

Sense and Sensibility in Shashi Deshpande's "The Dark Holds no Terror" and "That Long Silence"

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Abstract

The sense and sensibility plays a climacteric role in the novels of Shashi Deshpande's novels both on the theme and characterisation. Her tenacity with the issues of "woman Query" in her novels sometimes raises doubts in our minds that she is emphasising to the problems of womankind, pushing the other half into the subordinate role, but this is far from the truth. Present paper explores how sense and sensibility finds expression in almost every area of life. Our biblical view of mankind also defines God created man in his own image; in the image of God, and after that he created female. On the other side our mythological texts also present unlike and inimical views on the status of women:

**" ढोल, गंवार , शूद्र
,पशु ,नारी सकल
ताड़ना के अधिकारी**

These lines were written by a very renowned Hindi poet. These types of texts align from feminine leadership at the highest goddess, to limiting her role to the obedient daughter, house wife and mother. The aim of this study is to describe how gender was portrayed and to determine how women are considered senseless (but they are not actually) in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. And to understand the depiction of feminine issues, we have to go through the insecurities, anxieties, pain in accordance

with a social, historical, cultural and religious environment of Indian society. The quandary of women in our society, the so-called 'pre-ponderance' was totally changed. Our culture and religion considers woman a goddess but unfortunately we fail to recognise her as a human being.

Keywords: Sense, Senses-cape, Hope, Tradition, Culture

Introduction:

It is considered that lack of senses and the marginalization of women in which they involve the most persistent issues in our society. Shashi Deshpande has created a space for women to express and to stand themselves of their own. Indian women have been sensitively and communally ignored for centuries. Even the communication system delivers a code in the forms of sounds, sentences and the word that are affected by several factors, such as gender, culture class and race (Aitchison and Wardaugh,1987). Male and female are two basic components of human society, but it is clearly seen that where all natives despite of sex are equal, women are clearly less equal than men. There is a high gender inequality in a society. Cultural condition and social stereotypes control gender role in communication also, as reflected in how men and women use language (Heilman,2012; Mahmud,2015; Philips 2005). Our constitution also provides equal rights and privileges for both men and women but still majority of women across India does not enjoy these rights and opportunities which are guarantee to them. Our society possesses a double standard attitude towards women. Our thoughts and actions are totally different. One side we worship goddess but on the other side, we exploit girls and women.

Ignorance of the Intelligence of Women:

Ignorance of the intelligence of women is a more complex and complicated phenomenon for the women in Indian society. Gender plays an important role in that. During the last half of the 20th

century, the term Gender and sex are often used interchangeably but these terms define different concept and are not interchangeable. As for as sex is concerned, it refers to the biological, hormonal and chromosomal difference that determine if a person is male or female (Lindsey, 1997). By definition, gender refers to “meanings that societies and individuals ascribed to male and female categories”(Eagly, 1987 p4) and the term gender roles defines prescribed behaviours that are deemed appropriate for women and men (Lipman- Blumer, 1984). Gender roles, differing from sex roles which are psychological differences is based on sexual genitalia, are social construct, and they contain self concepts, psychological traits... [and] family, occupational and political roles assigned opposing to the member of each sex" (p2). If we ratify the study of gender roles, six predominant schools of thought emerged in an effort to explain why women occupy differing roles within a given culture. These suppositions are biological, structural - functional, social - learning, cognitive development, gender schema and symbolic interaction. All these theories are based on different outlooks of human development and cultural practices. Biological theory suggests that the differences in the male and female roles result from the biological differences inherited in both sexes (Cristen,1995; Dobson, 1995; Maccony, 1966). The structural - functional theory proposes that in order to maintain society itself, each sex must have roles and jobs that will preserve society and keep it functioning in effective manner (Eagly,1987; Parsons,1960; Parsons and Bales,1955). Cognitive theory (Baldwin,1971; Kohlberg,1966) and Social learning theory (Bandura,1977, Mischel,1966) suggest that gender roles are learned by children in stages and are established in rewards for correct gender behaviour; however,these theories are different in their elucidation and education. Gender schema theory which is a combination of the stage and the socialization theories recommends that human develops schemas for learning about gender and gender roles(Bem,1988). One more theory that is symbolic interaction theory, it also postulates that gender is strictly a social construction and based on society's definitions of masculine and feminine, distinct gender roles are transfer and prop up by different mechanism within society (Blumer,1969; Lipman,1984, Mead,1964). In short symbolic interaction theory holds that a person's understanding of his or her role is subject to change. If plays are considered social

