



REFLECTIONS OF IDENTITY ON WOMANHOOD: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE



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ABSTRACT

Life never opens the door of happiness to a person, and if it is a woman then the story differs. It is herself who has to cut the way from darkness and walk towards light. Indian women novelists down the years have explored female subjectivity in order to establish an identity. People form their identities through life experiences and interactions with the people around them, Indian women writers have been undervalued due to the superiority of the male experience. In Indian context women aspirations and expectations are within the

framework of Indian social or moral commitments. Women have been subjected to male defined and male dominated social institutions and value systems. The role of women is that of a homemaker confined to the boundaries of her house where rules have been drawn and set. The 19th century woman began to the quest for her identity and individuality and the big question who am 'I'.

KEYWORDS

Womanhood, Individuality, Identity, Self-hood

RESEARCH PAPER

“The ‘I’ both calls out the ‘me’ and responds to it taken together they constitute a personality as it appears in social experience. The self is essentially a social progress going on. If it did not have Two phases there would not be conscious responsibility, and there Would be nothing novel in experience”. (Mead-1934,178)

In the flow of time the image of women in fiction/movies has undergone several changes. Women writers have drifted away from traditional portrayals of self-sacrificing and are moving towards for the search for identity and recognition. Today’s women of the 21st century reject passivity, docility, and subjection and to foster better understanding that she is not subordinate by birth but complementary to the male.

Feminism could take on a plethora of meanings like literature written from a feminist point of view, to raise women’s consciousness gender defined roles, process of questioning the fundamentals of culture, writings that highlight the agonies of women in the world governed by men. Crucial to the understanding of the feminist social critique is the undeniable fact that oppression has dual manifestation i.e. social and psychological. The social condition of women is of interior colonization resulting in dominance, victimization, oppression and exploitation by men. The purpose of the male chauvinism is to obtain psychological ego satisfaction as it is said that exercise of power destroys freedom. In the treatise Politics of the Ego it has been stated that

“Man establishes his manhood in direct proportion to his ability to have his Ego override a women’s and derives his strength and self-esteem through this process. It is out of the need of a sense of power that he necessarily must destroy her ego and make it subservient to his”

Shashi Deshpande’s writings are rooted in culture in which she lives, her feminism is particularly Indian. Shashi Deshpande’s *‘The Dark Holds No terror’* is a novel that represents a women’s journey from darkness to light ,the light of new hope and dawn along with her recognition of selfhood and seeking her identity and existence .In *‘The dark holds*

no terror the protagonist Sarita is drowned in the ignorant world and forgets herself in submitting herself to the conservative Indian middle class norms. The text is a saga of mental sufferings of Saru. It explores the women's life that she has to be accommodated herself in her father's house and later father-in-laws house. In *The Dark Holds No Terror* Sarita is thrown in double jeopardy, her wishes are victimized not only in her parental home but also with her mate too. she struggles against all odds in the day time she plays the role of a successful doctor but in the night she is a trapped animal in the hands of her husband Manohar who is jealous and frustrated with his wife's success he assaults and rapes her as he can find no way to prove his superiority. Sarita fights a battle from both her parents and her husband. Shashi Deshpande's writings not only unveil women's problems but visualizes women's psyche but her women are like Sarita who know how to break the shell and come out of the dark. The writer thinks that clearer is the light, the lighter is the shadow. Her woman characters face adverse situation and move towards optimism. In the same way '*In The Dark Holds No Terrors*' cuts her way from darkness and enters the world of hope and light

The Concept of emancipation found its articulation in creative arts, Indian Cinema and especially literature. This new awareness had gained momentum and has made women concrete and visible particularly in novels Indian women novelist writing in English have reflected the ideology of personal freedom in their writings which resulted in changing situations in the status of Indian women. The Indian Women writers' literary voice can be heard as belonging to a transition in the work of women sensibility. The exploration of female consciousness as the cannon fired by the western feminist movement has had their impact on rest of the world. The totality of the female literary tradition is now seen as a product of liberation of women's creative impulse. The goal of feminist literature is conscious raising. It has become a technique for analyzing women's role to raise her awareness to vital issues, her writings and real life experiences in society are reflected in Indian cinema (Bollywood) filmmakers in India are heading these days to churn out women oriented movies.

