

Delineation of Female Characters in the Selected Novels of Shashi Deshpande

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Abstract- A plant or a tree grows how well we treat it. The changes have to be made right from roots. We all are trained in our home and it is where we mold ourselves to become who we are in the future or now. The patriarchal society and the chains they attach to the gender difference have to be destroyed. Women and girl children all around the globe face harassment and are dominated because of their gender weakness. Actually, there is no gender weakness, neither in men nor in women. These all have been created by the society and the customs, which we/ the society have been following over the centuries. Women have to be treated at par with men in the society, but male domination and the male superior ego does not allow them to be a part in the society. When women get the same right and power that of men, it is believed that there will not be anyone to follow the order or act as the head in superior decision-making systems. No man will take orders from a woman, but women are trained and enslaved to fulfill the commands of male superiority. Shashi Deshpande one of the prominent writers in India succeeded in delivering the real face of gender discrimination and the male domination over the female of the Indian society. The characters in her novel tear apart the patriarchal norms, which stood against them. The discussion in this paper is about the most iconic novel written by her 'The Dark Holds No Terror' (1980) and 'Roots and Shadows' written in 1983 and was published in 1996.

Keywords: Women struggle, Self-identity, Confidence, Relationships, Freedom of Women, Social-Identity, Disaster.

INTRODUCTION

Indian Writing in English has only existed on its own during the post-Independence era. The Post-Independence era was the time which began to emerge at the end of British rule in India. It is particularly the post-Independence period that witnessed the most crucial developments of the time. So the post-colonial writers try to portray a true picture of India. There was a struggle for self-identity. Unlike the male authors, female novelists have the courage to portray women's positions in their works in an confident and unusual manner. And one of the most well-known Indian women authors of Indian English fiction is Shashi Deshpande. Her artistic ability is influenced by the rigidly traditional Indian society's cultural ethos. And she inspired women at a time in India when feminist thinking was considered totally ridiculous. Deshpande didn't make the decision to write consistency. She had two kids, no job, and grew bored with just being a housewife and mother". She felt very lonely in England since she has no friend's and her husband was gone all day. Her husband also used to encourage her to write about all the incidents.

DISCUSSION

India is a patriarchal country where men hold for higher position than women. It is difficult to act differently in this circumstance. Indian women writers have made valuable contribution in almost every genre. Women writers attempt to convey the frustration, struggle for racial discrimination in their works. Kamala Das, Arundhati Roy, Kamala Markandaya, Manju Kapur, Bharti Mukherjee, Nayantara Satgal and Githa Hariharan were Indian writers who captured the oppression of women and their fight for gender equality. Shashi Deshpande is the one who attempted to give voice to a generation of women who were cooped up in their homes and viewed as a resource to be traded through marriage.

She said " Marriage is a very strange thing. It's a very public institution, it's meant to tell the world that two peoples are going to live together, to declare that their children will be legal, that these children can inherit their property. It's meant for social living to ensure that some rules are observed, so that men and women don't cross the lines drawn from them. At the same time, marriage in an intensely private affair, no outsider will know the state of someone else's marriage. It's a closed room, a locked room.

Moreover, Deshpande is highly influenced by patriarchal society and boundaries made by males and tries to prove her novels as a true mirror of social environment. She went on to produce what is considered some of the best work in modern Indian Literature. She considers herself as a feminist in personal life but not a feminist writer because she feels her novels are not a men verses woman issue at all. She creates characters that guide her readers through urban society social strata, but her emphasis gradually shifts to educate women from the middle and upper middle classes who struggle for their own autonomy as well as for recognition in the family, in society, and in their culture. Her stories are set in this environment, where everything happens in private, including rape, which is only partially private. She introduces this distressing subject, which had already existed as marital rape in one of her earliest pieces. "The Intrusion," in her first published work. The Intrusion is all about a newly married woman, whose sense of worth is dishonored by the horrifying treatment by her husband, whom she perceives as an intruder. Deshpande emphasizes the self-effacing role of female protagonists in the short stories under study in a scathing manner.

Her popular novel "That Long Silence" is a beautiful Indian feminist novel in English. The novel is all about Jaya who is the protagonist from the outer world to self. She is an upper-middle class housewife who maintained her silence throughout her life. She

embarks on a quest for self-actualization. The beginning of the book features the responsive appearance of a woman in solitude and a moving query about the ultimate meaning of her life within the context of her familial tie. The story follows a person on a quest to discover who they really are while dealing with the gender based traditions. In a society where women seek security and men respectability, marriage is still a social requirement.

