

MULIEBROUS TRIUMPH OF THE DYAD WARRIORS IN ACHIEVING AUTONOMY IN SHASHIDESH PANDE'S *SMALL REMEDIES*

Dr. G. SARATHA LAKSHMI ^{1*}, Dr. C. SHAHIN BANU ², Dr. N.VADIVU ³

^{1*} Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Languages, Sona College of Technology, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India. Email id: saratha@sonatech.ac.in

² Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Languages, Sona College of Technology, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India. Email id: shahin@sonatech.ac.in

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Languages, Sona College of Technology, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India. Email id: vadivun@sonatech.ac.in

***Corresponding Author**

Abstract:

ShashiDeshpande is a prominent literary voice which tries to furnish the reader with quintessential woman by closely analysing the woman's psychological, emotional and intellectual needs and aspirations, cravings and desires and the conflicts and catastrophes' that they inevitably bring Social issues of contemporary India and gender issues invariably find a prominence in her writing. Shashi Deshpande's concern is to explore the root cause of the fragmentation and the dichotomy of characters and to find out what happens to their psyche in the process of achieving and celebrating self-hood. She has beautifully delineated their problems and plights, yearnings and aspirations, failures and fables, and dreams and disillusionments. Small Remedies is a sensitive portrayal of a woman's quest for self-identity

Key Words: Self-Identity, Aspirations, Catastrophe, Psychological, Emotional Intellectual.

Using the story of two women SavitribaiIndorekar the aging diva of GwaliorGharna and Leela the trade union activist as the background, Shashi Deshpande explores the theme of a womanSavitribaiIndorekar in *Small Remedies* the leading musician is also a proof for the revolt of women and their unending thirst for self-independence. Introduced to devotional song by her mother, Savitribai's initiation into the world of music was prohibited by her father who reminded her mother of the traditions of their Brahmin family. Married in an orthodox Brahmin family before independence, Savitribai was encouraged by her father-in-law to pursue her dream. In spite of the opposition in the family a female trainer was arranged for bai and soon a Muslim tabla player joined. But Bai soon realized the limitations of her later, which could not help her in fulfilling her dreams of becoming a professional singer. She revolts against the tradition by taking a bold step and walking out of her marital home. Gulam Saab, the Muslim tabla player became her partner and they set up a home in Neemgaon much to the shock of the community, Bai a Brahmin married woman, lived with a Muslim man out of wedlock. Thus Bai, a revolutionary in her own right has defied traditions and has chosen to live a life of disgrace. Bai's revolt against her marriage is not because of any problem with her husband. Her dream to be a renowned singer which cannot be fulfilled while she remained the daughter-in-law of an affluent Brahmin family has made her reject her husband for Gulam Saab. Gulam Saab who recognized her talent and encouraged her becomes a means for Bai to achieve her aim. Both of them could have married and lead a graceful life. But Bai never bothers about the so called wedlock;

“Why didn't they marry? If they had been married, they could have acknowledged their child openly. And he was a Muslim; it was possible for him to marry Bai,(Small Remedies 278) he had another wife living. For Bai, too marriage would have been a boon

it would have given her the status of a married woman, saved her from malicious gossip. And more given her looks and her ambiguous marital status, it's not hard to imagine that she had to put up with a great deal of unwanted attention from men. When I think of women who even today speak of a relationship as a marriage, knowing very well it's not, who wear a mangal sutra to prove it I am surprised Bai didn't succumb' (279).

Gulam Saab always holds the secondary position in the house. Madhu recalls 'I have seen the two of them together she always a little ahead of him, she always the focus of attention (176). Bai's interest has dominated their life and he has devoted his best years to help the woman he so fervently loved. According to Madhu, Bai was not a subjugated woman only or a successful artist, but a legend of human will power piercing through the hurdles to come out of her own life. She is projected as an image of 'Heroinism' leaving a world devoid of submissiveness and beauty. The originality with which Bai's character has been concerned provides a genuine justification of the fact that for Shashi Deshpande the question of female identity is an agenda of the comprehensive scheme of things where a woman is desired to search out a self of her own beyond all the well-defined social images. What Madhu intends to search out in the life of Bai, Shashi Deshpande intends to search out in every woman. Madhu declares

'I can make Bai the rebel who rejected the convectors of her times. The feminist who lived her life on her terms. The great artist who struggled and scarified everything in the cause of her art. The woman who gave up everything a comfortable home, a husband and a family for love' (166).

In contrast to the basic human urge, Bai through her music makes efforts to reach immortality. Deshpande in her characterization of various women in her novel makes it thoroughly clear that the flowing of one's genius and the development of one's personality is a matter of one's own individual choice. It Savitribai has her own way of realizing her goals, we have Leela, Madhu and Latha who stick to them stand without luring the tables on the world. If Savitribai is callous and indifferent to social norms and practices, Munni, her own daughter craves very much for acceptability and approval. She doesn't consider herself Ghulam's daughter. She sticks to her real name Meenakshi and goes to Pune and marries according to the wishes of her grandmother.

Through 'Small Remedies' Deshpande frankly affirms that for women, nothing is as great as preserving individual identity, individual rights and personal freedom. Men and women are merely the agents and the pioneer to reproduce and shape a better generation in decidedly woman's forte. There are barriers and break downs in life, but the unconquerable spirit never gives into the opposing forces and through their unconquerable will power and unyielding determination they reach the pinnacle of success.

