

RELATIONSHIP RENEWAL IN THE SHASHI DESHPANDE'S ROOTS AND SHADOWS

S. MARIAMMAL

Assistant Professor, Department of English, N.G.M. College, Pollachi, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande occupies a prominent place among the contemporary women writers in Indian Fiction in English, who concern themselves with the problems of women and their quest for identity. Shashi Deshpande is emerging as a potential novelist writing in English. Shashi Deshpande was born in 1938 in Dharward, a prominent place known for its education and culture in north Karnataka. Her father Adya Rangacharya (Sriranga) was a highly reputed and well-known Kannada playwright. She was educated in Mumbai and Bangalore, and secured her M.A. in English from the University of Mysore. Shashi Deshpande also received degrees in Economics and Law. She is one of the foremost Indian Novelists of the modernity. She occupies an important place among the Indian English Novelists. Shashi Deshpande, has emerged as a writer possessing deep insight in the female psyche. Her major concern is to exhibit the conflict of the modern educated women. She has dealt very minutely and delicately with the problems of middle-class educated women in her novels. She portrays mainly on the career- women and their quest for identity in the male domination Indian social set up. Shashi Deshpande expose about the striving Indian women who often agonize embarrassment in life. *ROOTS AND SHADOWS* is not an exception to this. As O'Neil once put it, "we must dig at the roots of the sickness of today". (Pathak, R.S 146,147) As in most of her novels, the second coming and renewing the relationship happens in this novel also and adds positively.

KEYWORDS: Post Colonialism, Feminism, Self-Identity, Domination, Metamorphosis, Egotism, Marginalization, Second Coming, Renewal

INTRODUCTION

India is a land of amazing cultural diversity. The south, north, west and east have their own distinct cultures and almost every state has carved out its own cultural niche. Indian English Literature refers to the body of work by writers in India, who write in English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous regional languages of India. Indian English Literature has a relatively recent history; it is only one and half centuries old. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora, such as V.S.Naipaul, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri and Salman Rushdie, who are of Indian descent. The present day Indian English writing comes under the broad realm of post-colonial literature – the production from previously colonized countries such as India. Indian literature in English had begun several decades ago and is still in a continuous process of metamorphosis.

Literature is a truthful expression of life through the medium of language. Its success lies in blending both art and morality in such a beautiful way that art, in the long run, becomes the thought. It reflects not only the social reality but also shapes the complex ways in which men and women organize themselves and their perception of the socio-cultural reality. Over the centuries, literature has been used as a social forum in which gender based discriminations in the society and the torture inflicted on women in general are expressed. The writers who have expressed such problems of a suffering woman are namely Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Nayanthara Sahgal and Shashi

Deshpande. These women writers constitute a major segment of contemporary Indian Writing in English and most of them have used fiction as a medium of expression to present the plight of women.

The feminist's literary criticism has developed as a part of the Women's movement and its effect has brought about a revolution in literary studies. The objective of feminism is to wake up the women gender and it is the right time to come out from the shells. Unlike other writers, Shashi Deshpande shows variations in her novels. The main motive of Shashi Deshpande is to bring out the sufferings of middle-class women by probing deep into the understanding of their known and unknown problems. She has shown the differentiation in a clear manner. Through her novels, she deliberately insists freedom for the Indian women within the Indian socio-cultural value system and institutions. Her feminism doesn't uproot the woman from her background but tries to expose the different ideological elements that shape her. The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande's novels are modern, educated, independent women, and aged between thirty and thirty-five. They search for freedom and self-identity. Shashi Deshpande depicts Man-Woman relations gendered humanism, class-consciousness and quest for identity in her novels. Woman has become a victim of physical, cultural, and social, sexual and emotional brutality by men within and outside relationships, which resulted in the Marginalization of them in every sphere. She strongly admits that feminism is an entirely personalized perception. The prescribed norms of woman are a clear-cut manifestation of patriarchal society. Her characters try to break them and come out of the psychological turmoil.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the renowned novelists writing in English in the sub-continent. Her first collection of short stories was published in 1978, and her first novel is *The Dark Holds No Terrors* in 1980. Almost all her novels deal with a crisis in the heroine's life. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is Shashi Deshpande's masterpiece. Saru (*The Dark Holds No Terrors*, 1980), Indu (*Roots and Shadows*, 1983), Jaya (*That Long Silence*, 1988), Urmi (*The Binding Vine*, 1993), Sumi (*A Matter Of Time*, 1996), Madhu (*Small Remedies*, 2000), and Manjari (*The Moving On*, 2004). She maintains a unique position among her contemporaries through her vivid portrayal of characters and their inner conflicts. She has won the Sahitya Akademi Award, for her novel *That Long Silence*. Her works also include children's books. In her novels, many men and women live together though they belong to different age groups, classes and they perform different roles. Deshpande firmly believes that a change will take place in the mind of women to fight against the domination of men. The chief concern in Shashi Deshpande's novel is, evidently self-assessment, which she presents through realistic techniques.

