl!” (*Ai lārkī*, 1991) by Krishna Sobti (b. 1925). The research will be focused on the reflection of the sociolinguistic category of pronominal and verbal politeness and particularly on the cases of shifting between the forms expressing different degrees of respect.

In Hindi, the second person pronouns (and the corresponding verb forms) can be opposed to each other on the basis of closely interrelated categories of number and politeness. The category of subordination, or politeness, “conveys the relations of the social hierarchy, reflected in traditional etiquette: higher, equal, lower” [1]. Subordination and politeness can be expressed both lexically (special particles, the choice of emphatically polite or impolite forms of appeal etc.) and grammatically. In Hindi, the category of subordination is most clearly and consistently manifested in the second person verbal and pronominal forms.

The communication strategies used within the “mother-daughter” dyad have been chosen for the analysis because in the traditional Indian society the relations between a mother

and her adult daughter are not strictly regulated by communicative norms [2]. At the same time, despite the existing uncertainty, for Hindi it is possible to note general tendencies regarding the choice of forms used within this dyad. By following these trends or violating them, Hindi writers obtain an opportunity to enrich the images of their heroines, providing their linguistic characteristics [3].

In this paper we will attempt to apply existing theories regarding communicative strategies in Indian society to the material of stories by Krishna Sobti, one of the leading writers of the so called “women’s writing” (*mahilā / strī lekhan*) movement in Hindi literature.

## II. DEGREES OF POLITENESS IN HINDI

There are three second person pronouns in Hindi: *tū* (impolite or intimate), *tum* (neutral) and *āp* (honorific or distant). This distinction is quite conditional, since when choosing a pronoun to designate an addressee, a Hindi speaker can be guided by many intersecting factors of both linguistic and extra-linguistic nature (for more information about the category of subordination in Hindi, see, for example, [4-5]. Since there is only one second person pronoun in modern English, in translations of examples the three levels of Hindi politeness system will be indicated additionally: (I) for the intimate, (N) for the neutral, (H) for the Honorific, (N-I) for the neutral-intimate and (H+) for the hyper honorific.

Analysis of appeal strategies is not something particularly new for Hindi sociolinguistics. Dr. K.S. Misra [6] has already examined some of them on the basis of a rather broad corpus of texts (4 novels of Munshi Premchand, a classic of Hindi literature). To achieve greater accuracy of research, Dr. Misra divided all the heroes of the novels into 2 groups: G1, which included representatives of the “higher” strata of society (higher castes, educated people) and G2 (middle and low castes, people with a low level of education) [6]. This classification is based on the fact that, according to a fair comment of Dh. K. Jain, in Indian society “the level of politeness grows with the level of education” [4], and each of the two groups follows its own strategies of expressing politeness and subordination.

As for the G1 group, K.S. Misra notices that mothers address their daughters using the neutral forms (the pronoun *tum* and corresponding verbal forms). The intimate *tū* is permissible with respect to a little girl; if mother uses *tū* to address an adult girl, it indicates to her anger or particularly warm feelings towards the daughter. An adult daughter, in return, addresses her mother using the honorific *āp* form, switching to *tum* in the case of emotional instability (she is angry or feels special affection, as in childhood) [6]. In G2 families, mothers address daughters with *tū*, while a daughter replies using neutral forms [6].

Despite the fact that K.S. Misra's observations are based on numerous examples, all of them originate from rather old novels written by a Hindi classic. Analysis of more modern texts by a representative of the so called "women's writing" movement will enable us to draw a more detailed picture of linguistic aspects of communication between mothers and daughters.

### III. "TO HELL WITH YOU, MITRO!" AND "LISTEN, GIRL!" BY KRISHNA SOBTI: AN OVERVIEW

#### A. Women's writing

"Women's writing" movement appeared in Hindi literature in the 1960s, and has occupied one of the most important places in it. The movement developed in the clue of the Western philosophy of feminist criticism, especially its English and American version, which was founded in the middle of the twentieth century by Virginia Woolf, Kate Millet etc. The theoretical basis of the "feminine note" is that the male authors, who prevailed in the literature until the middle of the twentieth century, were unable to create full-fledged female characters, making them overly generalized, either idealizing or demonizing the female characters [7]. Supporters of the theory think that only a female author is able to overcome this dichotomy, to express herself and to reflect a real woman's entity and personal worthiness.