Deshpande, like a skillful painter, mixes many colours on the landscape of relationships and tries to make her reader believe in certain possibilities made impossible by the investigating eyes of society whose makers shout in the name of revolutions and modernism but shrieks when it comes to be discussed as an issue. The male female friendship association of a female name with a male having different religion, the exchange of hugs between them, a lady spending a night with an alien male are some of the cases the author wants the readers to devote a patient and rational hearing. What she attempts to represent is that deviation or distraction is an individual choice. The fault of any relationship being ruined and ravaged lies not only in the faltering of the female but also in the fritting of a male. The different codes of conduct for male and female are the sharp edges of the sword that sever human connections.

Madhu's visit to Bhavanipur on a vacation brings her back to her, childhood memory. Her host Hari proves to her lost connections with Leela, her mother's sister. Talking about Leela with Hari, reminds Madhu of her chivalry and courage which Leela combined in her personality even in those olden

days. Leela, though born in a traditional Hindu family faces the wrath and indifference of her relatives and family members because of her independent ways and freedom of choice.

Born in a traditional Brahmin family Leela's interest in studies was taken as her disobedience against the traditional role of a woman. As a punishment she was married to a man of average income. But her marriage proves to be a boon for her, as her husband Vasant encouraged her to study and fulfill her dreams. However his sudden death closes all doors of happiness for Leela, but once again she refuses to go back to her father's house and takes up a teaching job. While working for the patient of TB, Leela meets Joe. In spite of their love for each other they wait for fifteen years because of Joe's daughter, Paula's resentment. Their decision to finally marry in spite of their age and their respective families shows the depth of their love. Thus, Leela a Brahmin widow dared to go against traditions and married a Christian. Her family reacts strongly against it and ostracizes her. She becomes a rebel and an example to be given to warn young girls from breaking the traditional norms.

Leela's boldness to join Prabhat's perishes her nationalistic views and her individuality come in to question because society feels her to be a rebel who disregards that customs and codes. Less qualified though, she is an avant courier in those days when many things were considered taboo. She persuades Madhu to study further and not to surrender to the tyrannies of time. Leela has an individuality of her own and she wins the admiration of many because of her strength, and integrity. Being feminine is not her infirmity rather the way she preserves her femininity and her individual will power becomes a matter of applause. Madhu finds herself a dwarf before Leela who according to her was,

'But there was Leela, part of a generation even before mine, she always supported herself when her first husband Vasant died, she took up a job and educated her brothers-in-law. Even after marrying Joe a doctor with a fairly good income, she continued to live on her own money. And after Joe died, she moved back into her Marutichawl home the very next day the place where she began her married life at the age of fifteen... But Leela was an unusual woman, a head not only of her generation, but the next one as well; (94).'

Through the portrayal of Leela, Deshpande proves the point that true human will succeed disputes, barriers and breakdowns. The ability to struggle and justify one's goal is the answer to the doubtful and destructive ways of the society. Leela's entire life is a tale of winks and turns yet it is full of examples women look forward to. Leela lost her husband, Vasant who was a TB patient but did not lose her bond with his family. She marries Joe not because of her love but because of his adventurous attempt of eradicating TB. He helps TB patients to recover from that disease by establishing a clinic especially for them. Leela continues to wear cotton sarees her husband's mill produced even after her husband's death. Her clinging to her injured past and her faith in her present. Leela a sublime character for whom the barrier of education, language, caste and religion mattered less. She does not regret her past but finds way to accommodate herself with the challenges and responsibilities of changing times. She not only plays mother to Madhu but also to Paula and Tony, Joe's children. The way she fulfills the expectations of all speaks volumes about her potential. Irrespective of what society says she proves herself a woman of action and also clings to her family associations. Her identity as a woman and a human being absorbs everything, drinks all the bitterness and disseminates love and compassion like mother earth. Leela's revelations make Madhu admire her more and she attains the deity status to know that Leela responded to her mother's call even after thirty years perhaps to reconcile with the dis-reputations they made of her. The success of these two bold and courageous women Leela and Savitribai in accomplishing autonomy describes the change dawning in Indian society against the patriarchal norms. Every day is an

opportunity to make changes to create the life we want. Accepting changes in life can be scary in the beginning but allowing the fear to stop you growing, evolving and progressing is all the more devastating. Through the lives of Leela and Savitribai, Shashi Deshpande encourages the Indian women to live their dreams because magic always happens when you direct inner powers towards the dreams you want live in.

Works Cited

- Deshpande, Shashi. *Small Remedies*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2000. Print
- Dodiya, Jaydipsinh. *Indian Women Novelists in English*. Sarup & Sons, 2006.
- Dominique S Verma and T. V. Kunhi Krishnan (eds.) (2000), *Memories of the Second Sex: Gender and Sexuality in Women's Writing*, Somaiya Publications, Mumbai.
- Dugaje, Manohar. Question of Identity Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* and Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*. *International Journal of Research*. Vol. 06, Issue No. 04. 2019
- K.M. Pandey, *Dimensional Depth of Female Consciousness: Shashi Deshpande's The Binding Vine*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2001, pp. 74-76.
- Lau, Lisa. "No longer good girls: sexual transgressions in Indian women's writings." *Gender, Place & Culture* 21.3 (2014): 279-296.
- Manohar, D. Murali. *Indian English Women's Fiction: A Study of Marriage, Career and Divorce*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 2007.