Shashi Deshpande, has emerged as a writer possessing deep insight into the female psyche. Focusing on the marital relation, she seeks to expose the tradition by which a woman is practiced to play her role in the family. She writes about the situation of women and their failures in the fast changing socio-economic ambiance of India. She portrays modern, educated and career oriented middle class women, who are quite sensitive to the eternal changing time and situations. Deshpande's protagonists plan to assert their identity from patriarchal society. Shashi Deshpande, through her novels, shows women willing to take their share of the blame of their problems and courageously face the situation. Most of her women characters are able to transcend their identity crisis by analyzing their childhood and the process of their upbringing. Traditionally Indian women have been focused as marginalized figures. Shashi Deshpande's novels can be easily termed as feminist novels because almost all her novels are focused on the problems existing in the lives of the women and how they respond to the various problems.

In the Indian social set up, the 'socialization' of a girl for her future part as wife and mother begins in early childhood. This process has been imposed on women through myth, legends, folklores and rituals. Women are forced to accept the patriarchal domination from the childhood to death. The story of Deshpande's protagonists always start at the

critical point where despite 'total' freedom and total surrender to the expectations of their husbands, they stay disconnected and are made unhappy. They wish to fine-tune themselves. Shashi Deshpande wants her character to give expression to her mind and self. Her characters are not mouthpiece of her, but emerge as real women. Shashi Deshpande's novels are a veritable mirror of the situations of urban middle-class Indian Women.

Roots and Shadows is a novel which has won the Thirumati Rangamal Prize in the year 1982-83. The novel traces the attempts of Indu to resolve her personal crisis through a temporary return to the old house where she had grown up. The novel opens with Indu's arrival at the family during Akka's illness. The novel is based on the joint family system. The family is an upper caste Brahmin family. Akka, who is the youngest sister of Indu's grandfather. Akka comes back to her parental house as a rich widow after the demise of her husband. She started to be as a caretaker of the family. Akka's, dominating nature marks the question in the mind of Indu. Indu being educated and challenged Akka and decided to get marry Jayant. Expect Indu, remaining people in that house adored Akka as a Captain of the ship. Indu comes out of the family against the will of Akka, she married Jayant who speaks different language and belongs to the other caste. When Akka fallen sick, her desire is to see Indu and that makes Indu, the protagonist come back to her ancestral home. Indu has received information from her Grand aunt that Akka is bedridden. This paves her way to come out from the residing place to the outer world. She only comes back with venomous to the home.

I had left home full of hatred for the family, for Akka specially. I had sworn I would never go back, which had not prevented me from dreaming of the time I would. Childishly crude, technicoloured dreams of revenge, forgiveness and death. With the star-role, of course, being mine. But there is a difference between eighteen and twenty nine. At twenty- nine, knowing both Akka and myself, I knew there would be neither repentance nor forgiveness on either side. (R&S, 27)

During her stay at the ancestral house, she could analyze herself. Akka felt that Indu is the right person, bestowed over the entire property to Indu, and passed away. After Akka's death, Indu came to know about her pathetic life, which she led with her husband. The family members are eagerly waiting for the distribution of the wealth between them. Indu is in dilemma about it. Meanwhile, her mind travels to the past incidents and her present position. Indu, comes to the decision that the wealth should be given to the essential things. Indu, the journalist is ragged between self-expression and social stigmas, material and psychological. The novel begins with the heroine Indu return to her ancestral house. It is here that she discovers what her roots are ... as an independent woman and a writer, and her shadows are ... a daughter, a mother and commercial writer. She rebels against Akka, her conventional world, and her rigid values and marries Jayant. In her marriage with Jayant, she has compromised on many things. She has modified her to the taste of Jayant. After marriage she did as per wishes of Jayant. She herself says :

When I look in the mirror, I think of Jayant , when I dress I think of Jayant, when I undress I think of him. Always what he wants , what he would like, what would please him. And I can't blame him. It is not he who has pressurized me into this. It is the way I want it to be.... Have I become fluid , with no shape, no form of my own (R&S, 54)

Eventually, with Akka's money, she achieves herself and leaves all the shadows behind. "That I would at last do the kind of writing I had always dreamt of doing" (R&S, 205). To achieve freedom, she seeks marriage as a substitute to the bondage inevitable in the parental family. She thinks by fitting herself in a new role of a wife to attain her freedom. Her

longing to achieve a complete personhood is obvious in these lines: “This is my real sorrow that I can never be complete in myself. Until I had met Jayant , I had not known it I meet Jayant and lost the ability to be alone”. (R&S, 34)

She waited that her marriage with Jayant would enable her to realize the fulfillment. In the concept of Akka in Marriage is “Such marriage never work. Different Castes, different languages... it’s all right for a while. Then they realize” (R&S, 69). Jayant couldn’t tolerate any superior activities of Indu. Her femininity is suppressed and marriage turns disappointment to her. She says, “... it shocks him to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When I’m like that, he turns away from me”(R&S, 82). Being suppressed with her emotions, it turns towards her cousin Naren. Then the question of adultery haunts her mind. She puts herself to be honest towards her husband. She wants to Indu presents new generation and deals entire thing with proper reason. She longs to be free and complete in herself.