Literary works in tune with the philosophy of the feminist criticism began to appear in Hindi even before the independence, long before the introduction of the term "*mahila (stri) lekhan*" [8]. Initially, they were mostly poetic (e.g. Mahadevi Varma), because poetry was traditionally perceived as a high literary genre, and female poets were widely known in India at least since the era of Bhakti (Mira Bai etc.). The attitude of the Indian readers and critics to this phenomenon is still controversial, as it has both supporters (Rajendra Yadav, Indra Prakash Pandey) and fierce opponents (Jayadeva) [7].

Krishna Sobti, being a classic of "women's writing", has always drawn an accurate portrait of contemporary women, reflecting changes in the perception of women in the society and women's self-realization throughout her work. The main character of Krishna Sobti's novels is a new woman, determined to find her place in the modern life, and to fight in order to achieve her aims [9].

Krishna Sobti is famous not only for the gallery of vivid female characters and explicit themes, but also for her special, "female", style; her works of fiction are characterized by the

living language, confessional tone and deep psychology [10]. The most interesting fact in the literary heritage of the author is the evolution of female characters, which absorbed several literary trends (romanticism, realism, experimentalism), styles and techniques, but are always characterized as humanistic and deal with the inner world of people [11]. Colorful and controversial female characters, turns and unexpected twists of fate, human passion and desires are the center the writer's attention, while the social life and historical events in the country and in the world are only in the background of the plot [12].

#### B. "To hell with you, Mitro!"

The story "To hell with you, Mitro!" made Sobti popular in 1966. It presents a striking and provocative image of a married woman who is searching for her own outlook upon life, trying to understand what she needs in life.

An elderly couple, Dhanvanti and Gurudas, and their three sons with their wives lead a life of a traditional extended family. The story begins as their middle son beats his wife Mitro, accusing her of shameful promiscuity. In the presence of the whole family Mitro declares that she is suffering from dissatisfaction of her physical demands.

In the meanwhile, it turns out that the family's grain trade business doesn't give any profit because the younger son, Gulzarilal, has appropriated most of the money, hoping to buy his wife Phulavanti some jewelry, as her marriage portion, according to the tradition, was given to the wife of his elder brother. Mitro is outraged by the behavior of Phulavanti and sells her jewelry to support the family business.

After Phulavanti's brothers take their sister away to the parental home, she spreads false rumors that she was plagued by her husband's family, and Mitro fights against the slander.

Mitro and her husband are going to visit Balo, Mitro's mother. Having learned that her daughter is unhappy with her husband, Balo pushes Mitro to unfaithfulness and arranges a date with one of her young admirers. However, at the last moment Mitro realizes that the values upheld by her mother are unacceptable for her, and wants to get back to her husband's home.

Mitro, an absolutely new, nontraditional woman character has to look for a place for herself in a traditional Indian extended family in which two generations, parents and their three married sons with their wives live together. Obviously, the novel's characters belong to two opposing camps – supporters of traditional values of life and traditional outlook at the role of women in the world (the parents, Mitro's husband and his sister) and those who try to find new values in the changing world (Mitro and her mother Balo, the youngest son and his wife).

Every young family symbolizes a particular attitude to the roles of the spouses in a traditional Indian family – e.g. the eldest son's wife follows all traditional rules without any doubt or hesitation while Mitro refuses to consider even a single one.

It is impossible to determine from the text the specific time and place of the action, but it is clear that it takes place "today" in a provincial Northern Indian town. Each of the characters of the story has an inherent prominent feature, and tends to be the collective image, a symbol, some kind of the allegory.

The plot of the story does not develop gradually from the entanglement to the climax and then to the denouement, but follows the ways of life of a young woman, her search for her role in the family, the collapse and acquisition of targets in the woman's life.

Mitro, the least traditional and the most provocative character of the novel, is a bouncy, witty beauty whose bold words and actions cause confusion in the life of the family. Mitro is full of energy, for which she can't find a proper application: she draws everyone's attention to her family, rescues the family business, upholds family honor and searches for love-affairs [7]. She seems to be the embodiment of Shakti, who symbolizes the female energy, which terrifies everyone, because it can become destructive, therefore should be held well in hand by the man.

