

SILENCE HIDES VIOLENCE: A STUDY OF SELECT NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

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Abstract:

Shashi Deshpande's women are courageous to revolt against men. In her novels Shashi Deshpande focuses on women and her role in society. Her novels represent the contemporary women's struggle to define and attain an autonomous self-hood. Her female protagonists are able to free themselves from traditional constraints after a long and bitter struggle. The protagonists are an example of how the male in society dominates women.

Keywords: Violence, Male domination, Family, Cooperation and Peace.

In Indian context the plight of a victim of domestic violence is seen. When the fear of staying outweighs the fear of leaving, an Indian Women will flee. The average Indian woman is more likely to put up with harassment from her natal family or husband's family. A normal Indian house wife has a tendency to bear the harassment. She is subjected by her husband and family in a man-woman interaction within the household. When a bride arrives at her new family's home in India, She is a low status member of the family hierarchy. She is extremely reliant on her own goodwill until this puts her in jeopardy. The wife in a traditional Indian home is reliant, subservient and complaining. It is duty of women to look after the home children, elderly parents and relatives. In a democratic society the extent to which domestic violence threatens. Women's ability to play a decisive part in their own lives and how it eventually impacts her human rights is a major problem. Human nature cannot be changed by law alone. Education is required for societal transformation since it awakens cultural thinking. In a society a family is a social group of people who live together under the same roof. In today's world where everything has lost its meaning, the value of family is more important than ever. The foundation of one's strength is one's family. Fletcher says:

Family' is a small, relatively permanent group of people, related to each other in the most intimate way, bound together by the most personal aspects of life, who experience among themselves the whole range of human emotions...who experience continual responsibilities and obligations towards each other, who experience the sense of 'belonging' to each other in the most intimately felt sense of that word. (51)

Co-operation rather than competition respect rather than demanding, equality rather than domination, discourse rather than monologue, communication rather than control, love rather than fear, hatred and disdain all are needed to manage a smooth and happy family. These characteristics can contribute to a humanitarian approach to human rights when dealing with families. This definition portrays the man-woman relationship in domestic life. Murdock defines family as:

The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults. (504)

In the novel *That Long Silence* the Protagonist Jaya plays the role of common women who struggle within male dominated society. Jaya is a victim of Gender discrimination. Shashi Deshpande expresses male chauvinism in Indian society through Mohan. Jaya is an intelligent woman. She struggles to get recognition in the society. Jaya feels that she has lost her identity after her marital life. Jaya feels suppressed in male dominated society. She couldn't express her thoughts and ideas freely. As a writer, Jaya couldn't achieve success due to the rules laid by Mohan. He motivates her to write. Mohan says, "My wife is a writer. She writes for woman's world" (TLS 119). Jaya realizes silence as root cause for all her problems. In the end of the novel Jaya breaks her silence. The novels end with a resurgence of faith. Jaya's decision to erase the silence brings new hope in her life.

The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* portrays the struggle of Indian Women. The Protagonist Saru suffers in her life due to some incidents. Fate and chance plays an important role in her life. Saru marries Manohar from lower caste. Her marriage life shatters when she is recognized as a doctor. Saru is a modern woman but clings to traditional values. Saru was against tradition but accepts reality. She says:

Have you noticed that the wife always walks a few steps behind her husband? That's important, very important, because it's symbolic of the truth. A wife must always be a BA. If he's 5'4" tall, you shouldn't be more than 5'3" tall. If he is earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety-nine rupees. That's the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. (DHNT 137)

In the end she faces her problems boldly. In both the novels women suffer due to man and marriage.

Shashi Deshpande's characters try to come out of traditional belief. The female characters fight not only with the outside world but with their own inner selves. Despite being educated and self-sufficient in modern era, women have been unable to break free from male oppression. Female characters in the novels of Shashi Deshpande suffer due to violence. Home is the place where one gets peace. From the home the human rights culture is to begin. Eleanor Roosevelt observes:

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunities, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world. (4)

In the novels of Shashi Deshpande women encounter atrocity, and they fight against cruelties just like the women one face in their day-to-day lives. Violations in the family are common. In these two novels, Shashi Deshpande defines women as a subject in her own right. Both Saru and Jaya strive for and attain certain autonomy; they have realized their immense potentialities for action and self actualization. Their return home is not defeatism but the triumph of independent women.

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