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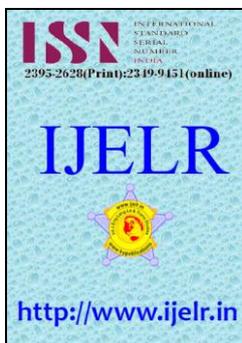
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DESHPANDE'S "THAT LONG SILENCE" AND "THE DARK HOLDS NO TERROR"

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ABSTRACT



Shashi Deshpande has been one of the strong supporters of women literature in the post modern literary ground. The present article has been prepared with a view to bring out the legacy of feminine ideologies which should be empowered in the global scenario. In her two famous novels namely *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *That Long Silence*, Deshpande has presented both Sarita and Jaya in the forefront of feminine protest. Both the two protagonists have such type of activities that are really significant towards the justification of female ideologies in the societal framework. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya's quest for her individual identity has been beautifully handled by her potentialities to stay fixed in her established rules against the patriarchal framework. Again, in *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Sarita, the protagonist of the novel has been taken as the central representative figure who raises her voice in favour of the common Indian women facing the same traumatic life. The life sketch of Sarita has really inspired and encouraged the other women who also have prepared themselves for struggling against the male dominance. Shashi Deshpande has tried to project a new identity for the women beings in lieu of their status in the household arena. The article has greater potentialities to inspire the women beings in Indian societies towards having a life of their own.

Keywords: Gender Discrimination, Traumatic Life, Women Status, Society

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1. INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande is one of the renowned women novelists belonging to the category of Indian Writing in English. Her novels bring into light a realistic and influent demonstration of Indian women's status in the broader societal context. The depiction of womanhood in relation to the changing conditions of the society has been purely analysed in her novels. Her novels are defensive about what the characters want to portray through their disclosure of their individual realities. Deshpande has never wanted to regard herself as a feminist, yet she has focussed primarily on the women issues and suppressions that undergo in every field of the societal arena. Her themes and issues in her novels are centred on the common lives and complexities

of women beings living in several types of disturbing environments. She has put both the men and women in the systematic positions under which the analyses are centralised in the context of women's problems problematized by both the men and the society. Actually, Deshpande has tried to voice against the ill-treatment of the male beings upon the women. The women characters in her novels are created in such an order that they are bound struggling against the tradition-bound systems of the conventional society in the middle class scenario of the contemporary India. The plots as well as the sub-plots of her novels offer an indicator to the cataleptic conditions of the women in their conflicting involvement against the male dominated middle class society. She has also argued that the women in her novels are not fixed in their struggling positions; rather they have resolved their redefined status by reforming the critical rules of the patriarchal society. Speaking about the potentialities of women's identity, Betty Friedan has counteracted the patriarchal set-up by arguing that the concept of feminine mystique has permitted and encouraged the women beings to keep aside the question of their individual identity. The mystique further speaks out that women can only answer the question that they belong to someone of the male beings as daughter, wife, daughter-in-law etc.

The backgrounds of most of Deshpande's novels are arranged with the ongoing occurrences of the middle class society where the changing status of a woman has become very much confusing. The protagonists in maximum number of her novels return back to the redefined situations of the society where a new world for them has been created by them with utmost care and trial. In logical terms, the capabilities of the women beings are upgraded by their individual psyche where the rules of the conventional society are transformed in relevance to the empowerment of women. The famous American feminist writer Betty Friedan has said that "A mother might tell her daughter, spell it out, 'Don't be just a housewife like me.' But that daughter, sensing that her mother was too frustrated to savour the love of her husband and children, might feel: 'I will succeed where my mother failed, I will fulfil myself as a woman,' and never read the lesson of her mother's life." (The Second Sex, p.54)

Deshpande's protagonists also have transformed in relation to the changing conditions of the social outlook. Her narratives have acquired the authentic ideologies of a woman's eternal voice. The secondary status of women is thrown out by her as her protagonists have prepared them to struggle against the dominant social norms where women are not permitted to occupy the major places in the conventional structure. The masculine concepts of virtue, contentment, relationship, dialect etc. are disregarded by Deshpande and she has perpetuated the role of women towards emphasising the legal identity of the women beings in the emerging structure of the traditional Indian society.