Mitro suffers from the lack of attention of her husband, because she is ready to take care of him and to respect him according to the traditions of typical Indian wife, but she wants this care to be mutual. Her husband expects Mitro to have the traditional behavior, he scares her impulses.

At the beginning of the story Mitro's mother-in-law – and the most conservative woman of the house – condemns Mitro's behaviour, teaches her to behave in the traditional family manner. However, at the very end of the story she understands that the cause of defiant Mitro's behavior is not in her debauchery, sees Mitro's devotion to the family and begins to treat her with great confidence.

At the climax of the novel, Mitro overcomes her contradictions and her real image becomes clear to the reader when, despite the advice of her mother to betray her husband, she comes back to him. Mitro understands that she will never be able to change traditional notions about women's role in the society and her own husband's outlook upon life. However, she realizes that she does not want to follow her mother's footsteps as her mother's free way of life will not help her to find moral harmony. Mitro has her own outlook at the role of traditional wife and mother. She does not resign herself to the imperfections and injustices of the traditional life, but she makes a fundamental choice in favor of traditional family values.

Mitro is not a victim of the traditional society and its conservatism; she is a woman who has escaped from the traditional framework of consciousness, but has not found new principles of life to replace the old ones.

The story ends in a climax when the heroine comes to the revaluation of values and to the crisis of her personality, which, however, can help her to overcome the crisis of her family life. The reader doesn't know if the changes in Mitro's personality will really help her, as that remains beyond the scope of the narrative.

All further works of Krishna Sobti are dedicated to the answer to this question and to the searching for some alternative ways that will allow the woman to respond to the challenges of the time, while remaining faithful to traditional values.

### C. "Listen, girl!"

Written in 1991, the story "Listen, girl!" has a very special place among Krishna Sobti's works. The author points to the autobiographical nature of this work in her preface to the story: she describes the history of her relationship with her mother, talks about the eternal theme of relations between the two generations. When the writer's mother became seriously ill and had to stay in bed, her daughter nursed her. After a while, Sobti's mother stopped recognizing her daughter, forgot her name and started addressing her "Hey, girl". The tragedy of losing a mother, experienced by Sobti as a woman, was reflected in the work of Sobti as a writer. That period of life when her mother ceased to recognize her own daughter, did not worry about her, about her future life and felt her be just "a female", was assumed as a basis of the story by the author. It is an implicit dialogue between two women, two generations, and two worlds.

The preface to the first edition of the book entitled "How I wrote 'Ai larkî'", is of great value to the researcher, since the author does not only recount the story of the conception and creation of the work, but shares her innermost feelings, so Sobti as a writer reflects Sobti as a woman. Sobti has tried to put a lot of thought and all her literature talent into the creation of the story, therefore "Listen, girl!" has become her special work, the symbol of the writer's parting with her mother in which the author is depicting everything remained unsaid between two women.

The key idea of the novel was born from the words of her mother, which she repeated constantly during her illness: "The fire will keep burning" (*āg jalī hogī*). These words indicate the continuity of generations, the continuity in the world of the feminine. After her mother's death Sobti lost her ability to be creative, however, these words haunted her and never left in peace and as a result, she wrote the story "Listen, girl!", where, however, these words cannot be found. Nevertheless, the novel begins with the description of the continuously burning source of light, which is a light of the table lamp in the sick woman's room, and which is not extinguished until the very end of the narrative. The idea of the story was to show a strong relationship between a dying mother and a daughter caring for her, to transfer all the unspoken things standing between them. This novel seems to be Sobti's farewell to the immortality of the human spirit [13].

In the center of the story there are two women, who are representatives of different generations and are almost opposite personalities. One of them is a traditional Indian woman, a wife and a mother; she holds the family and the house. The second woman is her daughter, who has exceeded the limits of the customs, a new woman who wants to fulfill her life independently, to become a writer rather than, an exemplary wife and mother. "Listen, girl!" is not just the human drama of deceasing of the nearest relative, but the

conflict of different outlooks upon life of an elderly dying woman and an independent young woman who are closely connected by family ties of kinship and sincere love [14].

