



THE TRAJECTORY IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF COMPLEMENTARY PARALLELISM: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO THE DICOTOMY AND SILENCE OF JAYA AND MOHAN IN THE NOVEL “THAT LONG SILENCE”

LJI THOMAS

INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR

ABSTRACT

The paper assessed the reorganization path of the female subjectivity in the novel “That Long Silence” of Shashi Deshpande. The root cause of the fragmentation and the dichotomy of the characters, Jaya and Mohan are synchronized in a well- defined manner. The exploration of the psyche of Jaya in the process of individuation is also examined. In the novel, Jaya is trying to find her true self which was in a confused state from her childhood onwards. The attainment of complementary parallelism indicates the mutual co-existence in a relationship via identification of each other’s role and the space needed, without being into a domineering status.

KEYWORDS: trajectory, dichotomy, accomplishment, complementary parallelism, silence, tradition, self

INTRODUCTION

The paper looks into the Sahitya Academy Award winning novel “That Long Silence” of Shashi Deshpande and documents how Jaya, the heroine of the novel identifies herself with the complementary parallelism in their dichotomic relationship. The leading characters Jaya and Mohan are not recognizing the give and take formulation between them. The novel passes through the perception of Jaya. Her ‘self’ was torn apart and it becomes into bits and pieces. This identity crisis which she felt, made her to introspectively look into the ‘self’.

THE DICOTOMY OF JAYA AND MOHAN

The two variants, Jaya and Mohan are fixed in apparently incompatible principles. The root cause of the fragmentation is vivid in their upbringing, leading to the formation of clashes and conflicts.

Jaya, a girl born into a middle class family is away from the supposed mainstream social norms. She was very clever, eager to know new things and bright. This made her to feel the patriarchal impulses from her house itself. For instances her grandmother always encourages her to act more conventionally. When she was grown up it was explained that the civilized and cultured girls are skilled at cooking, cleaning and household labour. An interesting fact was that she was recommended to keep quiet when she disagrees with any matters.

From her childhood itself Jaya was facing the polarity of tradition and modernity. The male hegemony and the female subordination which comes under the traditional sensibility and the empowered, free spirited self under the modernity is in a tug of war in the psyche of Jaya.

In Hindu marriage, traditionally, the position of the husband and wife is clearly defined. The husband is expected to be the authoritarian figure whose will should always dominate the life of the wife. She should regard him as her master and should serve faithfully. Thus the traditional concept of superior husband and subordinate wife had been the guideline of Hindu marriage.

The Indian traditional marriage ceremony exhorts the husband and wife to be one, in which the 'one' will be the husband. That is the wife will merge her name, personality, life style and infact her entire life into that of the husband. Here in the case of Jaya and Mohan both had their own reasons for engaging into this marriage proposal. For Mohan he wants an English speaking wife makes him tie the knot with Jaya, a well-educated girl. Jaya in return marries Mohan due to audacity as her mother disapproved him.

Mohan had a strong traditional background where he had grown up seeing his mother silently submit to every unpredictable demand of his father. This roles of submissive wife and dominating husband deeply ingrained in his mind. Jaya was very much attached to her father rather than her mother. She has two brothers –Dinakar or dada and Ravi. She and Dada share all happiness and worries together. But Ravi is a different kind of person. When she was fifteen her father died and her Dada brings her the proposal of his friend Mohan. Jaya is a dark complexioned girl and well educated. Mohan is a handsome, junior engineer in the steel plant at Lohanagar and his only demand about his bride is that he wanted to marry a girl “who can speak good English” and “that what he wants is an educated cultured wife”.

Mohan's concern about his wife is traditional. His decision is that his wife should obey his orders and not say “no” against him. He has a painful background. His family is an ordinary Brahmin family and he had completed his education with the help of an old man. So he showed no responsibility to his family. But he loved his brother Vasant's daughter Rawati many more than his daughter Rati. On one occasion of Rawati's birthday Jaya as well as Rati feel that Mohan loves his niece more than his own daughter. He is a traditionalist rooted in customs. To Mohan a woman sitting before the fire, waiting for her husband to come and eat hot food is the real strength of a woman.

