



SHASHI DESHPAHDE: A PRAGMATIST FEMINIST

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Abstract

Sahitya Academy prize winner and a leading Indian contemporary English writer, Shashi Deshpande undoubtedly represents a new type of feminist writing i.e. a humanistic or pragmatist feminist writing. Possessing a rare insight into the entire panorama of women's plight in the present day custom bound Indian society, she portrays her woman characters as intelligent, educated, career oriented and full of self confident that they find a positive or pragmatist solution to any kind of cultural, social, and family related hardship. Deshpande's approach is different from that of all other feminists. Like others she also deals with the excesses committed upon the female lot for centuries and their deep but quiet suffering leading to an attitude of passive resignation. Her attitude towards the journey of life is positive and realistic, though innumerable sufferings and obstructions come in the way. This is what we call is a pragmatist feminism. The pragmatic method attempts to interpret "each notion by stressing its respecting practical consequences." In fact pragmatism in its empirical attitude reaches towards "facts", action and power.

Keywords

Key words: - portrays, moth eaten, male chauvinism, hardships and pragmatist.

INTRODUCTION:

Contemporary Indian English feminist writer, Shashi Deshpande in her writings pointed out the social problems such as discrimination and inequality of women in the society. She is one of the most acknowledged writers who have expressed restlessness with the traditional positioning of women. Shashi Deshpande, a journalist, essayist, Padma Shri and Sahitya Academy A wards winning Indian novelist, writes about the situation of women and their failures in the fast changing socio-economic background of India. Her novels focus on modern women belonging to Indian middle class. She deals with inner world of the Indian women in





her novels. She portrays her heroines in realistic manner. Her novels deal with the theme of the quest for a female identity and human values within the women

MATERIAL AND METHOD:

The present research paper is on the literary writings of Shashi Deshpande. So novels -That Long Silence, The Dark Holds No Terrors and The Binding Vine- of Deshpande are taken up for the present research paper entitled SHASHI DESHPANDE: A PRAGMATIS FEMINIST.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

Pragmatist feminism of shashi Deshpande:- Jaya in That Long Silence is a middle class housewife and has a pragmatic attitude towards her life besides feministic temperament. Having received convent education and acquired modern sensibility she tries to trace out the reasons and practical value of each and every act that she undertook. When her husband , Mohan, being caught in malpractice sought her sympathy, Jaya reacts differently and revolts not to go with the idea of Mohan. This type of Jaya's mental attitude is certainly an indication of individually and a pragmatic thought. As the pioneer of pragmatism, James William, says: "The pragmatic method tries to interpret each notion By tracing its respective practical consequences". Here Jaya projected as a matured and as a asserted woman who has a pragmatic attitude towards life. She decides to go against an age old traditional belief of co-operating husband even in his bad notion of acts. In fact, Jaya's this development of the past notion is pragmatism and it has its own truth, as per William James. Pragmatism is nothing but making of truth from experience. So Jaya is here doing the something as pragmatism proclaimed. When Jaya was rechristened as " Suhasini" in her marriage, she protects inwardly and declares herself as Jaya. Here this kind of Jaya's notion apparently shows that she does not want to meekly submit herself and she thinks





reasonably and tries to work out the purpose of changing her name. But the answer which comes out is the tradition or the custom which imposes a new name on her. So she clearly rejects the idea of changing her name as it no longer has any practical purpose except submerging her identity. This ideology of Jaya is certainly a feministic pragmatism which demands not only self identity but the practical value for each and every act. As William James says: “ The pragmatist turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power.” Here Jaya too turns towards fact that changing of name is nothing but merging her identity and hence she rejects the idea of changing her name. Circumbulating the tulsi plant which is supposed to increase the life span of her husband is practiced by her mother. But here Jaya being aware of the fact, rejects the notion of doing it. It is too an indication of self assertion and pragmatic approach of Jaya who thinks reasonably and expects practical results for her work. The novel Dark Holds No Terrors does not confine itself to the narrowness of feminist problems. With woman as a central figure. Shashi Deshpande probes th universally relevant issues of human relationships, man’s tragic loneliness ect. Saru, the realist, sees the ultimate human reality in the human body and its process of decay. She conceives that loneliness is a painful inescapable human condition. She realizes that the suffering of multitudes does not mitigate one’s own suffering in any way. And that is why she is doomed to sit and watch happiness recede from her all by herself. This knowing of reality is nothing but pragmatism. Pragmatism itself is a reality which is based on practical use. So Saru is a feministic pragmatist who knows the reality and purpose of life. As William James Says: “ The pragmatist clings to facts and concreteness, observes truth at its work in particular cases and generation. Truth for him, becomes a class name for all sorts of definite working values in experience.” Here Saru is a pragmatist who knows the reality of life and satisfies unto it.