models, then how female and male characters are presented, it also questions how society on the run discriminates the roles of men and women. Our religious beliefs have made this system a legal and valid one also. As Manu, the Hindu law giver says, 'women are supposed to be in the custody of their father with their children; they must be in the custody of the husband when they married; and under the custody of their son in old age or as widows. In any circumstances she should not be allowed to assert herself independently.' This is the real status of woman in India, no matter she is Hindu, Muslim or belongs to any other religion. The leading Indian women writers in English highlighted the issues, problems and experiences of coeval Indian society. They have focused their writing towards women and present their problems in their writings. These writers include Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Geeta Mehta, Kamala Markandaya, Shobha De, Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy etc.

Present paper explores a broad continuum of feminist English literature with the deep survey in the works of Shashi Deshpande. Although modernists advocate these female writers as Dekavan(1999) noted that: "Despite the powerful presence of women writers in the founding of modernism and throughout its history, and despite their near- obsessive preoccupation with femininity in all modernists writing, the reactive misogyny so apparent in much male - authored modernism continuous in many quarters to produce a sense of modernism as a masculine movement" (p,126).

Although women had always been characters in plays, women's voices as serious playwrights were silent, and it was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that this began to change (Case,1988). By the 1960s, the status of female playwrights it was increasing, and after the rise of the second wave of feminism, "a more energized and forceful refocused attention on women's socio-political status, reopened artistic avenues for women and redefined both the nature and artistic expressions of women's experiences" (Kachur, 1991, p.16). The primary importance of this study rested in the broad topic of gender. The study of gender is pluridimensional in that it crosses the

bounds of history, sociology, psychology, and organisational development. Because of the far-reaching impact of gender, "research from one disciplines can therefore do much to inform one's own work and to provide new perspectives and a broader context for understanding research in one's own field" (Stephenson, Paludi, Black and Whilley, 1994,p.9).

Shashi Deshpande does not consider herself to be a feminist as she says that she writes about humans and their relationships, about their struggles to make their life sensible and to understand their place in the society. In an interview given to "The Times of India" on July 22, 2001, she says: "I am human being and write about other human beings who happen to be a woman." Most of her novels are true to life and deal with the problems of the women like rape in marriages, lust, breaking free from traditions, and stereotype. In her novel 'InThe Country of Deceit', she deals with the theme of love and adultery in postmodern society. Her novels "Roots and Shadows" And "The Dark Holds no Terror" explores the true situations which Indian women have to face in India. The character Indu and Saru come from very orthodox Hindu family. Right from their childhood, they were brought up with lots of do's and don'ts. In "Roots and Shadows", Akka and Jayant both represent the patriarchal society. He says: "Akka, I thought she was just an interfering old woman, but she was more than that. She was a proof one of the strong. A family is like any other group, there are the strong and weak; the strong have to dominate the weak and Akka I thought she was one of the strong ones, that is why she puts the burden on me (R A S, 3,145). Indu's marriage and Saru's marriage create a big problem in the house. Akku could not accept it because Jayant (Indu's husband) is from another religion: "Such marriages never work. Different caste, different language... it's all right for a while, but they realise" (RAS 69).

Saru and Manu always worked hard to straighten their life and survive their needs with money. When Saru was interviewed:

“How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?” This put the seed of ego and complexities in Manu's mind. There is an another incident when Saru and Manu meets Manu's colleague. Saru and Manu were shopping for their holiday trip on their vacations, and they accidentally meet Manu's colleague. Wife of Manu's colleague says:

"If you had married a doctor", the wife said tartly "you would have gone to Ooty too... London, Paris, Rome, Geneva".

Similarly in the 'Roots and Shadow', Indu is a radical woman. Right from her childhood, Indu had seen the secondary place occupied in the family. A simple situation like sending up a cup of tea for her to room was considered a breach of etiquettes. Women like children were supposed to know their place. She writes, "As a child they had told me I must be weak and submissive. why? I asked. Because you are a female. you must accept everything, even defeat with grace because you are a girl, they said. It is the only way, they said, for a female to live and survive. As I ...I had watched them and found it to be true" (RAS P. 145) Shashi Deshpande has tried to portray in her novel "In The Country of Deceit" that in the country of deception everyone lives in the fright and suffers mentally and emotionally throughout their life. In order to escape the guilt, they try to avoid everyone, even their relatives. In this novel, in the last scene of section third, she shows the relationship between Devyani and Ashoka. Devyani tells Savi that: "Ashok is the sun, the moon and the stars in my life".(219) She again says: “How can you love a man and not sleep with him? how can you not long for the physical Union? it's not just sex, it's showing your love through your body, it's seeing and feeling his love through his body" (226). The role of gender discrimination is clearly seen in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. In her novels women are supposed to be submissive, secondary and marriage is the most important thing for her. A woman without marriage cannot survive. In her novel 'Small Remedies', Shashi Deshpande shows the condition of women without men: 'Woman without man, I realised then, are totally different creatures'. She again says in her novel 'That Long Silence', "Marriage is very strange thing. It's very