Deshpande has marched forward for fashioning a self hood for every woman in the conventional Indian society. She has prepared each single woman to fight for her individual rights and requirements that are suppressed by the male hierarchy. As remarked by Simon de Beauvoir, "The true woman is an artificial product that civilization makes, as formerly eunuchs were made. Her presumed 'instincts' for coquetry, docility are indoctrinated, as is phallic pride in man." (The Second Sex, p.428)

Deshpande has presumed that the society has the power to regulate the common human beings of any gender in its tremendous changes. The generations of women from traditional mythological structure up to the post modern arena are changing in accordance with the changing scenario of the social rules. The concepts like liberty, social foundation, independence, suppression etc. have been transformed as the time progresses gradually. In this context, Deshpande has identified the society of the traditional ancient women beings as reflected in her novels. She says that her grandmothers are those women who could be unable to accept the opportunities of development and growth of the society and who could only confine themselves inside the four walls of their home. But, in present times, the concept of home is purely changed by the attempts made by the young women of the modern society. The novels of Deshpande are framed on the backdrop of the discriminating gendered roles where the women are taken as the prime subjects for continuous upheaval of a perfect society.

2. Significant Features of the two Novels:

The title of the novel itself shows up the identity of the novel. The title, *That Long Silence* suggests that there are surely some types of maladjustments inside the psyche of each single woman character operating in different dimensions inside the societal platform. In the novel, the title puts forward the failure of the woman character to counteract with the society where she lives dynamically. In real terms, the silence that women suffer inside the society is the silence of their own self, their own expectations, their individual identities etc. Shashi Deshpande has projected the character of Jaya to rebel against the complexities of the society where women are not provided any types of logical platforms. Jaya has been created by Deshpande to oppose the cruelties of the society that applies some unbearable propositions upon the entire women community. After seventeen years of Jaya's married life, she has suffered huge amount of societal pressure as a result of which has become compelled to voice against the society for establishing her female identity. During her loneliness, she has prepared herself fit for the struggle that she is supposed to perform against the illogical activities of the society around her. At every moment, Jaya is found searching for her own identity. But, she is not given her feminine self by the society or by her own family members. The marriage that she has undergone has completely changed her feminine expectations as well as her visions of life. Like other novels of Deshpande, *That Long Silence* is also thematized as a quest for individual feminine identity. Most of the novels of Deshpande are basically narrated by the female protagonists who are found striving for their self sophistication of the concrete life of themselves along with the society. All of the female protagonists have succeeded by means of their writing habits for developing a systematic resolution in relation to their own individual selves.

In the starting of all the novels of Deshpande, the protagonists are seen trapped inside the suppressive environment of the family as well as the society which make them compelled to think themselves as worthless objects for the up-gradation of the patriarchal society. But, it is clear that towards the concluding parts of the novels, the protagonists have become capable of diagnosing their feminine identities and thereby they have become successful to overtake the confusions of their inner psyche for the establishment of a unique identity for the whole female community. Deshpande has confirmed that it is the capability of each single woman who can direct her own life circle at a reasonable shape and who can also free herself from the sense of futility pressurised by the society around her. In general terms, women are seen as successful externally, but in internal perspectives they are not up to the mark. This is because of their individual self assertion which makes them bearable at any social platform. Actually, the figure of woman is positioned as the embodiment of uncertain expectations. What a woman thinks cannot be thought by any other male beings in the society. The thinking process of every woman is not identical in nature. For example, though the female protagonists of the novels of Deshpande are projected with reference to the same context, yet their projections are completely different. Each single woman character is projected in different situations. Though they are the victims of the male dominated society, yet their struggles for freedom are not similar in nature. The character of Jaya can be systematized in terms of her self-analysis in relation to the cruel patriarchal platform. Jaya has suffered a lot which compels her to think about her feminine self. The real life struggle of Jaya has been elaborated in the novels with reference to her long term silence in the societal platform. Jaya has learnt a lot from her silence. She has become a matured lady not according to her age but according to her experience in life.

