A LONG ARDUOUS SEARCH OF IDENTITY IN SELECT NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

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Abstract—Down the ages man is considered to be the head of the family, the protector, the guide, the provider and the moral supporter. They are no more doormats or damsels in distress at the disposal of patriarchal norms. The elements of self-constructively have freed them from the Sisyphus curse of withering into the domestic discomforts. Women in Indian fiction, the replicas of true Indian woman are no exception. Shashi Deshpande having perceived women’s conspicuous physical and psychical changes in the modern milieu, indoctrinates within them the self constructively to seek identity in her novels Roots and Shadows, The Binding Vine, The Dark Holds No Terrors, A Matter of Time and That Long Silence. She has appropriately presented her protagonists who unlike the western counterparts seek identity in a moderate mode within the family unit not ignoring their duties with the false notion of being liberated.

Keywords—Shashi Deshpande, Domestic Discomforts, The Binding Vine, The Dark Holds No Terrors.

I. INTRODUCTION

The first study deals with a general background to Indian English literature and its development in present scenario. This study narrates the life and works of Shashi Deshpande.
Portrayed by her in her novels, with a view to understand and appreciate their trials and tribulations under the impact of the conflicting influence of tradition and modernity. It critically analyses their response to the emerging situation in life so as to fit them in the contemporary society. Without probing deeply into the novelist’s conviction of what would serve as the ideal panacea for the different kinds of challenges, the study considers the problems of her characters which have had to contend with the given situations. Shashi Deshpande’s woman protagonists are about towards their and privations, tensions and irritations, pains and anguishes. Her stories suggest that compromise is what characterizes the life of the common run of the middle class women in India. Unable to defy social conventions or traditional morality, the middle-class women themselves are enmeshed by desire and desairs, fears and hopes, loves and hates, withdrawal and alienation, suppression and oppression, marital discord and male chauvinism. Shashi Deshpande’s chief thematic concern is with a woman’s struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society. Her efforts are to find and preserve her identity as a wife, mother and most of all as a human being. And accordingly in her novels the novels the operative sensibility is distinctly female and modern.

In the novel That Long Silence, the narrative is fabricated at two levels; one represents the inner world of Jaya’s consciousness reflecting her discontent of personal life and on the other, Shashi Deshpande reflects on the various dimensions of problems of women in the traditional society of India. Mohan, the husband of Jaya is an engineer by profession. Mohan’s concern is basically with the externals such as money, status, material comforts. Jaya is a very bold lady. Her father taught her to have confidence in herself and has taught her lessons of morality Jaya is not merely a housewife but she is also a career woman. She is a successful columnist and an aspiring writer of fiction. She Writer serious and sends them to magazines. But her husband is a materialist man and has no craze for the creative genius.

The novel Roots and Shadows present a typical facet of deprived womanhood through the character of Akka, who is the youngest sister of Indu’s grandfather. Akka returns to her parental home as a rich widow after the death of her husband and starts looking after her nephews and nieces with the care and attention of a truly compassionate mother. She becomes the presiding deity of the family who confers peace and security on willing subjects but deals ruthlessly with the rebellious and the recalcitrant. Akka’s authoritative nature never allows people into her life and understands her.

Shashi Deshpande

That Long silence is Shashi Deshpande’s most popular novel which won the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award for the year 1900. Most of the critics tend to read the novel writing or as a novel expressing woman’s struggle to achieve an identity in the society which is primarily male dominated. The quest for an authentic selfhood on the part of the protagonist finds an artistic expression through the heroine’s rebellion against the patriarchal core of society. In this study, I attempt to explore the novel as a quest for identity by Jaya as she feels having on identity within the framework of marriage. So, most of the critics focused on the feminist concern of Deshpande on the theme of search for identity in the novel. Only occasional attention is paid to the theme of marriage.

The Dark Hold

The Dark Holds No Terrors had been translated into the German and Russian language. Sarita, in this novel experience the real life and realizes that the dark no long holds any terror to her. She is known a ‘Saru’ an ordinary, modest, sensitive, middle class
woman, aware of her own drawback. She always wishes to crack the rigid traditional norms and wishes a new environment where, the mother, father and husband may not play oppressive role towards her daughter and wife respectively. She is a successful doctor during the daytime and at night a terrified and trapped animal in the hands of her husband Manohar who is an English teacher in a small college. Saru comes to her father’s house after fifteen years of marriage. She had once determined and had proclaimed that she would never come back to her father’s place but circumstances forced her to return back ad she was unable to bear the sexual of her husband. Here she had an ample opportunity to review her relationship with her father, husband and her dead mother. She emerged with a better understanding of herself and others. Saru remembers all the past, a brief confession to her father about her trauma and her courage to confront reality, “To make myself in your image was the goal I sought.” (TDHNT 124) These lines highlight a very crucial and closed relationship between mother and daughter. The novel explains the fear, the suffocation and the helplessness. The threw of one’s own self disowning one’s own mother is the question to be probed. Saru is deprived of parental care and affection. Her mother’s hatred for her and prefers her brother. Dhruva creates a rift between the mother and daughter and compels Saru to be a mutineer due to the bias policy to her mother. The novel exhibits the cruelty of a mother. It is a strange that in today’s male bigot society, the mother, full of a closed minded conservative, and a moral bounded, prefers a son and the daughter, yet to come to secondary place in the family. Saru’s mother never forgave her for being alive even after her brother had drowned, and she could not forget the traumatizing effect of her mother’s hysterical outburst. “You did it, you did this, you killed him, and you killed him. Why didn’t you die?” (TDHNT 62) Deshpande’s novels The Dark Hols No Terrors, That Long Silence and Roots and Shadows reveal how poignantly she expresses the frustration and disappointments women experienced in social and cultural oppression in the dominates society, the power to change others. In “Roots and Shadows”. One can find the exploration of the inner self of Indu. At some point of life, Indu feels that by breaking away from the family, she could trace and identity her roots. In her process of the inner quest, she finally explores that these family bonds are the root of one’s being and keep on reflecting like shadows. Indu wants to explore and confirm her felinity through ‘self realization’ and ‘self discovery’. The works of Shashi Deshpande involves her artistic vision of felinity as alienation. Even the small troubles which her like uproot her social bounding. In her inner quest for the self, she realizes her ‘displacement’ and Marginalization

Marginalization, as a woman. A process of ego dissolution begins. Women like Indu can neither express themselves nor choose for themselves. They can neither love nor hate. She learns to be content with ‘the gift of them’. They can neither love nor hate. She learns to be content with the gift of the silence’ (RS33) that marriage had taught them. Indu craves for love almost frantically.

CONCLUSIONS

Undoubtedly my novels are all about family relationships. But, I think I go beyond that because the relationships which exist within the family are, to an extent, parallel to the relationships which exist between human beings outside. But surely, when I am writing about the family, it is not just about the family. It definitely does not limit my canvas. On the contrary, that is where everything begins.
REFERENCES