public institution, it's meant to tell the world that two people are going to live together to declare that their children will be legal, that these children can inherit their property its meant for social leaving to ensure that some rules are observed, and so that men and women don't cross the limits drawn from them. At the same time, marriage is an intensely private affair, no outsider will know that states of someone else's marriage. It's a closed room, a locked room..." (TLS, p.292).

In our society, a woman is supposed to be like a goddess, and obedient wife and daughter and even a mother. She has no right to annoy or angry. "A woman can never be angry she can only be neurotic historical and frustrated." (TLS) Despite all these problems Shashi Deshpande also talks over the issues of menstrual, is considered to be a hurdle, a barrier in leading of free life by women. And the ideogram of this process shows a woman's growing, caring, feeling, loving and giving etc... The idea of childbirth is clearly portrayed in the poem of well-known famous poet Margaret Atwood's "Spelling":

"At the point where language 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 andthe word

splits and doubles and speaks

the truth and the body

itself becomes a mouth."

We can get a clear picture of childbirth and this picture is consolidated with the process of self knowledge. The present passage refers the three phases of a woman's life in accordance with the concept of Elaine Showalter. First stage is the 'Feminine stage', where "language falls away", where a woman silently yields with the norms and the convention of society. The second stage is the 'Feminist stage', it is a stage of self protest, where walls of uterus breaks and the realisation of knowledge and hollow existence comes into a woman. Finally the final stage is the 'Female stage', in this stage in body becomes a mouth, like a child comes out of the body, words from the mouth, the woman finally speaks out in disapproval. If we scrutinize her characters, we will find that the Shashi Deshpande's focus is on the collapse in the inner and outer lines of her of her women characters. Like D.H. Lawrence, she has also believes in the growing awareness among women in their rights and individualities. R.K. Srivastava observes: "Being a sensitive women novelist and gifted with a good observation, sensitiveness, a penetrating analysis and a skill to paint with words, Shashi Deshpande creates a such gallery of characters, both male and female dominated by latter"(157).Millet, (2000) systematically noticed the attributes, the qualities that always stigmatize women. They end up being a lesser human being, second to men. The following table summarises the opposite traits between men and women, which are very famous in our society.

| Feminity Traits | Masculinity Traits |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Traditional | Progressive |
| Neatly Dressed | Casual Outfits |
| Long Hair | Short Hair |
| Listener | Speaker |
| Kind | Wise |
| Weak | Strong |
| Passive | Rude |
| Shy | Brave |
| Empathetic | Hard Working |
| Submissive | Controlling |
| Powerless | Powerful |
| Independent | Independent |
| Emotional | Rational |

| | |
|-----------|------|
| Reluctant | Bold |
|-----------|------|

Above table exhibits the characterizations given to female around the world. Through these qualities women are generally portrayed as the passive sex who are either religious or vain. Religious women are described in modest clothing with dull colours. (Lee and Mahmoudi, 2020) while the vain women seem to concern themselves more with how they look with their either bright or soft colour clothing and long, well arranged and neatly accessorized hair (Setyono, 2018; Yang, 2016). Shashi Deshpande reflected this imbalance representation and gender stereotyped towards female characters in the form of the domination of male characters.

Conclusion:

The women of today are in a fair way to dethrone the myth of femininity; they are beginning to affirm their independence in concrete ways but they do not easily succeed in living completely the life of a human being. The abundance of work regarding Gender and gender discrimination in the novels of Shashi Deshpande suggests that this field is still a burning question in a society. The dreams and the struggles of female protagonists are well explained in her novels. Through this paper, I tried to analyse the imbalance representation and gender stereotyped attitude towards female characters in the forms of the domination of male. Characters, marginalization of women in domestic roles, and narrow range of occupational roles for women, and stereotypical characteristics of femininity and masculinity.

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