

THE FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVEL: "IN THE COUNTRY OF DECEIT"

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Abstract

Indian rich and cultural traditional values have given it a celebrated distinguished identity among all over the world. Undoubtedly, Indian affluent customary heritage is being appreciated and escalated worldwide, as a result of its widely renowned wisdom and prominent traits of civilization since the time immemorial. But this hard fact cannot be denied that some outdated unacceptable dogmas have coarsened the glare of extremely acknowledged Indian historical conventions and subsequently, the women category had to pay a lot to keep these cultural traditional values alive among the civilization not only within the historical contexts but also in the present scenario, that we can perceive around most of the societies of Indian civilization. The women category is highly expected to be obedient and subservient against the conservative rituals which had been laid down for them by their patriarchal households inspired by the male-dominated traditional system of society. These unauthorized cultural dogmas are influenced by the superstitious beliefs of the people of the old generations, who want the same to be followed by the upcoming civilizations also. Traditionally pressurized and brainwashed group of every new civilization follows the same as predisposed by the elder members of the society to keep the cultural values being breathing and to be continued as well. With the awakening, the awareness spread by the education, modernity and advancement with the progress of science and technology, some enlightened people of civilization in the Indian environment have been conscious to raise their voice against the sufferings correspondingly the exploitation and humiliation of women under the ascendancy of the male-dominated patriarchal system of the primitive orthodox customary rituals. Unquestionably, a large number of women in Indian male-dominated civilization are still playing their submissive traditional roles to satisfy the inclinations of their concerned orthodox households. But some apprehensive women with their innovative exposure of modernity seem to be more conscious against their mortification and subsequently want to have a desirable change in their pathetic conditions of women caused by the ongoing undesirable practices being imposed over them by the patriarchal set-up of the orthodox society. This awakened category of the women of society put their sincere endeavours to work for the upliftment of the women by dragging them out of the marsh of some outdated dead habits and norms that have ever been tried to snatch the liberty of the women. One such woman amongst the other awakened women is, Devayani Mudhol; the female protagonist reproduced by a well renowned writer Shashi Deshpande. Being herself a woman, Shashi Deshpande has delved deep inside to the inner psychic mind of her heroine and has projected Devayani Mudhol as a role model of extreme modernity who does not want to live any more under the tyrannical orthodox rules of her own household inspired by the society of Indian civilization. Throughout her complete novel, Shashi Deshpande has projected her heroine as a bold and confident independent woman who leads the course of her life with full freedom and choice of her own which reveals the feministic perspective of the female protagonist of the novel towards her upliftment and liberty as well.

Keywords: Traditional, Cultural, Conservative, Customary, Exploitation, Humiliation, Primitive, Orthodox and Dogmas.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande belong to the Indian middle-class traditional patriarchal households which demand from them to play their respective roles as per their family lineage. Most of them accept their traditional roles without any contemplation but among them, some women like the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande are outspoken, courageous, and modern

enough as they are well educated and well aware with their human rights which pave the way for them towards their independent course of life. Devayani Mudhol, the protagonist of the novel, "In the Country of Deceit" is among the protagonist of Shashi Deshpande who has the modernistic attitude towards her own liberal life without any restriction and the impediments created by the customary rituals of the conservative values. She has been a law student and so that, is well awakened and aware with her individual rights and the rights being a woman of such orthodox society. Hence, she does not want to be bother with the conservative primitive rituals of the contemporary civilization which force to suppress the rights, liberty and identity of women. Devayani Mudhol bravely and boldly confronts and then rejects the outdated rituals of civilization and ascends herself from the bottom of such orthodox dogmas of the traditional values to the top of the utmost modernity of the present civilization by mounting to the peak of modernisation in term of the western concept of modernity by breaking the tapering barricades of conservative customs of the society which gives less importance to the female category of the society as compare to the male category of the same community. She gets the glorious success to establish the identity of new women among her community and then settles down the example to the other women of the society that women can also do better if they are given the opportunity among the society to show their dexterity and capabilities in their respective fields of agility. During the whole course of the novel, she puts down her sincere endeavours to submerge the perfect example of an emerging woman by fighting with the primitive traditions of such an orthodox society; as the most challengeable task to the women of male-dominated society.