Jaya, the only daughter of an unconventional family adored by her father and brothers was brought up differently. She realized that to Mohan anger made a woman unwomanly. Her father named her Jaya-Jaya for victory. Jaya's father assimilate the strongest emotions which defines the modern strand in Jaya. It is he who inspires resilient and courage. The disparity in Jaya and Mohan's background leads to a clash of expectations.

The first conflict of ideas taken place when Jaya becomes pregnant, repulsed by the odour of cooking oil-asks Mohan to cook. She was insulted for her demand to do something unmanly. Mohan laughs it off. Jaya's assertion flares up into fight in which Jaya responds equally bad temper as she had always done at her father's place. Mohan was shocked at her display of anger. He voices his disapproval by repeating “How could you? I never thought my wife could say such things to me. You are my wife”. For Mohan anger made a woman unwomanly.

Jaya realizes that her anger had shattered him. It had broken the image of a traditional wife Mohan had in his mind. The image he had created about his mother whom he proudly told to Jaya is “My mother never raised her voice against my father however badly he behaved to her”. His mother had silently endured the mood of her drunkard husband and slogged to fulfil his irrational demands. This had set in Mohan's mind the qualities of endurance and sacrifice of a woman. She realized that “to him anger made a woman unwomanly “since then Jaya like a dutiful wife learnt not to annoy him lest it should affect her marriage. For the first time she becomes aware of the role of a wife and its limitations. She blames her parents and their easy life style which did not train her to be a perfect wife as she saw in the women at Mohan's house.

Dicotomic characteristics of Jaya and Mohan are being inculcated from their parental home itself. The gap has been made by the age old conventions which existed in different stratas of society. The fragmentation within Jaya is because of the confrontation of the tradition and modernity existing in the family itself. Women (especially her grandma) are becoming the part of this accord of tradition whereas the men (father and Dada) exhibits modern ethos. In Jaya's case it was her father who was progressive and inculcated the modern ideals whereas for Mohan the traditional notions are deep rooted.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF COMPLEMENTARY PARALLELISM

The dichotomic features of Jaya and Mohan leads to self-discovery. This insight is acquiring partly through the recognition of the 'contrasts' and the 'silence'. The 'Long Silence' Jaya undergoes was not a silence internally-it was an argumentative self- introspective noisy revelation. It was obvious from her decision when Mohan at last inform Jaya about his arrival. This 'silence' had two mechanism. One is the outside superficial '*that long silence*' and the other one is the inner deep prolonged noise which is the active mode of the psyche that tries to configure her 'self'.

This silence is noisy at some point of time when it is achieving the self- recognition. The outside world can only guess about the inner noise. It is only the one segment of the trajectory in the attainment of complementary parallelism. The ultimate recognition is the understanding of relationship's existence.

The novel is silent about Mohan's self- recognition. Moreover in Jaya also from some perspectives even the writer cannot identify the 'sounds of silence' properly—all is within the psyche of Jaya. Here the answer to Mohan's silence is his decision to come back to Jaya. Both are recognizing that they are the 'essentials' in the parallelism of that complementary action.

The quest for self- discovery is a rational point of retreat for modern Indian women from the fetters of society. It enables them to throw away the rotten customs and rituals and to instil a sense of dignity and self- respect in their lives. Jaya is a sensitive and thoughtful creature who contemplates over her fate and position in the society .She strives to know what she is and why she sinks into inactivity and desperation and feels alienated and tormented.

Jaya in the quest for self- definition of women, who is educated and modern has to go beyond the society ordained roles of mother/sister/wife and has to find out who she is? Women is an autonomous being. The loneliness of a lady is no mental abnormality but paved the way for the “new woman’s quest for self- discovery”. Jaya is indicative of an ‘emerging new woman’. She is conscious about her status and is prepared to listen to no one’s advice other than her own.

