

DEPICTION OF HARDSHIPS, PAIN AND SUFFERINGS FACED BY WOMEN IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THAT LONG SILENCE

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ABSTRACT:

In the Indian perspective, a number of feminists have realized that the area under discussion of woman's enfranchisement should not be reduced to the contravention between male and female. In order to liberate herself, the women needs to make powerful herself to tackle different institutional structures and enlightening practices that subject herself to patriarchal supremacy and control. This research paper analyses how the Indian English novel writer, Shashi Deshpande uses the genre of fiction as a medium to convey the culture to learners exhibiting the Indian family life in a detailed approach, their traditional background or their own subservient attitude makes a survival fittest and shows how woman survives even in the critical circumstances of their life and it exposes the depiction of hardships ,pain and sufferings faced by the women

KEYWORDS: Hardships, Depiction, Pain Sufferings, Subservient.

I. INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande , as one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English. She has her own way of presenting the situations and characters in her novels. The theme of her novels, if stated in general terms, is the condition of women vis-à-vis men. She believes that women very often suffer due to male chauvinism and their own defeatism. The novelist places some hard facts to arouse women to action. The title of this novel *That Long Silence* itself implies that women do not raise their voice against suppression. Jaya, the heroine of the novel, was so named by her father because it meant victory, but victory never came to her in life. She was married to Mohan, a man who had no qualms in adopting unfair means for money, while she was straight and upright in everything. Jaya had to accept silently what he was doing – she was yoked with him – yet she was held responsible for all his misdeeds, and made a scapegoat by him. She said nothing to disapprove the allegations made against her own husband, though she knew well that the allegations were unfounded and meaningless. Deshpande wants the women to be aware of the subordinate position they have placed themselves in for the sake of their husbands and children. They have become wives and mothers and ceased to be individuals. Jaya, for instance, felt at one stage – when she flipped the pages of her old diaries, that she had been the wife of Mohan and mother of Rahul and Rati all over, but never herself anywhere. The woman sank her personality for the sake of her husband and children, yet she remained subordinate to them. The protagonist saritha represents the status of women in our country in the novel “ *The Dark Holds No Terror*” and she says women must be subservient to her husband if she wants to lead a happy married life. And, she knows that if she resists subservience she will be doomed. Woman's magazine will tell you that a marriage should be an equivalent partnership, which is “gibberish.Garbage”, in Deshpande's words. Thus Deshpande wants to bring an awakening among women so that they may fight for equal partnership with men.

She further says that the story of gender discrimination is not a new development – it began since the beginning of civilization. She has given an example of Shakuntala who was extorted by the saints to live in the harem of the king, no matter if the king had refused to recognize her as his wedded wife. Again Draupadi had to follow her husbands to the jungle though the husbands had put her at stake and lost her in the game of dice. She then observes that in Sanskrit drama, women characters have to speak Prakrit, while male characters spoke Sanskrit because Sanskrit is considered the language of advanced, learned people. Jaya felt that Prakrit sounded like ‘a baby lisp’. She thought she had been speaking Prakrit all her life. Jaya was told by her Ajji not to argue with her husband. And Mohan's mother, Jaya was told, had never raised her voice against her husband ‘though he treated her roughly’. On one occasion, Jaya asked Mohan to cook foodstuff for her in the early months of her pregnancy since the smell of oil and spices made her sick.

When he expressed his inability, Jaya said that she was sure he would cook well as his mother was a cook. This remark enraged Mohan. He stopped talking to her for days. Jaya had to make the first conciliatory move because she had realized that Mohan was shattered. He didn't expect such a forthright remark from his wife. On another occasion, Jaya was shaken when she saw marks of distaste on Mohan's face when she had got into a temper, signifying that a woman had no right to be angry. He thought anger made a woman 'unwomanly'. By all these instances, the novelist has shown that woman is not supposed to raise her voice, not to revolt against injustice, whatever happens to her.

With these views in mind, the novelist sets out to present her characters. Obviously, she wants to say that Mohan and Jaya are not typical characters, representing the two classes of husband and wife. She has drawn particular character with their own peculiarities. Mohan is not a general case. He had a bad childhood-his father did not have money to pay the school fee yet he was irascible by nature. His mother was poor, pitiable woman, who went to cook during functions in other people's homes. Mohan has tasted the rigours of poverty and humiliation. He became, in a way, a psychologically affected person, obsessed with money, and rooted in present-day mores. When he found himself caught in a financial scam, he said like a modern scammer, "I have just accepted a few favours from people I know. Things are not too bad, I'm not that involved. Agarwal-I doesn't know how Agarwal slipped, he was always very careful." He had no compunction, since he had to make quick money.