Indeed, Shashi Deshpande is aware of human condition, she portrayed the character of Jaya and through it she wants to spread the truth of human life which is certainly a work of pragmatism. The novel surely has a positive suggestion to offer. Saru places her trust in self – confidence and she says: “ All right, so I’am alone. But so is every one else. Human beingsthey are going to fail you. Because there is just us, because there is no one Else, we have to go on trying. If we can’t believe Overselves we are sunk.” “If we can’t believe ourselves we are sunk”, these words of Saru are universally acknowledged fact and this fact turns out to be pragmatism. “Pragmatism is making a truth out of experience”, as per William James. Here Saru also realizes the situation and accepts the condition which is universally true . so it is a pragmatism approach towards her life. Indeed, Saru is a dynamic feministic pragmatist throughout her life as she always thinks reasonably and applies commonsense to solve any eventuality in her life. She defies her mother to study medicine, she defies age old tradition to get married. In a nutshell, she comes out of four walls and carves her own existence in this society. This is certainly pragmatic approach of Saru who improves her past. Urmila, the heroine of “The Binding Vine is undoubtedly both a feminist and a pragmatist. She is totally a different mode of woman from that of Shashi Deshpande’s earlier women. She directly protests the age old traditional beliefs. In spite of her family members opposition, she resolves to get published” her dead mother in-law’s poems. Urmila’s dead mother-in-law, Mira, subjects to ill- treatment in her married life. She undergoes mental trauma as she does not receive the shower of love from her husband. Having left hardly any option, she turns to writing poetry expressing her inner desires. She writes poetry in her school dairy and keeps it secretly in a trunk. Unfortunately, she meets with death in child birth. Thus, her four the dairy wants to get it published so as to expose the cruel treatment of no other than her own father-in- law. This kind of





Urmila's notion is not merely feminism but a dynamic pragmatism too as Williams James says : Pragmatism is " the attitude of looking away from the supposed necessities and of looking towards facts ." Here, Urmila being a daughter-in-law of the victim supposed to keep quiet. But she contrary to supposing comes out center to get printed her dead mother-in-law's poems. She , contrary to her family members, resolves to do this because she wants put forth the fact which acts as undercurrent in her. In that sense, she is a feministic pragmatist who looking towards facts neglected supposed necessities. Urmila wants to wage a war against injustice meted out to her dead mothe-in-law. Shashi Deshpande, Perhaps, aware of modern woman's mess in married life, she has created such characters to root out that mess io her dead mothe-in-law. Shashi Deshpande, Perhaps, aware of modern woman's mess in married life, she has created such characters to root out that mess in conjugal life. Thus, Shashi Deshpande too proved to be a feministic pragmatist by creating feministic pragmatic characters. Here Mira, daughter-in-law of Urmila, too resents being named as Nirmala in her marriage. This resentment is natural as it is of no use in changing the original name expect meekly surrendering before the tradition and merging of self. So shashi Deshapande women being aware of modern sensibility and reality do not accept the old values which no longer bring any fruits in practical life. This is really not feminist attitude but a feministic pragmatic attitude of Mira which puts her apart from a lot.

CONCLUSION:

The Indian woman is now clamouring for recognition of herself as not just a "woman" but as a "person" an individual acutely conscious of her position, both in the family, and in the society. Inspired by feminist movements in the West, some Indian women, in their desire for freedom, have made total switch over to the other side, seeking freedom from everything, even from their culture. However, Shashi Deshpande's





protagonists do not strive for the kind of freedom that the emancipated women of the West seek so fiercely, but in conformity with the society they live in without drifting away their culture. Shashi Deshpande does not take the theory that “Women are Victims”. The “dependency syndrome” in women is responsible for their victimization and Deshpande, through her writings, exhorts women to offer resistance and emerge as strong willed individuals to face life, to share responsibilities and not to escape from them.

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