The writer in Jaya got a scaffolding effect from Kamat, her upper floor neighbor. She had a free spirited converse with Kamat, helped to expose her inner self and recognizes what she is. It gives Jaya a kind of confidence on her principled abstract ideas. A kind of form was achieved. Mohan, when lost his job temporarily due to some malpractices he had done, made Jaya to meet the expenses by writing articles. She was confined to particular topics yet her intellectual domain was feeding in a way which an educated, self-opinionated women finds satisfaction from the roles other than a wife and mother.

Jaya realizes that whenever Mohan is no longer around her, she has no face to show to the world in the absence of her husband. It is he who provides comfort and gives meaning to her life. When he fears the loss of his job and shifts to Dadar temporarily he has no work to do. And because he has no work to do Jaya too has nothing to do.

Jaya’s journey is from a fragmented self to a unified whole. She tries painfully her way back through the disorderly chaotic sequence of occurrence and non-occurrence that made up her life. On receiving Mohan’s telegram that all’s well, she finds her true self:

I am not afraid anymore. The panic has gone I am Mohan’s wife,

I had thought and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife.

Now I know, that kind of a fragmentation is not possible.

She rejects the image of two Bullocks yoked together. The intense searching of the self has brought knowledge of life which cannot be lived in vacuum. She has come to terms with a liberated self---a self that does not want to take up a subordinate role but a complementary role.

CONCLUSION

The transformed psyche of Jaya do not find freedom in the western sense but in conformity with the society they live in without drifting away from one’s culture. Jaya’s decision is a sensible harmonization. She becomes aware of the fact that breaking off the bonds of family would result in loneliness and disintegration of the larger social setup. It is clear that the role of early life experiences, role of education, closeness of parents, sibling relationships are some crucial elements that go a long way in creating a woman’s personality. Despite the tussle, there is a strong urge to return home, to the security and warmth of the family.

The woman protagonist achieves individuation yet do not negate, the family or society. Long hours of contemplation in ‘*that long silence*’ from a passive partner to the resurgence of an active woman is accepted. This new vigour is the result of idea which is conveyed in the epigraph of “Dark Holds No Terror”

You are your refegee

There is no other refugee

This refugee is hard to achieve.

Finally Jaya asserts her individuality as a women and also as a partaker in the endless cycle of life. As Deshpande says to an Interviewer Vanamala Viswanathan ‘it’s necessary for women to live within relationships’. Considering the context of the novel, the statement also includes women as well as men because these autonomous units have to combine together to function a family smoothly. If one is over dominating it will not give the desired result. Here this mutual adaptability has happened in a desired pattern.

REFERENCE

Deshpande, Shashi. The Dark Holds No Terror. New Delhi: Prestige, 1989.

Deshpande, Shashi. That Long Silence. New Delhi: Penguin, 1989

Deshpande, Shashi. “Literature alive”. The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande, ed.R.S Pathak. New Delhi: Creative’ 1998.

Dhawan, R.K. Indian Writing in English-Women Novelists. New Delhi: Prestige, 1991.

Kapur Promila. Love, Marriage and Sex. New Delhi: Vikas, 1993.

King, Adle. "Shashi Deshpande: Portraits of an Indian Women" The New Indian Novel in English' ed.Viney Kripal, New Delhi: Allied, 1990.

Manu. Manu Samhitha. Trans. Manmath Nath Dutta. New Delhi: Cosmo, 1979.

Offen, Karen. Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach. New Delhi: Prestige, 1990.

Shrirwaadhakar, Meena. Image of Women in Indo English Novel. New Delhi: Sterling, 1979.

Tong, Rosemarie. Feminist Though. London: Routledge, 1993.

Uma Alladi. Women and Her Family: Indian and Afro-American: A LiterayPerspective. New Delhi: Sterling,1989.

