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'Sexism in Shashi Deshpande's "That Long Silence" and "The Dark Holds No Terrors"'

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ABSTRACT

During 21st Century, women are stronger and independent when compared to earlier centuries because they can achieve whatever they want. Women has become stronger and self-independent. They are doing well both inside and outside the families. Women faces challenges throughout their life and they deal with it attempts all the possibilities to overcome problems and difficulties. But every coin has two sides, this success of women and their independence cannot be digested easily. People started making them target them in various ways. They are independent but they are not equally treated in this male dominant society. Gender discrimination or sexism is still accompanied in the Society. Women condition changed and even their problems changed. Shashi Deshpande in her work "That Long Silence" depicts the condition of educated women how they are educated to get married in rich proper families their education was only utilized for their own children. In another work of Shashi Deshpande "The Dark Holds No terror" we will see how professionally powerful independent women treated brutally by her own close people.

Keywords: Self-dependant, gender discrimination, challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based upon ones sex or gender. Sexism creates inequality between sexes and gender. Sexism also fuels

gender based violence and hate crimes. If we talk about Indian families. We still find many families who provide basic education to their daughters not to make them independent, self-sufficient or financially powerful but to marry them in rich

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upper-class families to make their future bright. This is the harsh reality of Indian families they consider daughters as a burden either she is educated self-sufficient or uneducated. Even though if girls somehow manages to study properly and achieve success in career than also her own family member force her to live according to her in-laws who behave more brutally.

Indian novelist Shashi Deshpande recipient of SahityaAkademiAward and Padma Shringing Award in 1990 and 2009 respectively. She dealt with the inner world of the Indian women can relate to them. She scrutinized the universal importance of women problems, through women perspective. Her concerns for women and oppressive lot is reflected in her works. The conflict which every Indian women face to become proper daughter, wife and mother is reflected in her novels. Her novel deals with Indian middle class females.

'That Long Silence' is the story of Indian middle class educated girl Jaya who is brought up in stereotype Indian family where girls are subverted than only they can get a proper husband. She married to a person named Mohan. Her marriage was not a happy marriage there was a communication gap between the couple. Mohan wants that Jaya should obey whatever he says without any arguments or without any second opinion. The relationship that Mohan prefers with Jaya is built on expectation that she is well versed in English communication and can make "educated cultured wife"(line-92)

"One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; It is civilization as a whole that produce this creature, intermediate between and Enoch which is described as feminine" (Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex)

The novel begins we find Jaya and her husband shifting from well-settled comfortable house to their old house in Dadar. Mohan Jaya's husband was suspended from job and there financial condition was not good. Jaya who was well educated started writing articles to run her family.

ShashiDeshpande shown the role of Indian women who is either a dutiful daughter, obedient wife or loving mother her family are her main concern. Jaya who has lost all her dreams and desires had to work because of her financial crisis.

"The winter has presented this phenomenon through a character Jaya who is known by two names Jaya and suhasini, Jaya which means victory, is the name given by her father when she was born and Suhasini, the name given after her marriage which means a soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman"(line-3)

Here, Shashi Deshpande shown how women doesn't has any fixed identity she is subverted in all the ways her childhood name and identity was changed after marriage Names also symbolizes two aspects of a personality her father named her 'Jaya' means victory this was her father's desire for her. And later 'Suhasini' represents her husbands expectation are she should be soft, smiling, placid and submissive woman.

Jaya's dream of an ideal husband shattered. Her husband was not that person about whom she often dreamt. Her sexual life experience is also frustrating. After every hurting sexual intercourse her husband asked her self-consciously whether he has hurt her, but she cannot answer him with 'yes' because she is a woman and sufferings, getting hurt is the only option open for women that is what she is being taught throughout her life.

Jaya's husband who is totally unaware of her wife's feelings, likes, dislikes, expectations, etc wants his wife to share her guilt of malpractices in his business and to endure it together.

"both are yoked together, so better to go to the same direction, as to go to different directions will be painful..."(p-10)

Mohan and Jaya are advised to move from their place in churchgate, Bombay to an impoverished flat in Dadar. They move into the dingy place leaving the kids with the neighbors. Jaya to run family started writing articles for the newspapers where her frustration from life is clearly visible. Neither her husband nor she ever tried to communicate about their needs and wants. Gradually, situation gets worsen and Mohan left home.

Jaya realizes that the 'long silence' had crept between the two and how it destroyed their mutual trust and communication. Moreover she realizes that the long silence within herself which she had been neglecting since her childhood.

Another novel 'The Dark holds no Terrors' by Shashi Deshpande who is a successful lady doctor and protagonist of the novel. She is 'two-in-one woman' who in the day time is a successful doctor and at night 'a terrified trapped animal' in the hands of her husband Manohar, an English teacher in a small college. This explores the trauma of girl faced during her childhood and also in her married life. Saritha who is refer to as 'saru' in the novel through this character Deshpande showed the trauma of middle class Indian girls.

Sharita is ambitious, resourceful and pragmatic. She bears the physical, mental and emotional sufferings done by her husband as she is typical Indian women and doesn't want to harm her material life. The darkness inside her is not

inherent but it was imposed on her heart and mind by her own mother who keeps on blaming her for the death of her brother Dhruva, her mother says;

"...why didn't you die? Why are you alive when he's dead?..."(Dark. p-4)

From childhood saru being a girl had to bear such kind of behaviour of her mother. This kind of Indian women are still found in 21st century. Because of this attitude mother of Indian family many teenage girls ends up taking wrong decision because they can't share their stuffs with the person who is closest to them. Saru involved herself in studies and achieve her dream to be successful doctor but she married a person of her own choice which is considered as a crime by her parents and she lost touch from her family for about 15 years. She returned to her home when her mother died.

Her mother doesn't want her to marry a boy from lower caste.

She objects;

"What caste is he?"

I don't know

A Brahmin?

Of course not...his father keeps a cycle shop"(Dark. P-87)

In her marriage love is replaced by brutal force. Saru says of her mother;

"It's because she cursed me that I am like this" (p-179)

Most of the teenage girls of Indian class family goes through this mentality because they never got the most vital part of love relationship with their mother. Mother and daughter relationship

is most pure and needed love for girls but unfortunately some girls are still deprived of such love and understanding they start searching that love and understanding outside the house and in some strangers which lead them to some bad consequences.

Saru has learnt that necessary condition for a successful marriage “A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he’s an M.A, you should be a B.A. If he’s 5’4” tall, you shouldn’t be more than 5’3” tall. If he’s earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn than four hundred and ninety-nine rupees”(p-137)

Saru was not happy in her martial life. Her husband is so much insecure of his wife success and more earning career. Which is reflected in their sexual life. Her pain, her sufferings cannot be spoken off in public but she feels her body as a burden. Her personal experience compel her to disbelieve the existence of love. Such brutal experience of her childhood and her marriage life she ends up in having a extra martial affair.

CONCLUSION

The protagonist of both the novels are the prisoners of their own disabilities. Jaya from her own disability to share her thoughts and feelings. Saru with her own anxious, eagerness and ambitions.

The dignity of women in India has not gone through any drastic change from the point of view of authority. By the changing time women

are able to acquire educational and economic independence but still they are unable to raise themselves above from this patriarchal norms. In this 21st Century women has become the biggest enemies of women some Indian mothers are still not evolved they are still living in there own times where women were subverted. Instead of understanding and changing along with time they chose to dominate new generation which ends up in a unfavorable condition. The structure of these society needs a swap.

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