Jaya's character is presented in the midst of both the conventional and the modernistic perspectives. Being married to Mohan, Jaya has come under the supervision of the conventional societal set-up. She has done according to the rules of the society. What society projects upon her, she has obeyed that without any protest. Deshpande has represented all the women beings of the middle class society who have suffered same types of situations by standing on the same realistic positions. In the novel, Jaya has revealed the frustrations, alienations and emotional traumas that she has undergone in her life which have also destroyed her internal ideologies of observing the realities. In the starting part of the novel, Jaya is found satisfied with her marriage with Mohan, a man of renowned social status. But, as the time goes on, Jaya has started to face the difficulties that the middle class society has projected upon her. She has become dependent upon her husband for

existing in the society. That is, she has faced a type of situation where loneliness has become the constant companion for the establishment of her individual identity. One thing is clear that Jaya has suffered a lot not because of her silence of life, but because of her life partner that she chooses for marriage. Being a man of social status, Mohan is also a man orthodox view. In some of the situations, Jaya has been compelled to abide by the conventional rules of the society to the extreme point. It is because of the nature of her husband that she becomes unable to involve inside the modernistic purview of life. Actually, Mohan did not provide much freedom to Jaya in her fulfilment of her own expectations. Jaya has failed both mentally and physically to come closer to her husband in all the matters relating to their conjugal life. Though her family is perfect externally consisting of her husband and her two children, yet she is not satisfied at all, because she has been suffering from silence and loneliness from the time reveals her own self. Jaya's husband Mohan has never tried to understand the inner emotional ideologies of Jaya and her desires. In reality, she has been gifted the type of a life which is always troublesome and uncultured from all corners. The entire novel continues with Jaya in her gradual emergence as a confident woman who has shown full control of herself in leading her life to a goal-oriented position. In her life, Jaya has rejected all types of deformities coming under the dominance of the patriarchal framework. She has rejected the identity of conventional, mythological women figures like Savitri, Sita and Draupadi. She has not accepted the relationship between herself and her husband as pure and sophisticated; instead she has regarded the relationship between married counterparts as the pair of a bullock. Deshpande has used the image of a worm crawling towards a hole to identify the troublesome condition of Jaya who has fallen under the trap of stereotypical process of home-making environment.

The following lines indicate the situation of Jaya in spite of being an emerging writer in the society.

A woman can never be angry; she can only be neurotic, hysterical, frustrated. There's no room for anger in my life..... There's only order and routine- today I have to change the sheets; tomorrow, scrub the bathrooms; the day after clean the fridge..... (*That Long Silence*, p.147-148)

Shashi Deshpande has analysed the character of Sarita in her famous novel *The Dark Holds No Terror*. The novel tells the theme of marriage in terms of its complex societal realities and the treatment of the female self as otherness. The protagonist Sarita is projected as a successful lady doctor, but she is all the time thrown into the complexities of the society for being the other human being. The patriarchal framework is so strong in the societal outlook that not a single female being can come forward to disclose her own identity in front of the general public. The story of the novel tells the critical conditions of Sarita in relation to her conflicts with both the private and the public spheres. During the daytime she is a popular lady doctor and in the night time she is trapped in the hands of her husband Manohar who is an English teacher in a small college. The novel starts with the returning of Sarita to her father's origin home after a gap of fifteen years. Actually, she had decided not to come to her father's home in any case, but the societal as well as the family situations were so much bore some that she could not control herself to return to her own home for having a peaceful state of mind. Sarita returns specially being unable to bear the sexual atrocities done upon her by her husband. The narrative of the story of the novel is formed with the juxtaposition of both the past and the present. After coming to her father's house Sarita has understood the techniques through which she has prepared herself to face the realities regarding her ill-treatment projected upon her by the male dominated society. Sarita's ambitions in her life have been justified after she has come into the realities of the society as well as her individual identity. She realizes that her passions and ambitions can only be fulfilled by the medium of having a routine education in her desired field. This is evident that Sarita is found seeking for college education after she finishes the school educational processes. When Sarita becomes a doctor, she has taken that profession very honestly which at the same time brings her both respect and a proper identity. Her neighbours become aware of her professional identity from the day she walks back in a blood stained coat after serving the victims of an accident. This profession has lifted her up a little bit in comparison to her husband Manohar. The positions that both Sarita and Manohar preserve are not identical for Manohar. Actually the impact of the patriarchal society is so strong that Manohar has suffered from a complexity to live with his wife systematically as before. He has faced lots of problems to establish his own egotistical position in the society. A kind of separation has come between them since Sarita becomes a doctor. The marital relationship is also deformed as Sarita has

become the centre of attraction for the public. The respects that Sarita has received from her well wishers can be understood in the following lines-

