

Tradition versus Modernity in Shashi Deshpande's Novels

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Abstract:

Traditions are necessity of human life that travels from one generation to another. At the same time while observing the past there will be some mutations gradually. These are exhibited in Shashi Deshpande novels. Shashi Deshpande has also tried to exhibit how to scroll on the path of modernity by holding the hand of tradition. The authentic recreation of India is also a distinct feature of her novels. The woman deprived of love, understanding, and companionship is the center of her work. Her subjects are the realities of women's lives and the truths that lie behind their silence. Keeping in view the long-standing traditions of Indian society, she seeks solution to the problem by changing mind set of the men folk towards the women. The world of men now is in a process of women thinking. It cannot be changed without changing man's way of thinking.

Key Words: Women, Tradition, Modernity, Identity.

Intoduction:

Most of Deshpande's novels are in the form of first-person narrative. The narrator is usually the protagonist herself. It is only through her point of view that the readers are watching the actions. Since her novels are mainly concerned with the women's quest, every novel becomes an exploration into the female psyche as well as an understanding of the protagonist's place in it. When most Indian novelists glorify the virtues of Indian women such as their patience, chastity selflessness and sacrifice, she explodes the myth of woman being an embodiment of all virtues. Shashi Deshpande accidentally became a writer and her rise in the literary world has been meteoric.

Her writing career began after the birth of her two sons. First, she started to write her experiences only and her father published it in Deccan Herald. Later when she was working for the magazine onlooker, she wrote a short story, which was published and was highly appreciated by the readers. Then she started to write stories. She herself has stated how she suddenly became writer in her interview to BBC world service.

Women Being Tradition:

Deshpande's main characters that can be seen moving from a passive acceptance to that of active assertion. They neither succumb to societal pressure nor break away from accepted traditional and societal institutions. They remain intact as successful individuals. Though they were born and brought up in traditional families, they want to be more than mere daughters, wives and mothers. They are neither rebels nor they conformist. Every woman is a preserver of peace and happiness at home. If one says that every home is happy, it does not mean that all the members of the household are happy, but what it means is that all the women in the household are happy and their happiness keeps others happiness assured and in fact. Such happiness arises out of peaceful, harmonious and prosperous life in a house, and so it mainly depends on women who rule it for its betterment and economic advancement.

Women Being modernity:

It deals with a woman's attempt to assert her individuality and realize her freedom. Deshpande's novel Roots and Shadows projects the inner world and thoughts of Indu, the protagonist. She is a revolutionary woman, and she appears to be acting against dominance right from her childhood. She refuses to be cowed down by Akka, the rich family tyrant who is dominating her ancestral home. After marriage, she is totally unwilling to become a puppet in the hands of her husband, Jayant. She is not able to understand the type of life she is leading. Hence, she starts questioning it and rethinking of her life such as her journalistic career, her marriage, and her illusion of hard-won independence. She meets Naren, her cousin and feels that he understands her more than Jayant does. She gets attracted to him and shares her problems and lives with him. At last, she decides to return to Jayant. This novel deals with a woman's individuality and her freedom. Deshpande's women who become the strong foundation of these stories are of all ages, and they belong to all social levels and contexts. These short stories also can be categorizing as (1) the stories that mirror the reality portraying the subjugated position of women in Indian Society and (2) the stories that shape the reality by depicting the reaffirmation of women.

Man and Woman relationship:

It deals with family relationship in Shashi Deshpande's novels. Generally, Man and woman are complementary to each other. Neither of them can claim any superiority over the other. But it is always the woman who watches over, teaches and guides the man in his life. In Shakespearean plays, many such ideal women have been portrayed. One of such perfect examples of womanhood is Viola, the heroine of Twelfth Night. Without Viola in Twelfth Night, there is no beginning, no middle and no end. She possesses all those virtues necessary for an ideal woman.

She has love, beauty, patience, resourcefulness and modesty. Wherever she is, she is the sunlight of happiness and makes peace reign supreme. She acts as the helpmate of man, his guide and ministering angel. But there is no equality of status between man and woman. The women are subjugated to male dominance and made to suffer silently and are ready to sacrifice herself for the welfare of her family. Tradition has taught the Indian woman to have a muted experience. From her very childhood, the girl child is taught to accept her place in silence. She is often expected to accede to the distinction between herself and her brother without any objection. She is not allowed to raise her voice against men and she is told repeatedly that the behavior of a girl must be submissive. As she grows, she is forced to accept that helping in household chores is her responsibility. Her desire to study or her need to play is considered insignificant compared to more important things like helping in the kitchen.

Gender discrimination:

It deals with the silent sufferings of the women characters. They are subjugated to the male demonism. It focuses on the gender discrimination faced by the protagonist in the novels of Deshpande. Gender discrimination or sexism is a prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Sexism can affect either gender, but it is particularly documented as affecting women and girls. In the male dominating society, women are treated as inferior to men. The heroines of Shashi in the novels mutely endure the injustice done to them or resign to a life of hopeless despair. The educated and intelligent women also refuse to submit or resign to an unquestioning life. Besides, they are not outspoken to the injustices done to women in the name of tradition. Though it angers them, they are unable to revolt initially. But the silence suppressed with anger differentiates them from most of the other characters. If they are outspoken, they would have escape from their silentsufferings.

Conclusion:

Concludes with a final review of earlier chapters conducted in this chapter and a close emphasis has been thrown on the main results. Deshpande's novels do not limit itself to woman's predicament and woman's quest for identity and space as an individual but it also shows how contrast between tradition and modernity deals with each other and how it impacts on human relationship within the family. Shashi Deshpande has wonderfully conveyed that life is not pure acceptance or pure rejection but it is integration of both. The family is a foundation of human history and a very little change in the role of woman seems to threaten the existence of the family which follows certain values and traditions. How traditions and beliefs can put its impact on relationships between parents and children, brother and sister, husband and wife.

Here Shashi Deshpande wonderfully explores the journey of the protagonist from rejection of traditions and attraction to modernity to her acceptance of both at the balanced level. And all their transformations affect the concept of family. But it shows how the concept of family can exist in the battle between tradition and modern. It reveals cultural unity as well as diversity in the society, which can be useful for the students of literature from sociological point of view. The analysis of the literary works presented can also be helpful to the students of literature for further research in the field.

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