The story resembles the literary form of the drama. The room of the sick woman looks like a stage on which the action takes place, presenting a dialogue between the mother and the daughter (to a far greater extent a monologue of the mother). The text of the narrator rarely occurs between the words of two heroines, it is reminiscent of remarks in the drama: someone has entered the room or has come out; someone has brought a tray of tea, etc. The dialogue between the mother and her daughter seems to be continuous, one sentence follows from another, and the breaks for sleep or rest are almost invisible to the reader. Creating a truly dramatic monologue of the mother, the author manages to convey the atmosphere of constant tension, emotional intensity of the both women, which they try to hide from each other.

There is no description of the characters, their appearance, personal traits of character and their views upon life in the story. The space is limited by the room of a sick woman, the reader sees the details of the other rooms, the kitchen and streets occasionally, as a part of the outside world. There is a bed, a table with an illuminated lamp and a window with heavy curtains in the room. The action takes place nowadays, but the narrative is transferred several times in the past, when the mother recalls the days of her youth and a trip to Shimla. The narrative is nonlinear as sometimes a few minutes or a few days may pass between episodes. Sobti depicts time in general as global total time, trying to emphasize the eternity of issues, which are a matter of women's concern, and their different opinions, which they hasten to convey to each other.

Of all the works of K. Sobti, the stories "Listen, Girl!" and "To hell with you, Mitro!" were chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, both texts abound in dialogues and consequently are replete with the second person forms; secondly, their heroines belong to different groups according to the classification of K.S. Misra, and finally, only in them one can find a sufficient number of cases of politeness shift, i.e. switching between forms of different degrees of politeness in communication of the same people. This phenomenon deserves special attention, since it can be interpreted not only as a way of reflecting linguistic realities, but also as a kind of literary device.

#### IV. EXAMINATION OF THE SECOND PERSON FORMS USED BY MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

##### A. Mother-daughter communication within G1

The heroines of "Listen, girl!" belong to the G1 group, and, following the trend noticed by K.S. Misra, usually address each other with *āp* and *tum* forms consequently: *yah na bhūlo ki tum mā se bāt kar rahī ho* [13] – "Don't forget **you** (N) are talking (N) with your mother"; *ammū, āp ab kuch tāzā mahsūs kar rahī hai na?* [13] – "Mom, **you** (H) feel (H) a little better now, don't you?"

However, if the daughter strictly follows the chosen communication strategy throughout the story, the mother shifts to the impolite forms from time to time. At first, it may

seem that this shift is spontaneous, and the mother is simply inattentive to the subordination opposition. This can be confirmed by a contextually unmotivated shift *tum-tū-tum* in the mother's story about her own childhood (quotes her mother's words): *tum choṭī thī to <...> ab yah terī choṭī bahan kā hissā hai <...> barī hokar sab samajh jāogī* [13] – "When **you** (N) were young <...> Now this is **your** (I) younger sister's share <...> Having grown up you **will understand** (N)". However, later K. Sobti makes us understand that the mother is very well aware of the difference between the degrees of politeness.

In one episode the doctor comes to examine the mother's state. When leaving the house, he says some typical words, but finishes the phrase with the neutral-impolite form of the Future Imperative (about this form, see [3]): *pareśānī mahsūs karē to mujhe fon kar lenā* [13] — "If you **feel** (H) some discomfort, **call** (N-I) me". The mother, who earlier would address the doctor with the honorific forms only (which is compliant with the etiquette norms), instantly shifts to the neutral form, perceived as impolite under such circumstances: *jīte raho beṭā, khūb kamāo* [13] — "**Stay** (N) well, my son, **earn** (N) enough money". Feeling the communicative failure, the doctor repeats his words, but this time he prefers the hyper honorific form: *koī pareśānī ho to mujhe apne āp fon kījyegā* [13] — «In case of any discomfort, **would** you **please call** (H+) me yourself». This scene forces us to exclude the possibility of unmotivated shift between the degrees of subordination in the mother's speech.

The shift becomes possible due to uncertainty, instability of the relationship between the mother and her adult daughter (as opposed to the doctor-patient dyad), but in most cases the text of the story allows us to identify additional reasons for the politeness shift.