Deshpande says

“And then, as we grew into young women, we realized it was not love, but marriage that was the destiny waiting for us.”

So the novel can be considered as one of the best novel in terms of how a middle class smart woman is treated to develop her unique character. The story beautifully depicts the women world in an authentic, realistic and creditable manner. The major themes include man-woman relationship, gender discrimination, search for identity, female subordination, power and sexual politics. The novel has also won Sahitya Academy Award which was given by the Indian Academy of Arts and Letters.

Then in her award – winning book *Roots and Shadows*, Shashi Deshpande explores a woman's struggle to claim her freedom and uniqueness. The Protagonist Indu, an intellectual and sympathetic married woman, experiences an identity crisis in Deshpande's story like Saru in *The Dark Hold No Terrors* and Jaya in that *Long Silence* both seek freedom from the restrictions of the conventional and tradition – bound institution of marriage in quest of an independent self.

As a feminist novel, *Roots and Shadows* gives expression to feminine discourse all through. The Book delves into Indu's inner self, who represents the modern educated woman who lives in close proximity to society while eschewing all of its restrictive tradition. Aside from politics, corruption, and other factors, she is free, a wife of Jayant. Indu goes freely alongside Naren & speaks to him while using phrases like “ Kiss; rape, deflowered among others.

So Deshpande has depicted the inner struggle of an artist to express herself and to find herself through her innate and inherent talent for creative writing through the figure of Indu. Indu wants to end her horrific duty, but her husband won't let her. Jayant disapproves of this notion. He prevents her from expressing herself in a feminine way because he thinks someone like Indu can change the world with the stroke of a pen. Husband and wife have very different temperaments from one another. One has sympathy for the problems in the “system”, while the other seems unconcerned. One is looking to find their artistic selves, while the other is a philistine.

Since “ *Roots*” stands for tradition and “ *Shadows*” represents the fringe culture, *Roots and Shadows* is actually a symbolic portrayal of the dialectical nature of man and women pitted against one another for power. The dwindling custom will soon end against a background of catastrophic change, to fade into shadows. Additionally it implies that when the root is cut, life loses its unifying power, opening the door to fresh possibilities. Shashi Deshpande aims to demonstrate her identity as a feminist writer by deconstructing the concept of different in the novel.

Some of her notable works include *The Dark Hold No Terrors* (1986), *Roots & Shadows*, *If I die Today, Come Up and Be Dead*, *The Intrusion* and other stories (1993). Some of her Children's Book include *A Summer Adventure*, *The Hidden Treasure*, *The Only Witness* and *The Narayanpur Incident*. Her literary work earned her a lot of recognition and won her numerous awards. She won the Sahitya Academy Award for her fifth novel, *That Long Silence* (1989) and she was also awarded with Padme Shri for cultural contributions and has been shortlisted for a Hindu Literary Prize for her novel *Shadow Play* (2014). Many other novels has been filmed and were translated into numerous languages.

CONCLUSION

Thus we can say that Women's writing today has had a significant influence on the social and cultural climate. Shashi Deshpande is an outstanding novelist of Indian origin, writing about the Women's plight in a traditional society. She had tried to depict the cause of the feminine position in society. Shashi Deshpande has presented in her novels modern Indian women's search for these definition about the self and society and the relationship that are central to women. Shashi Deshpande's novel deals with the theme of the quest for a female identity. The Indian woman has for years been a silent sufferer. While she has played different roles-as a wife, mother, sister and daughter, she has never been able to claim her own individuality. Shashi Deshpande's novels deal with the women belonging to Indian middle class. She deals with the inner world of the Indian women in her novels. She portrays her heroines in a realistic manner. Shashi Deshpande's feminism is certainly not cynical or nihilistic. She analyses the universal significance of the women's problem, thereby transcending the feminist perspective. She believes that feminism is “..... very much an individual working out her problem.” She is quite down to earth in her feminist approach to the women's problem. For though she is aware of the seriousness of the Indian Women's dilemma and the generation old struggles behind it, she also believes that a positive change in women's social status cannot materialize without bringing about a change in women's mindset first. The women's increasing involvement rather than detachment in her predicament as expressed in her novels reveals the positive, humanistic side of Deshpande's feminism.

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