

SELF-AFFIRMATION IN FEMALE CHARACTERS IN SHASHI DESPANDE'S SMALL REMEDIES

Abinaya.A

Assistant Professor of English

Bon Secours College For Women

ABSTRACT

My aim is the paper is to show how self-affirmation can be one of the ways to seek a solution to the problems faced by the female characters in the novel, *Small Remedies* highlights the struggles of the characters, the dilemma they faced and finally they assertion as one them fights with the injustice and prove their worth Shashi Despande defines her view of feminism as one that has equal stand for both men and women and when asked in an interview that whether she would like to call herself a feminist. Self-affirmation theory is a psychological theory that focuses on how individuals adapt to the information or experiences that are threatening to their self-concept. Self-affirmation theory contends that if individuals reflect on values that are personally relevant to them, they are less likely to experience distress and react defensively when confronted with information that contradicts or threatens their sense of self.

Self-affirmation theory proposes a different kind of psychological adaptation – one that, under many circumstances, enables both the restoration of self-integrity and adaptive behaviour change.

Key word: self-affirmation.

The Indian novels in English by women may be divided into two phases. The first phase runs up to 1920 and the second phase begins in 1921. Indian women writers in English from the mid nineteen onwards have been overtly expressive about women's problem and have dotted their fiction with women characters. The protagonists of almost all their novels and short stories are women. Shashi Deshpande was born 1918 in Dharwad, Karnataka, India. She is an award winning Indian novelist. She is a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award.

The novel *Small Remedies*, has explored the confident level of the female characters, and explores the female strength and identity, it speaks about the remedies that the women characters of their own and attest them. It also highlights the mental and emotional dilemma that a woman faces. The novel begins with the dispirit mother Mudhu who lost her son Adit and has entered into a silence. Mudhu lost her mother very young and it was a brought up in a very protective environment by her assertion as a confident of small remedies. Madhu meets Savitribai is assertive, right from the beginning and she convey this to Madhu in her very first meeting. Savitribai leads the most unconventional life but undergoes great mental trauma because of the double standards of society. Savitribai who lost her only daughter Munni, never shows her sonow of anybody. The both of them have an affirmation of her life and explore her ability in the novel *small remedies*. *Small remedies* not a simple novel but a complex one with its complex protagonists. In *small remedies*, Shashi Deshpande has showsher protagonists belonging to the urban states of society. First no one can think that it is the story of a middle aged woman because it looks like the story on Madhu Saptanshi who is the narrator of the novel. Later, the reader came to know that the novel is linked with the lives of two women Savitribai and Leela. Here, Savitribai and Leela fight for their own rights. They want to relish life, they are full of vigor. Their efforts do not go in vain but bring them laurels. It is very difficult for anybody to judge the inside personality of such a women who looks like very soft from inside.

In *Small remedies*, Shashi Deshpande portrays a strong character of women. The main characters of this Madhu, Savitribai, Munni and Leela, along with their feminine qualities exercise their independence, courage, intellectual energy, rationally and ambition. They moral do not compromise with their dignity while solving their problems rationally. They boost their moral and in emotional strength to withstand in this male dominated social conditioning and oppression. They are aware of the injustices helped upon them; they display a determination to face the challenges of life body. The female protagonists move from feminine consciousness to the self-affirmation. In the Min characters of the novel, Madhu, Savitribai, and Leela are the three ambitious and courageous women, prove their strength by sacrificing everything for their goal. Writing, music and politics are the sidelined in their career, like politics so called male Bastion. Deshpande reveals the understanding of women psyche particularly educated, middle class women aspiring for self-affirmation and independence. The novel holds a mirror before the women of society.

The novel begins with the description of Bhavanipur, a small village where Madhu the narrator of the novel, comes to write the biography of Savitribai Indorekar. Madhu has been commissioned to write Savitribai's biography herein she was to be presented as a heroine. Surprisingly she refuses to present her as such since the latter had been a victim of gender discrimination prevalent in our patriarchal social set up. Just to impose the current concept of heroism on a lady seemed on only impractical but out of place to Madhu. But she presents her as a woman who had led a sheltered life not only as a child in her parental home but also as a daughter in law in an affluent Brahmin family. In *Small Remedies*, the cultural ethos is of the orthodox Brahmin Community, Pune, in the late nineteenth and during the early twentieth century. The novel deals with grit and determination of Savitribai Indorekar, an eminent vocalist. Savitribai has referred to "gender discrimination" when she says that takes a long way for a woman to reach the topmost position, and how difficult it is for a woman to break through the barriers that come in her way. Madhu, the protagonist in biography records how Savitribai felt when her grandmother asked to stop singing immediately during her performance at a family gathering.

Like her father and father in law, she had led a most unorthodox life and had paid price for it as a woman. Savitribai narrating her lif story to Madhu and she conceals the fact that she had any lover and had a daughter from him. Savitribai ashamed of her indiscretions and considers a blemish on her character and respectability she keeps aloof from her illegal daughter Munni, incase it should dull her image. In her quest for identity for her own sake, and it comes to sacrificing her hard-earned name for own child. Savitribai loves the child until her own emotional need be fulfilled. Munni's own identity and happiness; she selfishly keeps her out of her life recoiling under the guise of respectability and a good name.