Bollywood or Indian cinema has a rich collection of movies made around women. Scripts are written keeping them in mind these days to name a few movies such as Queen,

English Vinglish, Mary Kom, Fashion, Zubeda, Gulab Gang, and The Dirty Picture, Pink. These movies embark on the road to empowerment enroute identity.

A study of Milan Luthria The Dirty Picture, a fictionalized biopic that deals with the life and career of an artist called Silk Smita, who was a sensation in the 80's, she's known for her bold scenes and songs. 'The Dirty Picture' is the story of the protagonist Reshma played by actor Vidya Balan (who bagged a National award and a Film fare award) Reshma runs from her house a day before her marriage to try her luck in movies being unattractive she fails to convince the producers, but she doesn't stop here. She is determined in spite of being economically poor and living on an empty stomach virtually, she is ready to prove herself to survive in the film industry, as Shashi Deshpande had in one of her novels "To survive one has to be ruthless" the producer is shocked to see Reshma wiping her own self with a hunter for a dance sequence just to survive the hunger. She gets a chance to prove her credentials, the movie flops but she gets noticed and her producer transforms her from Reshma to Silk. In due course of time Silk becomes immensely rich, successful and famous as a southern B grade star. Relationship between her and a top actor goes sour and she takes on that star (Suryakant) saying that she will act in B grade movies and has no calms to do so. This requires courage to stand and speak for you in male dominated film industry. Silk's voice is suppressed and she is dropped from many big projects due to the influence of Suryakant. She even puts her entire savings in producing a movie but that too bombs and is forced to work with insignificant filmmakers. She is economically drained. She begins to lose interest in her work and is threatened by younger actresses, get cheated in love. The biggest shock she gets is when she is rejected by her own mother. Silk turns to alcohol and is lonely. The feeling of being lonely and insecure and being unloved eats her from within. The protagonist (Silk) of the Dirty Picture consumes sleeping pills and bids farewell to everyone. Her death is a mystery. In reality women like Silk Smita were ignored by top film magazines except for gossip columns. This movie explores the female subjectivity in order to establish an identity and feminine sensibility.

The above study shows how Indian women writers have undergone changes from traditional writings as depicting women as a symbol of sacrifice to modern day writings where they search for self-identity has just began and has resulted in creating awareness all over be it novels, poetry, dramas, short stories, T.V serials or the Indian cinema. Today

women in the 21st century have discovered a new platform for self-expression and raising their voice against injustice, domestic violence and influence public opinion. Many talented women novelists, poets and producers have bloomed on the scene and have set out to make an impression and craft a position in a male dominated society. Writers like Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De and Kamla Das etc. have touched the strings of contribution. Shashi Deshpande has displayed the themes of women suffering, physical assault and introspection. She tries to discuss the role of women into the cultural fabric of society that grants disproportionate power by disobeying the patriarchy edicts of silence. The aim is to get deeper understanding of social and personal attitudes towards marriage, empowerment for women, patriarchy, sexual assault, rape and man woman relationship as depicted in the novel. Producer Ekta Kapoor is famous for her women oriented serials which have become a craze on Indian television serials like Kyunki Saans Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi, which took the nation by storm with themes of Indian tradition, Hum Paanch a comedy serial with shades of sarcastic humour, Pavitra Rishta a super hit serial displaying Maharashtrian culture and tradition of a middleclass family. etc. These serials and many more which are woman orientated display many shades of women.

“We do not change overnight; it’s possible that we may not change even over a long period of time, but we can always hope without that life would be impossible.”

-Shashi Deshpande- That long silence, 1980

One has to believe in oneself women today should be assertive and must be capable in a position to take stand about their lives and carry on with a sense of responsibility and purpose.

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