DEVYANI MUDHOL; THE FEMALE PROTAGONIST OF THE NOVEL, REPRESENTING THE FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN THE NOVEL, "THE COUNTRY OF DECEIT"

"The time has come for women to stop seeing through men's eyes and language. We have to have a different and distinct women's voice". (Prof. Biswas)

Devayani Mudhol, the protagonist of the novel, "In the Country of Deceit" has been depicted as a brave, bold and courageous woman by Shashi Deshpande who lives in a small primitive town of Rajnur, India. She belongs to a middle-class family having great reputation within her community. She is well-educated so

that she is well-aware with her rights as well as with her position within her community. Her education is the outstanding achievement for her in such an orthodox society where the women are not allowed to get higher education as the contemplation of the society that it would be mere the wastage of time and then are expected to play their respective conventional roles for their traditional family households. Devayani Mudhol confidently and proudly takes advantage of her achievement by saying:

“Yes, I have done my law too.” (87)

It is a common belief of the Indian traditional and primitive civilizations since the time immemorial that women are only meant to play their conventional roles within their household and they are not allowed to perform any activity without the permission of their husbands or the other elder members of their families. On contrary to this, the men of the society are meant to look after the outside home affairs as there is considered the dexterity of men in this field and they are only meant to take the responsibilities of the outside affairs. One such contemplation is there that the women cannot survive and also is unable to perform any of the hard occupation without the help of men in the family household. But here in the novel, Devayani Mudhol proves the thinking and considerations of the society wrong and baseless. She lives in her home with her self-esteem and confidence alone. She undertakes the responsibility to demolish the old ancestral house of her parents and to build the new one in place of that old one and finally gets the success in her desired goal. To build her new stately house, she only takes help of other women, her sister Savitri to whom she often addresses as, “Savi”. By undertaking and performing her assignment skilfully, she explores her will power to show her dexterity in performing her endeavours in that direction, for which the society contemplates it as a duty which can only be performed by the men of the civilization and is far reaching from the capabilities of the women. By performing her venture in her desired destination, she gets the triumph of her endeavours and proves the primitive deliberation of the orthodox convictions, inaccurate. Devayani herself takes pride of her victory and proclaims:

“Yes, I live alone. My sister and I had demolished our old home
and build this one.” (12)

As the traditional values of the cultural heritage of India has always seem to establish the supremacy of male category over the female of the different civilizations of Indian conservative rituals. Similarly, there can be seen the supremacy of male category over the literary compositions also. In this connection, Virginia Woolf, a feminist writer explores the profound concern of the female category. Virginia Woolf, in her essay based upon her lecture delivered in October 1928, at Newnham College and Garton College, women constituent colleges at the University of Cambridge and later published in September, 1929, entitled as, "A Room of One's Own" has artistically been depicted the conditions of female category not only in social strata but also in the field of literary works of art where the omission of women can be seen clearly. Here the wide difference can be observed not only in the domestic situation of women but also the negligence of women in every sphere of life. Men of the society are only considered to be intellectually superior rather than women. The women of the primitive civilizations can be perceived as the blind followers of the men but the women of the modern civilization are coming out of their homes to show their efficacy. There is no field that has been left behind in the present scenario where the women have not shown their dexterity and efficiency. They are constantly walking towards the culmination of success with their male counterpart.

Shashi Deshpande's heroine, Devayani is not only an educated woman but also occupies the scholastic productiveness who does possess the high level of intellectual capabilities. During the beginning course of novel, she is observed to be engaged in her literary composition in translation work in English language which shows her efficacy and expertise in English literature and composition. It is the enterprise assigned to her by her mother's teacher to translate the book 'History of Rajnur' from Kannada language to English language. Even though she is a law graduate but this undertaking of her, reveals her scholastic achievement in the field of language compositional mission. She explores her gratification in form of disclosure of her competency:

"I'm translating a book, a history of Rajnur, from Kannada." It was written by my mother's old teacher- he's dead now. When his son asked me to translate it, I couldn't say no." (14)

As for her personal life is concerned, she does possess the modernistic and liberal attitude towards the reality when she comes across with her self-realisation, her physical and biological needs being educated, aware adult and broad-minded in her nature towards her own independent course of life. When she meets Ashok Chinappa, a new SP in Rajnur, she is attracted by his manly appearance. Her spirit of youth further is stimulated by Ashok Chinappa and she decides to surrender herself to her lover, Ashok Chinappa. Her modernistic perspective force herself to enjoy the independent sexual life with her lover without any fear of the family household or of the society. She herself does acknowledge:

“I lay in bed wide awake, conscious of my body in its nightdress, thinking, that’s the point of marriage. Sex without guilt. Sex without any strings attached. Sex without fear.” (77)

Shashi Deshpande portrays Devayani, having the standpoint of the extreme modern ideology who does not want to be bothered about the traditional orthodox rituals of the society. She herself capitulates herself to Ashok Chinappa without any contemplation and beyond the concept of morality even knowing the reality of her lover Ashok Chinappa that he is a married man having a daughter of him. Though, Devayani is virgin as compare to Ashok Chinappa but she spontaneously submits her heart and even her body to her lover Ashok Chinappa when Ashok tries to start advancement in the new relationship with her:

