

WOMEN IN SEARCH OF EQUALITY OR IDENTITY ?

SNEHA SHARMA , DR. MANISHA SHEKHAWAT

B.N. UNIVERSITY, UDAIPUR

ABSTRACT

Men and women have always been said to be complementary to each other. The present research paper is an attempt to investigate whether the society is taking that thought applicable in real or we are just racing ourselves to be equal with men and to rub shoulders with them and as a result not been able to identify our own identity in the search of equality. With reference to a prominent novel reflecting the situation precisely Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* ,this paper concludes with some suggestions which might bring some valuable changes in the society and will inspire women to search their true place and value in the society, which cannot be achieved by the race of being equal.

Key words : identity, equality, silence, society, comparison, realization

Ever since the first man and the first woman were born, a comparison between the two started. The question apparently comes into the mind that why there should be any comparison of any kind that should exist between a man and a woman when they are completely two different identities. We don't compare between the sun and the moon. Do we? The former is hot, heat is its quality. The latter is cold, coolness is its quality. We don't dart a comparative eye on a rose and a lily or a lotus or a sunflower. They are beautiful in their peculiarity .Could we ever be able to say that a rose is a better flower than a sunflower. I don't think we could and we don't need either. Variety and Abundance are the two greatest boons that nature, this very existence has bestowed upon us. If we are ready to accept ,most keenly .the immensity of nature then a question naturally and instantly arises that why and when did we find any necessity to compare between Adam and Eve ; the masculinity and the femininity :the two entirely different beings of humanity. One answer could be that they are interrelated to each other.

Every man has a bit of femininity in him and every woman is sometimes masculine...“Female masculinity is generally received as a pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment as a longing to be and to have a power that is always just out of reach.” But that doesn't mean that we could always start a heated discussion upon establishing one's superiority over the other. The discussions like who is stronger between the two, who is abler and efficient between the two,who is more intelligent and who is more emotional should be stopped now.Its been ages since all men and women have been making this a point of dispute and are yet unable to arrive at a conclusion.It is such a vicious circle which will lead us to nowhere.And after all

what will we get by finding out the ultimate superior one. The whole thing would start up again. Many thinkers, philosophers, scholars, scientists have wasted their time in such frugal thing. Man and woman are complementary to each other. They complete each other. What is missing in one is provided by the other. Then how can they be equal? Once they become equal, all the attraction would come to an end. So, stop making them equal. Stop the mad race of walking shoulder to shoulder. Man and woman are made to walk hand in hand. That is beautiful. The comparison is ugly. It only leads to losing one's own identity in the endeavor of becoming like other, equal to other. A rose is beautiful when it is a rose. Whenever a feeling in rose would arouse, to become like lotus, to become equal to lotus, it is going to lose all its beauty because it could never be able to become a lotus and will no longer be happy to be a rose. Rose is beautiful. Lotus is beautiful. Being an Adam is beautiful. Being an Eve is beautiful. One should be what he or she is and one will feel beautiful. In this nature, a twig of grass is as happy as the big Banyan tree because they know their true identity and their special place in the existence.

There is high time when we require to 're-engineer' the system as the feministic views do not require or ask for the equal treatment for women. They only desire to be in their own identity, to be in their own characteristics. In the words of G.D. Anderson "Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way world perceives that strength." Another feminist writer Louisa May Alcott is also having the similar view. "Women have been called queens for a long time, but the kingdom given them isn't worth ruling."

There are numerous stories which depict the struggles of women and how they came out of it after a 'long silence'. They actually had to fight for their rights, for the freedom and happiness which they deserve, which God has bestowed on both men and women but to the misfortune of women that she was subdued and subjugated and was abandoned from all the rights as a human being. The existence has not created any inequality between the two. Adam and Eve were created equal in God's sight and He assigned men and women different roles. "Men and women were created equal, yet different. And the fact that we are different is wonderful."

A prominent contemporary writer Shashi Deshpande, in her novels, primarily focus on the world of women in the context of modern Indian society. Unable to fully defy traditional, patriarchal norms of society, these women characters attempt to realize and preserve their identity not only as women but also as human beings.

"As I burrowed through the facts, what I found was a woman who had once lived here. Mohan's wife. Rahul's and Rati's mother. Not myself. But what was that 'myself'? 'Trying to find oneself' - what a cliché that has become. As if such a thing is possible. As if there is such a thing as one self, intact and whole, waiting to be discovered."

We all have our own life to pursue, our own kind of dream to be weaving, and we all have the power to make wishes come true, as long as we keep believing.

“Modern culture has placed expectations on women. Women are expected to strive for prominent positions in politics, the workplace and the education system. Another social pressure is for a woman to compare herself to others and base her value on that comparison. But this mindset is focused on the earthly and not the heavenly.”

The woman protagonists in all such novels wish to move out of the limited space of their marital home and choose a career of their own, other than that of house maker. It is this desire for recognition that Jaya in *That Long Silence* attempts to carve out a space for herself in the world of writing but she has to make a choice between success at work and marital harmony.

“He saw strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw a despair so great that it would not voice itself. I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender.”

“A woman can never be angry. She can only be neurotic, hysterical and frustrated.” This is what her husband’s opinion about women was. She thought that there was no room for anger in her life, no room for despair either. There was only order and routine.

She gives up her writing as her husband disapproves of her attitude in her writing. She is silenced even before she has an opportunity to voice her own opinion. “And so I crawled back into my hole.” Not wanting to face the tensions and friction that her writings may lead her into, Jaya very often crawls back into her hole that was unassailable and writing only light humorous pieces about the travails of a middle class housewife.

To conclude, a review on the situation is required and this matter of man- woman comparison needs to be looked with a new perspective. The society must accept them as different beings who need to have separate identification and instead of doing any kind of comparison, or equal assessment there should be the realization of true identities and specific nature.

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