



Research Paper

“The Role of Women” In That Long Silence

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ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande is a well known writer and novelist in the field of Indian Literature. She was born in Dharwad in Karnataka, as the daughter of the renowned Kannada dramatist as well as the great Sanskrit scholar. Shashi Deshpande as an Indian English Novelist stands apart, she writes about specific concern in her own manner. In her writings, especially fictions have rare insights. Shashi Deshpande's major concern is to depict the anguish and conflicts of the modern educated Indian women between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and the self expression, individuality and independence for the women on the another hand. Her fictions explores the search for the women to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of traditional roles as a daughter, wife and mother. She has examined a variety of common domestic crisis. Deshpande's concern and sympathy are primarily for the women. While revealing the women's struggle to secure self-respect and self-identity, the author subtly bares for the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by the women in our society.

KEYWORDS:- Wide – women emotions, protest, submission

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All over the world, the status of women, particularly in India, has been undergoing in a rapid change in recent decades. The image of women in Indian English Literature, novel is based on the traditional ancient literature of India, which showed women as a devoted wife or as a devoted mother. The imaginative and creative attitude to women has changed in recent times. Their writings are not based only on the observations of external behavior but also on the internal journey in the psychological realm of the feminine sensibilities. A few women novelists like Anita Desai, Nayanthara Sahgal, Arundathi Roy etc..., Shashi Deshpande makes a straight journey into the psyche of her women characters that are torn on account of the tensions generated by the discord between the individual and the surroundings portrayed in her novel to understand Indian women. As a PG Student, I am taking this prestigious opportunity to support this in my journal.

The present journal is presenting a back and forth narrations which Shashi Deshpande depicts in her novel, “**That Long Silence**”, to portrays the women characters and their problems faced in the society...., With the narration of **Jaya** makes all the women characters come together and presenting different problems a women faces.

To start with **Ajji**, the eldest women character in the novel represents the stage of widowhood. Ajji, “a shaven widow” is Jaya’s grandmother. Here, the word “shaven” points to the public humiliation of tonsure which a Hindu widow has goes in her life through. The word “widow” is now the symbol of robbing the slightest happiness once she possesses in her life. Ajji now lives in a complete seclusion. A widow is compelled to withdraw all the luxuries and pleasure.

Mukta, Jaya’s neighbor at the **Daddar flat**, also a **widow**. Here, our protagonist Jaya describes her as [...] a dancer, who stands still while the accompanying singer phrases out the song which she has to transform into dance. Mukta, as a dancer, still stand with mute body holds off all her emotions and feelings. She recollects the death of her husband **Arun**, when she heard the song sung by the singer, whom she accompany to perform dance. Here, onwards Jaya portrays the life of Mukta as a dancer and as well as a widow. Arun, her husband fell out of the train and died. Mukta seems to be living with a never ending grief. She is alone, fighting the toughest battle, the battle of widowhood and the battle of loneliness. Mukta is educated yet is never able to set herself free from the orthodox, worthless norms and confinement of solitude because of the fear of society. But as her daughter, Nilima, is a rebel who is outspoken and wants to live life to the fullest. Through Nilima, Shashi Deshpande our novelist, also discusses the issue of menstruation, is considered to be a hurdle, an

impediment in leading a free life by women. And the symbol of this process shows a women’s growing, caring, feeling, loving and giving etc... This **idea of child birth** is clearly portrayed in the poems of well-known famous poet, **Margaret Atwood’s “Spelling”**.

“At the point where languages falls away
from the hot bones, at the point
where the rock breaks open and darkness
flows out of it like blood, at
the melting point of granite
when the bones know
they are hollow and the word
splits and doubles and speaks
the truth and the body
itself becomes a mouth”.

From this above passage, we can get the clear picture of a child birth i.e, the process of giving birth is juxtaposed and merged with the process of self –realization and expression. The above passage can be divided into the three phases of a women’s life in accordance with **the concept of Elaine Showalter. Feminine stage**, when **‘language falls away’**, where a women silently succumbs with the norms and conventions of society. **Feminist stage, stage of self-protest**, where walls of the uterus breaks and the realization of knowledge and hollow existence comes into women, finally, the last stage is the **female stage**, in which the body becomes a mouth, like a child comes out of the body, words from the mouth, the women finally speaks out in protest.

Becoming a mother is the best of all the gifts God has endowed on one half of the living beings but at the same time children are not the identities of women. The actual fact is that in a conservative Indian society, the sole purpose of a women’s birth is to fulfill her conjugal duty by giving birth to an heir, who can carry the true name of her husband forward, and those who were not able to succeed in giving birth to a heir then it’s a sort of curse for the family.

Jeeja : Jeeja’s inability to deliver a child makes her husband to get marry again. Jeeja is Jaya’s maid. Later Jeeja realize that her husband’s act is right and she is not able to protest against it, it was her misfortune in life, inability to give birth to a child. Jeeja’s silence is most restful for Jaya. Jeeja is also proved one of the strongest minor class women who indirectly compel Jaya to rethink over her women awareness. The lives of Jeeja and Nayana , housemaids of Jaya,are like a hell. Their life is a continuous drudgery. They both receive very bad treatment at the hands of their husbands. **Nayana**, on the otherhand, has already given birth to four children yet her husband threatens her he will leave her from his life. Her husband is not a kind-hearted personality he wants her for his essential needs, he not even care for her as well as their babies, due to this manner, the two boys soon died after their birth and only the girls survived. Nayana is a sweeper.Nayana has an apathetic attitude to life. She wants a son not because she expects any help from him in her old age, and she also wishes not to have a female child, because she doesn’t wish to see her daughter , to suffer the same drunkard’s hands which she now suffering in her life.

