



ENLIGHTENMENT AND EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

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ABSTRACT

Indian women writers through their works are contributing meaningfully for the creation of awareness in the social order to become conscious about women's needs and demands in providing a intermediate for self assertion. Most of the writers like Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Saghil, Githa Hariharan and others have fixed their limits by focusing on the psychological oppressions of women who control their frustrations and predicaments within, in a male dictated society. Shashi Deshpande presents the trauma encountered by women due to cultural clash and has described the unresponsiveness towards women by men and society with plain and dramatic frankness.

Keywords: Education, Empowerment, Women, Modernity

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The novels here taken up study are *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *That Long Silence* and *A Matter of Time* to show how Shashi Deshpande brings the women out to the broader world who struggle to liberate themselves from the tradition bound families to seek an identity of their own through education. All these three novels deal with the disharmony and distress of educated women in a tradition bound Indian society and the survival steps they take to enlighten and empower themselves in this modern world because the patriarchal society always considered women as a vicarious achiever who as said by P.G.Joshi "1. ... maintains the status of the husband. 2. ... provides intellectual enrichment that adds to the value of the husband's work. 3. ... takes care of and participates in the public performance of husband." (*Sashi Deshpande's Fiction* 78).

The Dark Holds No Terrors, tells the story of a woman who in order to escape from the clutches of

sex difference of her mother, falls into the trap of love and get caught in the hands of a selfish husband and from there she again runs to her father to get refuge, but was treated as an unwanted guest. She questions herself "Why is happiness always so unreal? Why does it always seem are illusion?" (*TDHNT* 40) and finally she comes to realize that her profession as a doctor is the only weapon which will free her from the harsh environment, returns to Bombay for a new life to be started. In this novel, women education is shown as a hard nut to crack for a girl child and at the same time the writer also shows how, after attaining it the heroines realize the greatness and help they retain from it. This is the speciality of Shashi Deshpande which can be seen in all her novels.

A woman attains motherhood when she gives birth to a baby, not because of giving birth to a baby boy. This discrimination runs ceaselessly in the veins of Indians breaking the bond between man

and woman. Saru, the protagonist in this novel seems devastated and tries to escape from her parents because of the gender discrimination she has faced from her childhood which was forcefully insisted on her by her mother. This kind of discrimination stays deep down inside the mind-set of children especially girls because of which they hesitate to act against boys and this process continues after marriage also that results in the unhealthy relationship between husband and wife.

The next novel *That Long Silence* is a tale which tells about the silence of female forced by the male in order not to dominate them in any case. The ironic fact is that this attitude of male society is the result of the imposition of such things by women who are none other than mothers. Because she is the person who readies a baby into a boy to do whatever he wants by stressing the point that he is a boy. Again, it is the mother who in the name of protection, prevents girl child to mingle in the society freely which automatically brings a sort of fear sensation towards men which leads to the unavoidable nature of building silence in them. The braveness which was inculcated in a boy by her mother makes him as a dominated personality in the society.

In the novel *That Long Silence* Mohan, the husband indulges in malpractice in his office, thinks that he would tackle it, but when he finds that he cannot handle this situation, he puts the blame on his wife and children by saying he did it for the welfare of them. Jay assertively accepts the changes happened to after her marriage because she has learnt from Vanitamami during her childhood that “a husband is like a sheltering tree ... Without the tree, you’re dangerously unprotected and vulnerable...And you have to water it with deceit and lilies.” (TLS 32) But Jaya, being an educated woman in order to tackle this critical situation uses writing as a tool to liberate herself from the hurdles before her. Though her father brought her up as an individual, the society refuses to look her as an individual. But that helped to a great extent to vanquish the problems created by her husband.

Similarly the fifth novel of Shashi Deshpande *A Matter of Time* is a story which talks about the family with a lady and her three daughters who

struggles and finds a unique position of their own in the society in the absence of a male figure whom the society considers the prominent part of a family. It not only talks about a single generation of women but also about three generations from the similar clan. Gopal’s vanishment brings a sudden sorrow to the family members. Sumi the mother feels discriminated at first and fears for the future of her daughters Charu, Seema and Aru. The escape of Gopal, the father of the three girls sealed the fate of their family. His confused mind confused the minds of his daughters also. People suspect Sumi for Gopal’s desertion because; the societal setup is done in such a way to put the blame on women for every problem that happens in their house. But with greater confidence she overcomes all the barriers and makes her daughters to stand on their own legs. The words of Aru “Yes, Papa, you go we’ll all be right, we’ll be quite all right, don’t worry about us (MT246)” shows the confidence which Sumi induced in her.

When a married woman lives without husband, it screws the minds of people to know the reason for his absence. Though they come across the real reason, they track it in a negative way by blaming the women character in the house. Sumi’s catastrophe begins when she comes to know that her husband has left her alone. She owes to her daughters to show them that she is not the kind of woman who will not put up with a man who refuses to engage with the family after twenty three year of married life, by making her daughters as a lawyer and doctor. Women, who are trying to get a recognition in the society has to fight a lot to come out of the four walls when there are men who imposes anger as a by-product of his inability as in the case of Saru, Jaya and Sumi.

The positive changes which happens gradually in the psyche of Shashi’s protagonists due to positive thinking changed their mind economically, socially and beneficial for their empowerment and at the end all the protagonists unlike other suffering characters either through education or through profession empower themselves to survive in this traditionally modernized society.

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