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SOCIAL, CULTURAL, PERSPECTIVE IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S
'THE DARK HOLD NO TERROR'

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Abstract

Deshpande renders with sympathetic understanding the variety of suffering a woman has to undergo. Sometimes the suffering is attached to the cultural, social taboos, and is compelled to digest torture. Deshpande usually describes Indian women in her novels. That is why the condition of women in our families. Deshpande's sincere attempt to break the silence of women has been widely acclaimed in home and abroad.

Keywords: Cultural, social taboos, silence, women etc

Socio – cultural Explorations

The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* by Shashi Deshpande basically expresses the frustration and disappointments of women. Deshpande experienced the social and cultural oppression in the male- dominated society. It highlights the agony and confused experience by women in male- dominated and tradition bound society. This clearly

point out, how a woman grows from self-surrender to assert her individuality with newly emerged identity. Don't go out in the Sun. You'll get even darker.

Who cares?

We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married.

I don't want to get married.

Will you live with us all your life?

Why not?

You can't?

And Dhruva?

He's different. He's a boy. (P.34)

The women in order to achieve her freedom seek marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. Saru went to Hindu temple every Friday, with her mother. She longed to carry the brass tray that contains flowers, coconut and the haldi and kumkum containers.

Ganpati bappa moray,

Pudhya varshi lavkar ya, (The Dark Holds No Terrors p.147).

People celebrated Ganpati too, baba bringing the elephant-trunked idol home

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with reverence and pride and installing it with pomp and fervor.

“There was always a puja on Dhruva’s birthday. A festive lunch in the afternoon and an art in the evening... My birthday was almost the same... but there was no puja”(P.167-169).

The Socio-Cultural conditioning of a girl is still a part of Indian culture. Saru is always made to feel unwanted, undesirable and ugly. According to her mother, physical beauty is a pre-condition of worldly success for a girl. So constantly criticizes Saru’s appearance.

“I was an ugly girl. At least, my mother told me so” (p.61).

It is a reaction against her dirty physical experiences. Her feminist being brutally crushed, she loses forever the dreams of sentiment and passion. Love, Romance, both, she knew too well, were illusions and not relevant to author life.

Shashi Deshpande’s major concern is to depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated Indian women caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self-expression, individuality and dependence for the women on the other. Her fiction explores the search of the women to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role as daughter, wife and mother.

But on the social level, these women who have been struggling since ages to assert themselves are still being hacked by their male counterparts and forced to remain silent. The voice of this newly emerged class of woman, who have the same education as the men are having and are sometimes given the opportunity of supporting themselves financially, is heard in the writings of Shashi Deshpande. A voice of protest against the marginalized condition of women as a class is also audible in her works.

This duality in relationship accounts for even a educated married career woman compromising her ideals to submit to the traditionally accepted submissive roles for survival and for keeping peace a home. Sarita feels:

Don’t struggle, don’t swim against the tide. Go along with it ... (P.137).

These women strive heroically to overcome their cultural conditioning and the barriers created by society in matters of tradition and manners. They finally emerge as free, autonomous individuals, no longer content to be led, but desirous of taking a lead. In the Indian context, an ideal self-hood in a woman requires to take into consideration the institution of marriage, wifehood and motherhood. Formerly you were the only identities women had. Even women, who wanted an identity of their

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own, were required to fulfill these sates in life. Women are seen to function as individuals within the familial background.

Thus, Deshpande is successful in creating strong women protagonists who refuse to get crushed under the Wight of their personal tragedies, and face life with great courage and strength. The novelist's greatness lies in the fact that her women characters seek and find harmony within traditional social setup.

But on the social level, these women who have been struggling since ages to assert themselves are still being heckled by their male counterparts and forced to remain silent. A voice of protest against the marginalized condition of women as a class is also audible in her works.

The unconventional are seen to suffer for their violation of accepted norms of society or for questioning them, death is the way out for them ...convention women suffer too, but their suffering is sanctified by the norms of Indian culture and particularly by that of a patriarchal culture (Bala P.18).

In our country with traditional background, husband and wife must have a foundation on love, which is important for a stable permanent relationship. A loveless married life causes the wife and the husbands do drift away from reach others, resulting into a total failure. An understanding between the two is possible only when there is true love for each other.

Conclusion

Deshpande, in her works defines freedom for the Indian woman within the Indian socio-cultural value system and institution creating strong, glorified female heroines, and has presented the Indian woman as facing the very dilemma of having to choose between modernity and convention. There include religious and cultural elements (such as myths, legends, ritual and ceremonies) and social.

While analyzing her novels, I realize that a similar progress in the protagonist's life is portaged in them. All her protagonists- Saru, Indu and Jaya are shown to be in a state of confusion at the beginning and self-realization. At the end, they emerge as more confident, more in control of themselves, and significantly more hopeful.

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