And now, when we walked out of our room; there were nods and smiles, murmured greetings and namastes. But they were all for me, only for me. There was nothing for him. He was almost totally ignored. (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P. 42)

From traditional point of view, the relationship between husband and wife is based on some mutual strategies which are loyal and conservative. Whoever a wife is or whatever a wife does, she should follow those rules and regulations which are mandatory in the society. But, the relationship between Sarita and Manohar is significantly different from the conventional perspectives of the society. The feminine potentialities are seemed to arise up in case of Sarita. It is due to her profession that she has become able to cover up her troublesome life with a vision of perfection and sincerity. In the society, Sarita is recognised and respected by the common neighbours who have come frequently to visit her. Manohar is found disturbed in his complexities arisen from the gradual improvement of Sarita's life style in the public sphere. In this context, Sarita has put forward the following significant sentences which would verify the complex relationship between Manohar and herself. The lines are-

But now I know that it was there it began.....this terrible thing that has destroyed our marriage. I know this two.....that the human personality has an infinite capacity for growth. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband. (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.42)

Shashi Deshpande has analysed the rigid societal rules and regulations fixed for the suppression of women beings in the private sphere. The novelist has observed the realities of the society which are not acceptable for an educated lady like Sarita. But she is also confined to mobilise her personal life in front of the complex scenario of the society. In the novel, Sarita is seen writing to the young students of her friend Nalu like –

A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he's an MA, you should be a BA. If he's 5'4" tall, you shouldn't be more than 5'3". If he's 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. (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P.137)

These lines have greater significance in relation to the determination of the identity of a woman in the society. The patriarchal society is so much rooted in the blood of each individual being that if at times it is attempted to reform some illogical ideologies from the mind and psyche, some barriers come into the forefront and then interrupt the whole process of women's independence.

3. CONCLUSION

Towards the end part of the novel, the process of self realization in respect to Jaya has been brought into focus with skilful logicalities. Deshpande has argued that a woman always seeks for a family which is liberal and which is free from complex conservative rules formulated by the society. The family members should always offer sophisticated liberal propositions to women figures whereby they can perform their duties in a proper way. The novel is written with the vision of empowering the women potentialities in respect to prepare them to struggle against the hallmarks of silence and solitude. Deshpande has also put forward her opinion about feminine ideologies that women should never lose themselves out backwards for becoming the victims of male dominance. They should learn how to fight against the cruel nature of the patriarchal society in every moment. The ill-treatment of the conservative and conventional frameworks have really pressurised them to the deepest and to rescue them from that situation, they should always look forward for deserving a perfect life consisting of peace and happiness.

Deshpande has proclaimed that the novel is a treatise on the state of Indian women. Being a woman herself, the novelist has presented a realistic study of the attitude and conduct of women in Indian middle class families. If it is observed the real base of the family of Sarita, it can be said that the father of the protagonist is a silent man while her mother is excessively critical in every subject. Deshpande has brought out powerfully the psychological problems of a career woman and has discussed it artistically without crossing the

barriers of art. The novelist has tried to project the conceptual framework of an independent lady in the midst of utter complexities. Sarita has stood upon her own feet and thereby she has realized the actual identity of a woman in the patriarchal society. Sarita has also realised that,

We come into this world alone and go out of it alone. The period in between is short. And all those ties we cherish as eternal and long-lasting are more ephemeral than a dewdrop. (*The Dark Holds No Terror*, P. 208)

Deshpande's portrayal of the female characters like Sarita can be compared to the moral implications of women identity in the societal framework as evident in "The Feminine Mystique" written by Betty Friedan who points out, divides and systematically indicts one of the most extensive local concepts of post-war American life and society which is the myth of suburban women's individualistic fulfilment, that is 'the feminine mystique'. Both the two books have identical issues relating to the projection of women in the patriarchal platform. On one hand, Betty Friedan has discussed about the female self by referring to the women beings of the American society and on the other hand, Shashi Deshpande has talked about the conditions of the women in Indian purview by documenting on the post colonial ideologies. The concept of otherness has occupied a greater place in both the two books and the identity of the female self has been perfectly structured in terms of the justification of the feminine potentialities arisen from the psyche of each single woman in the present society. It can be argued that the entire article has larger importance towards the empowerment of women not in the American societal platform, but also around the entire world including the arena of Indian literary platform.

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