The most common type of the shift is the usage of the impolite Imperative at the beginning of the older heroine's remark, which serves to attract attention. For example, *sun larkī* [13] – "**Listen** (I), girl" или *chor de larkī* [13] – «**Leave** (I) it, girl». The more expressive impolite form allows the mother to capture the attention of her daughter more easily, as well as to lash out at her. This observation is confirmed by the fact that in the course of the ongoing conversation the impolite Imperative is replaced by the neutral form of the same verb: *larkī, ek bāt to batā!* [13] – "**Girl, tell** (I) me something!"; *par batāo mai kyā karū* [13] – «**But tell** (N) me, what shall I do?».

The mother also switches to the impolite forms when she wants to show her discontent: *itnī catur na ban larkī* [13] – "Don't **become** (I) so cunning, girl!" or *jo kahtī hū, vahi kar* [13] – "**Do** (I) what I tell you!". It should be noticed that she adopts the same strategy of shifting to a lower degree of subordination when she is angry not with her daughter but with her nurse Susan: *mujhe apāhij mahsūs na karyā* [13] – "Don't **make me feel** (I) an invalid".

Despite the fact that the shift between the degrees of subordination is observed quite regularly in the mother's speech, it cannot be called a complete one, since she never uses the impolite personal pronoun *tū* in either Nominative, Oblique or Accusative-Dative case in relation to her daughter. There are only six possessive forms *terā* "your" (masculine)

and *terī* “your” (feminine) used in relation to the daughter, and all of them are “framed” by the neutral forms, as in the example above. These forms appear on the “emotional peak” of the conversation and are most often accompanied by the impersonal appeal *larkī* “girl”, as well as the impolite verbal forms that do not serve to attract attention: *larkī, uskī foto to dikhā mujhe!* [13] — “**Girl, show** (I) me his photo”.

In this regard, it is interesting to observe that the mother does not use the pronoun *tū* when she recalls her daughter's childhood (which would be logical) or in those rare moments when she thanks her or asks for a favor instead of giving an order. This means that it is impossible to establish the unambiguous correspondence between an emotional outburst and a shift to a more intimate pronoun for this text. Rather it can be assumed that the shift “*tum-tū-tum*” indicates the breach of the normal “mother-daughter” relationship followed by the overcoming of antagonism and creation of a new “woman to woman” connection, which is a kind of a leitmotif of the story.

### B. Mother-daughter communication within G2

There are three “mother-daughter” dyads in “To hell with you, Mitro!”: Dhanvanti-Junko, Mayavanti-Phulavanti, and Balo-Mitro, all belonging to the G2 group according to K.S. Misra's classification. In all these dyads, the mother acts as the reference point, and the daughter builds up the relations in her own family either repeating her mother's behavior or denying it. Dhanvanti eldest daughter-in-law Suhagyanti does not interact with her own mother; we even don't know if her parents are alive or not and who they are. Unlike younger daughters-in-law, she fully belongs to her husband's family and does not seek to observe any personal interests.

All daughters are already grown up and even married, but their mothers nevertheless prefer the intimate *tū* forms addressing them: *janko, terī bhābhī sac kahtī hai* [15] — “Junko, **your** (I) sister-in-law says the truth”. *terī yahī śīrī bātē sunne ko mai taras gaī thī, mitro!* [15] — “It is these sweet words of **yours** (I), Mitro, that I was missing so much!”

In situations of emotional instability a mother can occasionally switch to *tum* and then return to the intimate form within the same remark, the fact reflecting the uncertainty of “mother-daughter” relations. Dhanvanti to Junko: *lo, dekho nāsamjhī! bejī tere bare bhāt-bhaujāt tere ghar kī bast rakhēge?* [15] — “So, **look** (N), you stupid! My daughter, will **your** (I) brothers and sisters-in-law take care of your house?” Mayavanti to Phulavanti: *phūlā, terī sās itnī sīdhī-sidhār to nahī...* <...> *aur, rī, vah burhāū tumhārā sasur?* [15] — “You know, Phula, **your** (I) mother-in-law is not that simple... <...> And, hey, what about **your** (N) old father-in-law?”