Madhu concludes that this is the best way for women to survive: to conceal their grief and live as if were a miracle of miracles. She tries to compromise with the untimely death of her son Aditya for death is as certain as birth in the cycle on human existence. There may not be complete and big remedies to bring a woman out of her claustrophobic existence, "Small Remedies" do exists and on has only to looks for them. She tries to submerge her sorrows in Hasina's melodious voice as she sings a 'vachana by Akka Mahadevi', a saint-poet of Karanataka or the churn of mustard seeds as the pangs of hunger grasp one. Memories come to the help of Madhu for she says hopefully: as long as there is memory, there's always the possibility of retrieval, as long as there is memory, loss is never total.

Meenakshi leads the life of a disowned child and is unhappy and novels of Shashi Deshpande reveal the manufactured patriarchal traditions and uneasiness of the modern Indian women in being a part of them. Women are more conscious for social shame than the physical and mental anguish of their own and near ones. Traditional social order neglects both the individuality and femininity of women. It gender based social structure, sexual colonialism is doing a great harm for woman than the social discrimination. Madhu comments on Munni's search for identity.

But for all of us, there's a self identity which we recognize as our real selves. For Munni, the self that she saw as her own lay in future, it was towards that self that she moved with deliberation, it was that self I met in the bus an ordinary looking woman with an ordinary family life and a name so ordinary that it covers pages in the telephone directory. (SR 170)

In *Small Remedies*, we find that Savitribai Indorekar's relationship with her daughter Munni is not so warm. Munni feels unwanted, unloved and rejected by her mother and she develops a feeling of aversion towards her or her identity. Her mother dissociates herself from daughter and in turn, she too dissociates herself from her mother. Munni even goes to the extent of taking a new name, "Shailaja Joshi". In almost all Deshpande's novels, we find the protagonist is exposed to some shock at the beginning. In *Small Remedies*, Madhu's son is killed in a communal riot. Madhu the protagonist and biographer is a very strong character, her choices, rejects her husband's ideology of essentialist approach and rebuilds her emotional, creative, imaginative and realistic self-confident. Savitribai Inorkar's as a challenge, she exerts her artistic and intellectual capacities. Writing itself is an act of empowerment. The female characters in the novel try to live life on their own terms, resisting its vagaries with stony silences, balanced self-assertion and deep involvement in their arts for Savitribai, it is music and for Madhu it is writing. Music is at the core of the story and so is creative writing. Bai forgets herself in her world of music, while Madhu drowns in her writing.

A family is an institution in itself-everything begins and everything that happens outside the family mirrors in the family. The domestic atmosphere quite harmonious and sanctified by the standard norms of the society is often seen with dissention, domination and violation. The complex nature of human relationships is analysed, whether it is within a family or in the broader of social space. The novelist narration around multiple acts of transgression bringing into the conflict of selves, other man, other women, physical, emotional, self-reflexivity, as she locates the self in the labyrinth of her lived experience, the experiential becomes the touchstone in narration. In this process of rebuilding and demolishing continues in the novel in a narrative flow.

Shashi Deshpande, through her novel *Small Remedies*, projects the self-confident of Indian woman in a hostile patriarchal society. She makes honesty an important tolls in the assertion self and project Savitribai and Munni as failures due to their life, achieves them success in their quest. Deshpande has inculcated in all her women-the thirst for self-discovery. It is the self-affirmation by the women in the novel, they get their philosophy. It gives them true meaning of life. Thus it is clear that all these women start thinking that they are first human beings; they can walk easily along with men. All the women, in this novel, have sensed this demand of the situation and become successful. They go against society but within the limits. They do not want to be dictator; they simply choose their lives according to their will and, in this way, prove successful in their attempts

In *Small Remedies*, Shashi Deshpande delineates the major women characters in their subversion of their traditional roles. We have glimpses of their shattered lives but they fight their own battles in different area of the society. In their own way, they tried to establish their individuality instead of getting compromised to their principles. Bai, Madhu and Leela are the victims of the gross gender discrimination but their self-realization helps them in discovering their identity and self. They went on with the dying desire towards their achievements facing the hardships while life threw upon them. They never looked back. Passing through the alienation, rebellion and aggression if necessary, they achieved their dream of being a new woman. They have their own dreams and they learn how to realize those dreams despite social barriers. They suffer a lot in their desire for the "Unfeminine" right to freedom. Women, though talented, gifted with courage, are sideliners as they are women.

Works cited

Agrawal, Rajmohan and Dutta, Divyarani, *Feminism in Modern Literature*. New Delhi: crescent publishing corporation, 2013. Print.

Deshapande Shashi. *Small Remedies* New Delhi: A penguin Random House company, 2000. Print.

Prasad, N.K *Feminism in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributions private limited, 2014. Print.