“He carefully unpinned the sari and began unravelling it from my body...I let him go on....and now I was part of it too, my lips were seeking him, my hands began roving over his body, my body made room for him and finally painfully, joyfully, accepted him...’ (132)

Devyani, in her bewilderment, sometimes comes across between the concept of evil and morality and then between lawful and unlawful and is confused for sometimes. But then finally she comes upon the conclusion with the help of her modern concept of utmost reality and her own biological and emotional needs, after all. After so much consideration upon such domain she ultimately comes upon the conclusion that every aspect of the social behaviour and humanity is only a splash and she has needed not to think over such aspects. She is modern

and liberal enough to enjoy her life through her own ideology of life and that is sufficient on her part. During her discourse with her sister upon the matter of her relationship with Ashok, she proclaims:

“I did it because I wanted him, I wanted to be with him, I wanted to be in his company, I wanted to sleep with him, I wanted this relationship...” (142)

Devayani is pure in her perspective and in her conduct even. She does not want to deceive herself and to the persons who are directly or indirectly associated to her. She enters in the new relation with Ashok Chinappa with the fair attitude knowingly the conditions and prospective future of this new relationship very well. In her fair treatment, Devayani Mudhol does not accept the proposal of marriage which is brought to her by her sister Savitri. She outrightly given her non-discriminatory reaction to this new situation which is being created by her sister in front of her. In her unprejudiced perspective towards an unknown person to whom her sister is thinking of marrying her, Devayani puts forth her realistic approach of sentiments before her sister with this impartial wording:

“And will you tell him I’m virgin? Will you say I’m pure and chaste and untouched? That I’m not second-hand goods?”
(185)

Both the women; Devayani and Savitri are of the same generation but there is broad difference between the perspectives of both of them towards the reality. Savitri here seems that she has been accepted her traditional roles within her community and her household but contrary to this, Devayani is not ready to accept and play the conventional roles of the patriarchal system of the society. She has nothing to do with these conventional orthodox rituals being laid down by the primitive systems of the old civilizations. In her extreme modern realistic ideology towards her independent course of life, she openly reveals her innermost desires and further consequences of her relationship with her lover, Ashok Chinappa. She explores about her present and prospective future perspectives of her relationship with Ashok to her sister Savitri in a plain forward tone:

“He’s not cheating me. I know we will never marry. And he hasn’t deceived me. I knew he was married. In the car I told her

that I was meeting Ashok in Bombay that we were to spend two days together.” (186)

Devayani’s modern feministic perspective does arise to its peak point when she confronts with the overconcerns of her sister for her and her future life. She is a modern and a law-graduate woman, who is well aware with her individual rights and with her own physical and emotional inclinations. Her sister Savitri want Devayani to discontinue her illicit conjugal relationship with her lover Ashok Chinappa but contrary to this Devayani is enjoying her new relationship which has given her a new life with an aim and the cause of happiness. How this happiness and charm can be snatched by anyone from her? She is not ready to be bother about the customs, about the society, about her relatives and all of the people who are associated to her. On the point of the frequent admonition of her sister, she becomes propulsive and then speaks out to her sister in hard tone, as her innermost awakened feministic perspective of an emerging women of the present world civilization:

“I’m an adult; I can take my own decisions. You can’t protect me, Savi, I’m not a child.’... I love him, Savi. It hurts me when you talk that way to him, about him. I love Ashok, can’t you understand that?” (221)

This new feministic perspective of Devayani Mudhol takes her towards the extreme of modernity as Rosalind Miles observes:

“A new type of woman has emerged, putting a decisively new inflexion on what Hardy called, “The ache of Modernity”.
(Rosalind Miles, 149)

SUMMERISATION

The female category of the primitive civilization has been remained the subject of merely the followers of the outdated orthodox rituals of the patriarchal traditions having no liberty or the viewpoint of their own in every walk of their life. They are expected to proceed after their cultural values established by their forefathers or the other elder members of the society. They have to suffer a lot; through their mental and physical torture, their exploitation and their negligence everywhere on the basis of their sex determination within their community and in family lineage. But the women of the present civilizations are educated enough

who are well aware with their rights and their own needs. Shashi Deshpande has depicted the role model of the emerging new women through her female character; Devayani Mudhol, who occupies the modernistic attitude towards the reality and with the help of her life style and life's journey, she has sounded the death-knell to the primitive out dated orthodox conservative rituals of the Indian culture and then succeeds to set the example of modern independent life to the female category of the Indian environment who have been the victimised creature of the civilization in male-dominated society since the time immemorial.

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