Vimala [Mohan’s sister] : She is the true-victim of helplessness of women i.e., she is the true victim of silence and this leads to the way of her death. Vimala never told anyone about her suffering, she sank into coma and died a week later. She never disclosed her problems with anyone because she knew that there is no solution to solve it because as in the view of societal means, it is the curse upon her life and not even to raise her voice towards her husband and towards the society, she thought that a women without child is considered to be a blot and thus bleeds herself to death in silence.

Asha[Jaya’s sister-in-law], is not similarly like Vimala. **Ravi**, her husband is a man who lives by “drifting on the edge of dishonesty” and does not have a permanent job. On a particular day, Jaya visits her sister- in –law’s house **Ravi** and **Asha** is having a gaint quarrel at their home and Jaya knows about their quarrels. But Asha is courageous in her life with the support of her father. More like these, we can see strong powerful women characters on other works like “Indu” of “Roots and Shadows” and “Saru” in “The Dark Holds No Terror”- shifts a journeys from ignorance to knowledge through suffering, going through a process of introspection, self analysis and self realization, emerges her as a confident individual, in full control in life, having significant hopes to accepts in life going on by . Like, if “Indu” is a journalist , “Saru” a doctor, and “Jaya” is a successful columnist and an aspiring novelist. She begins her life in a conservative, educated, “ middle class smiling placid motherly women”.(15-16), who suppress her own wishes and have no dare to protest her husband. Towards the end of the story, Jaya breaks the Silence from her 17 years of life she have once lead. i.e., finally she breaks her silence and break away the life of a caged bird from the society.

Jaya : After her marriage, Jaya, who considers herself independent and intelligent, shapes herself to suit her husband’s model of a wife. She gets transformed into “stereotype of a woman: nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support. In fact, Jaya keeps on changing herself according to her husband’s likes and dislikes. As a result of this, her individuality gets annihilated. After marriage, Mohan renames Jaya as Suhasini. The name “Jaya” means “Victory” and “Suhasini” means “ a soft, smiling, placid, motherly women”. A wife should not be angry with her husband because that undoes his position of authority. She knows very well that to survive within marriage, one has to learn many tricks, and silence is one of these tricks. Therefore, she silences her emotions as well as her physical desires. A women is often given no right to express her physical desires. She has to submit to the desires of her husband. Jaya also follows the same tradition which results in frustration in her marital life. Because of the emptiness in her marriage , Jaya is drawn towards Kamat, a middle-aged intellectual. The friendship between Jaya and Kamat were no physical relation but a spiritual and deep one. So in a nutshell , we can say that with the presence of kamat , Jaya gives up creative writing.

I. CONCLUSION

Today’s world, we can find some little empowerment of women. There are various organizations, programmes, and schemes were produced for the women’s empowerment. Women are seen as an equal to men because nowadays, a women have the power to hold a superior than man in the society i.e., women are seen as equal member of the society, but a few is not fully empowered. In Urban areas, we can find some development, but in remote rural areas, the condition is the same there are still people who live in traditional ways. The perfect empowerment can be said only when the empowerment of all women were done. But in Modern Era, women plays a multiple roles in life as wife, mother, daughter, sister-in-law, professional roles etc... That’s why our author Shashi Deshpande wants to look ahead on the different women’s perception on the role of their life as in the society.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande minutely analyses the institution of marriage by taking examples from the lives of women belonging to the lower and middle class. The condition of lower class women, as presented by Deshpande, is miserable. For them, marriage is a form of slavery. They share master-slave relationship with their husbands. Marriage for them means pain, suffering and burden. The condition of middle class women is better than that of lower class women, but she is also not free from suffering. All the marriages in the novel reveal that marriage is used as a tool in patriarchy for the advantage of man and to suppress women. Tolerance, lack of protest, submissiveness and faithfulness are the qualities that the society expects to be in a women. No doubt, a women should inculcate in herself the qualities like love, kindness, faithfulness and tolerance, but self-assertion is not regarded as well in these qualities. This is the main focus of the present novel of Shashi Deshpande . Here, Deshpande suggest that women should not succumb to the roles cast upon them. Women should get rid of the fear on her part that allows the oppression to continue. It is not only man who subjugates women. She is also responsible for her own predicament and should struggle to achieve her own identity. “The realization that [Jaya] can have her own gives a new confidence to her. This is her emancipation”. Jaya emerges as an individual with a distinct identity, She breaks herself self-imposed prison wall of mind and chooses to remain in the family at the same time comes out of the confining slots allotted to her by the patriarchal society”.

Shashi Deshpande shows that women aspires for love, respect and expression of herself in marriage, but they do not get what they aspire for. But Deshpande suggests that a balanced and purposeful life is not a utopian fancy for a women if she liberates herself from the stereotyped conditioning of the society and does not depend on the male presence to authenticate her thoughts, emotions and actions. A women’s relation with her family must develop within the totality of her life as a women which leads to a harmonious fulfillment.

So, Deshpande seems to give the message that “ women should accept their own responsibility for what they are, and see how much they have contributed to their victimization..... It is only through self-analysis and self-understanding, through vigilance and courage, they can begin to change their lives.”

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