The writer has used the technique of placing foils to highlight the characteristics of her characters. Mohan, a man of day-to-day world was married to Jaya, who rooted in traditional moral values. When she came to know that Mohan was involved in a financial scam, she thought of Nair family who has committed harakirin masse. Mohan had a tendency to shift his blame to others. He first said that Agarwal was to blame, but soon changed his stance and said that his wife was to blame. Jaya, on the contrary, could not say anything in defence though she knew that allegations against her were false. Next, Mohan never cared for Jaya's feelings while Jaya was always careful not to hurt him. Jaya recollected that she had a mind to laugh when people who came to Mohan's party appeared to her 'like the animals in Noah's Ark, as all of them, she observed, had the same smiles and made the same remarks, but she suppressed her smile, because she would not laugh at anything that mattered to Mohan. She felt, "If I did so, it would diminish him, and who wanted a dwarfed husband? Certainly, I didn't" (59). Mohan on the contrary, went on making false allegations and finally walked out on her.

It is a women-centric novel. Naturally, Kusum, Jaya, Mukta, Vanitamami, Jaya's mother, and grand-mothers, Jeeja, Nayana, Manda, Nilima, etc. occupy the centre-stage. None of these women has any defect of character and every one of them is the victim of male violence. Jeeja, Nayana and Manda are the domestic servants, discharging essential services. Jaya realizes that the fortunate women who concentrate their work happily are those that have husbands who are in lucrative jobs, never drank or beat their wives. She never bothers about them. She wants to support those women like jeeja and others, who have saved her from the hell of drudgery. Any little freedom she has depends on them. And Jaya and her like wouldn't wish them any different life. All of them suffer a lot by their husbands, was barren, so she lether illiterate drunkard husband have a second wife, who passed away leaving her child under the care of jeeja. The stepson was a drunkard too and was married to Nayana. He threatened his wife with the remark that he would fling her out if she didn't bother about the threat. Rajarama got injured in brawl and had to be admitted to hospital. In spite of his being imprudent, the whole family took care of him. Jaya went to the hospital to request the doctor for better attention to him. They also sold Batatawade near the mill to meet the medical expenses. Thus, this group of women shows the qualities of endurance, sincerity and diligence, but it is a shame that society doesn't treat them with sympathy.

Among the kith's and kin's of Jaya, Vanithamami deserves a special attention. She is very meek, and passive. She doesn't revolt against the excesses of her mother-in-law, who doesn't even allow her to buy sarees of her choice. But when she decides to bring Kusum in her family, she braves the opposition in the family. Her own husband doesn't like the sight of Kusum, but doesn't care. Then, she tries her best to get the Dadar flat for Kusum, requests Jaya to find a good job for Kusum's husband, and help the girl to live independently. Jaya does help Kusum. Jaya's sole consideration is that she was Vanithamami's Kusum. When Kusum died, it is Vanithamami who, moans and consoles Jaya who has helped her in spite of the opposition from all quarters. Vanithamami is the only person who has an affinity for the negligent girl Kusum. Though Kusum's sister, Shailja tries to get the favour of Vanithamami, she fails because she lacks innocence and emotions of Kusum. The honour goes to her love for the neglected and the innocent.

Mukta and her daughter Manda were the neighbours of Jaya at Dadar. Mukta was a young widow, but she was very cooperative and helpful. When Mohan walked out on Jaya, she gave full support to Jaya, who was greatly worried and restless. She went to her Church gate home to see if Mohan was there. She did not find Mohan, instead she found that Rahul had also disappeared, and Rati, her daughter spoke indifferently to her. She, therefore, returned to Dadar, she was not able to manage herself due to tension and high fever. So Mukta got the keys from her bag, opened the door, helped to change her dress and go to bed. Jaya screamed hysterically about Rati because she was so much get upset. On seeing her condition, Mukta checked her temperature, which was nearly 104⁰. The next morning when Jaya wakes up she saw Mukta sat besides her reading, her daughter and the servant prepared tea for her. Hearing the two girls talking and laughing in the kitchen was soothing. Jaya felt, "This was really pampering. I smiled at her as she covered me with a blanket." So much of caring reminded Jaya of her Appa (father) who used to check her fever with the back of his hand and ask her to come out of the bed as she was quite well. Mukta had been grateful to anybody that ever did her a fine turn. After she lost her husband, Kamat encouraged her to do B. Ed. In return, she was always good and respectful to him and snubbed Jaya for leaving him alone to die.