Even in her dream, she never thought that she would forfeit her writings. She has lost hope in writings due to her change of concept as a creative writer. Her husband forced her to go with a sleek picture to the readers. She could not bottle up her anger on her husband. She is emotionally felt that when her husband asked her not to resign the job. He says,

That’s life! What can one person do against the whole system! No point making a spectacle of yourself with futile gestures. We need the money, don’t we? Don’t forget, we have a long way to go”. (R&S, 17).

In disparity to Indu, Mini , Indu’s cousin at her ancestral home, prefers to accept the traditional life style. Indu enquires Mini, her choice of marriage, and is shocked to hear Mini’s passive acceptance- she says “What choice do I have, Indu... of course I’ marrying him because there’s nothing else you can do”. (R&S, 125)

Indu is in dilemma between tradition and modernity. She recognizes that liberty and fulfillment comes through the right perception of life, through certain rules of life, which have dignity and grace. Indu moves out of her ancestral home and started the independent life with Jayant, whom she had chosen as her life – partner. She could see the entire changes and lost her somewhere in the world. She is physically and spiritually dissatisfied with her husband. Her love marriage brings her many psychological problems. Actually, before her marriage, she was an independent, logical thinker, but after her marriage, she seems to be turned as submissive wife. Indu now realizes that, her love is a uniting bond, which will help her to surrender herself to Jayant, so that their lives shall be full of harmony and peace. She wants to go back to Jayant, for she loves and needs him, and wants to restart life built on the foundation of honesty and decides to be her true self in relation with Jayant. She has decided not to think her low in position, but in love. As Ujwala Patil says

“Returns home, equipped with that quality of courage , necessary to face the challenge of identity crisis for her marriage had, always posed- returns to suffer , to question and to find roots”. (Patil ,136)

The novel deals with a women’s attempt to assert her individuality and to realize her freedom. It shows the psychological struggle of Indu, protagonist. She is caught up in a conflict between her family and professional roles. Shashi Deshpande makes her heroine choose security through reconciliation. The ethos in the novel is neither of victory nor defeat but of harmony and understanding between two opposing ideals and conflicting selves. This is quite representative of the basic Indian attitude. As a feminist writer, Shashi Deshpande is clearly aware of the male-female imbalance in society

Deshpande’s women are not subordinate or inferior to men. They have the strength to shape their lives according to their potential and their desires and above all to discover their identity. Shashi Deshpande’s protagonist move away from the family for a short-term .Then they renew their relationship by returning to the home by knowing their needs of their family members. Deshpande, in her novels, has adopted feminism as well as humanism. The Indian women need not be

rebellious like the Western feminists nor like the meek and submissive Indian wives. The Indian women must seek their freedom within the verge of marriage through mutual understanding without disturbing the Indian socio-cultural values. Woman artists have been echoing the feeling of marginality and expressing their revolt against the purely masculine world. One of the major concerns of the contemporary literature all over the world has been to highlight the plight of women, their increasing problems, their physical, financial, and emotional exploitation and their mental anguish in the male dominated society in every sphere of life.

In other words, men are recognizing as strong and rational while women are associated as weak and emotional. In this division of traits, those men who are sensitive and those women who are intellectually or athletically inclined are marginalized. Shashi Deshpande, an Indian women writer portrays the universal experience of family relationships in her novels. It is the hallmark of Shashi Deshpande's characters that whatever occurs in their lives, her protagonist does not lose hope, and learns to survive finally. They have the strength to shape their lives according to their potential and their desires and above all to discover their identity. Thus, Shashi Deshpande conveys the message that the modern Indian women should learn to conquer their fear and assert themselves. The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande are keen about the real scenario of the male – dominated society. Indu realized her true self and it helps her for the better enlightenment in her marriage life with Jayant. Shashi Deshpande's novel traces a development from tradition to assertion.

REFERENCES

1. Atrey, MuktaKirpal, Viney. ShashiDeshpande A Feminist Study of Her Fiction, NewDelhi: B.R. Publishing & Co, 2011.
2. Banu, Akther. Shashi Deshpande and Women's World, New Delhi: Global research Publications, 2011.
3. Deshpande, Shashi. The Dark Holds No Terrors, New Delhi: Penguin Press, 1980.
4. Naik, M.K. Aspects of Indian Writing in English, New Delhi: Macmillan Company of India, 1979.
5. Iyengar, K. R. Srinivasa. Indian Writing in English, 1962. New Delhi: Sterling, 1985.
6. Pathak. R. S Indian Fiction in English: Problems and Promises, 1990, Northern Book Center, New Delhi.