In G2 families daughters usually address their mothers with the neutral *tum*. Switching to the impolite *tū* has been observed only for two dyads; Junko is depicted as a good-tempered obedient girl and a supporter of the traditional way of life, so she always follows the rules of politeness in communication with her mother Dhanvanti.

Phula is less conservative, but still she never crosses the line between her mother and herself when she is in good

mental condition. However, she violates the subordination requirements when she is supposedly dying, and social relations are not important for her any longer: *bhābo, mai mar gaī to apne jamātī ko kuch na kahnā... tere jamātī ko mālpūe bare bhātē hai* [15] — “Bhabo, if I die, don't tell (N-I) anything to your son-in-law... **your** (I) son-in-law likes pancakes very much». As soon as her life is out of danger again, she returns to the normal neutral forms of address and does not shift from them for the rest of the story.

The family to which Mitro was born is far from being a traditional one, and so she can afford talking to her mother in the intimate tone. Stressing this fact in her husband's presence (to his great surprise and even astonishment) she shifts spontaneously from the neutral to the intimate form: *tumhāre jamātī se acchā-burā bātne kā merā to thekā hī thaharā, bībō, par āj tū hī khuśī kar le!* [15] — “Indeed, Bibo, it is my right to share the happiness and the grief with **your** (N) son in law, but today **you** (I) can enjoy it!”

The last dialogue between the heroines, which can be considered a climax of the story, is particularly noteworthy. Here Mitro switches to the intimate form almost from the very beginning of the conversation. This shift is catalyzed by her attempt to console her mother and shorten the distance between them: *kuch to kah, bībō* [15] — “**Say** (I) something, Bibo”.

Throughout the rest of the conversation, Mitro continues to use the intimate forms. Since the subject of discussion is Balo's past, which does not correspond to the ideals of the behavior of an Indian woman and mother, Mitro uses *tū* and communicates with Balo on equal terms, as if she were her rival rather than the mother: *tere dilgārō kī gintī to sau-saikarō mē thī, bībō* [15] — “The number of **your** (I) lovers reached hundreds, Bibo”. At the end of the conversation Mitro switches to the neutral form again, but, as Balo keeps on pressuring her, resumes it with the impolite *tū*: *tū siddh bhairō kī celī* [15] “**You** (I), a servant of evil wizards!”

### V. CONCLUSION

Analysis of the text examples of both “Listen, girl!” and “To hell with you, Mitro!” demonstrates that the majority of the shifts in politeness degree serve the purpose of developing the main theme of the story, i.e. demonstration of the gradual corruption of the hierarchic family structure under the strokes of the new powers.

Summing up, it can be noted that in situations of non-etiquette, everyday communication, daughters in both stories address their mothers more respectfully than mothers do. In the G1 family, the mother-daughter dyad remains asymmetrical throughout the story; the shift between forms of subordination is carried out only by the mother. Being in a state of extreme emotional instability, through this shift the mother translates her attitude to the situation, using impolite forms primarily to express negative emotions.

For her part, the daughter, who has become a nameless embodiment of the feminine principle, demonstrates the reference communicative model: she consciously and honestly carries out her childlike duty and does not violate the

subordination structure typical of the mother-daughter relationship. At the same time, since the daughter uses only honorific forms in relation to her mother, despite the desire to “prolong herself” in the daughter, the mother is unable to occupy the same position with her: the mutual use of the pronoun *āp* indicates a significant distance between the interlocutors and is impossible here.

For the mother-daughter dyads from the G2 group, on the contrary, use of the honorific pronoun is not typical; therefore, for them any shift from the reference asymmetric model places the interlocutors on the one level of the social hierarchy. From the mother's side, such a “rise” of the daughter to the neutral level of communication is not something exceptional: adult daughters have built up their own families and occupy the same level of hierarchy as their mothers do. This is especially true of Junko, who has already become a mother. Switching to the familiar pronoun from the daughter's side, on the contrary, lowers the status of the mother and can signify a change in social roles: Mitro talks to the mother about her love affairs not as her daughter, but as a woman.

By the work with the pronominal and verbal systems Krishna Sobti depicts vivid and lively women characters and develops the main theme of her literary works on the linguistic level.

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