It is a women-centric novel and the women characters don't have any defect of character. They are rather spirits of love, service, and forgiveness. Male characters, on the other hand, are presented as devoid of feelings and a sense of responsibility. Mohan tries to help Mr. Agarwal, the secretary. He intentionally entered into a profane deal with the colleagues and gave a statement that he had done nothing except he got some favours from the public and okayed the substance material, and hoped that Agarwal would get enquiry put off. When he felt that his matters had become public, he boldly said that he had done it for the sake of his family and ditched it without caring for the wellbeing of his wife.

Another male character was Rajaram, Nayana's husband. He was a drunkard earning nothing; always threatened to throw out his wife if she gave birth to a baby girl again. He would beat his wife if she refused to give him money. He got involved in a quarrel with some rogues, got beaten by them so much that he had to be admitted in the hospital. The whole family was in distress. Nayana was fed up with him.

Jaya's Dada was a very selfish person. To make himself free from the responsibilities of an unmarried younger sister, he pleaded Mohan's case very strongly. He often said that he wanted to come back from America to his own people, but Jaya knew he would never return.

Satish wanted to go abroad, without caring for his mother. One son had died, and the other was going away. Nilima informed Jaya that one son of Mai was dead, the other was running away. Mai didn't have even a grandson. Naturally, her worry was who would cremate her after her death. Nilima had assured Mai that she would cremate her, but Satish could not give her this much of assurance, an ungrateful son as he was. Kamat had some graces but he tried to take liberties with Jaya. The novelist wondered why people having craving for a male child. She has portrayed her male characters as useless.

Deshpande always chooses to present the action, the events of the novel in retrospect. In the present novel, Jaya begins her story from the time Mohan came to do the Dadar flat to escape the ignominy of being involved in a scam dodging the official action. At this point, Jaya views her entire life from her childhood, when her father christened her Jaya, and gave her the impression, that she was different from all the children, pulled her out of the circle of friends exhorting her not to mix with them since they could not think beyond being housewives, while his daughter was to go to Oxford, win prizes and honours. Jaya is proud of her covenant education, her marriage with Mohan, her empathy with the death of Kusum and reaction of a mother, Mohan's involvement in scam, and his allegation against her and finally deserting her.

A natural advantage that emerged from this technique of reviewing the incidents that the novelist is able to discover connections existing between the incidents. As she came to her Dadar flat, she saw haldi stains on the curtains which reminded her of Kusum was brought to live in the flat and she had made haldi mark on the bland face of Lakshmi that decorated the calendar. Then the whole memory was rewound. She remembers that initially, she had disliked Kusum, but her misfortunes had evoked pity and sympathy that prompted her to bring Kusum to Dadar flat against the wishes of all the members of the family. And, then, the entire chain of emotions and reactions of her own and other members of the family came rushing to her mind. She also recollected that Vanitamami had laid her claim to the flat because she wanted to give it to Kusum who was virtually a destitute woman, who, as Jaya's mother, said, was of no use to anybody. Thus the whole film was replayed and the novelist had the opportunity to watch the whole drama from the critic's point of view.

As Jaya and Mohan arrived at Dadar flat, Jaya was full of shame for what her husband had done. She was reminded of Nair family, all the four members of which went, tied together, into the sea, never to return due to remorse and compunction on being involved in a similar scam. Jaya thought of on the probability of following Nair's example, but Mohan being impervious to such delicate emotions, dismissed the idea point blank. In his opinion, Nair was a fool and he opted to wait for the time he would be able to resume his work in the same spirit. It was his childhood desire to become rich and get a convent- educated and English- speaking wife. Then she could re-assess the importance of small events that occurred in her life. She remembered that she had requested the doctor to pay due attention to Rajaram in the hospital, but she could not tell him that she was a deserted wife, lest he should try to take advantage of it. Similarly, Rahul's intimate conversation with an uncle, Vasant had made her feel that Rahul was never so intimate with her. Thus, the novelist has made very clever use of the technique presenting the incident in retrospect.

It is not this that incidents are described in separate chapters - they are cleverly interwoven and narrated in a natural process. For example, one night Jaya and Mohan were lying awake. They heard whispers coming through the window and Jaya imagined that the couple was talking. But soon the shrieks of the women and revealed that she was being beaten by her husband to know where she had gone that day. The Kamat episode also occurred in a natural way. He had started giving guidance to Jaya in the art of story – writing. They came very close in the process and the moment came when he could have sex with her if Jaya's middle-class morality had not averted the situation. But it was clear to Jaya that she had never companionship from Mohan as she had from Kamat. It can be said that this novel has a close-knit plot and depicts a very serious female- centered theme. Shashi Deshpande is a crusader against oppression of women. She wants companionship between man and woman. Her presentation of the case of equality is convincing, since she never deviates from the hard realities of life. She has chosen to present a picture of women's life in middle and lower sections, believing that they make the bulk.

REFERENCE

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