

Mythical Woman Voices Echoes in Shashi Deshpande's "The Inner Rooms"

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 12

Special Issue: 1

Month: September

Year: 2024

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Citation:

Therichselvam, K. Rajalakshmi. "Mythical Woman Voices Echoes in Shashi Deshpande's 'The Inner Rooms.'" *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 12, no. S1, 2024, pp. 117–19.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v12iS1-Sep.8404>

K. Rajalakshmi Therichselvam

Assistant Professor

Department of English (PG)

AyyaNadar Janaki Ammal College, Sivakasi

Women who is considered as the half of the world's population and came out of man's rib are not treated equally with men in anyways. The problems faced by women have been looked into the international level in the last few decades. Though it was said that women are equal and they get whatever they want. Women face the problem of exploitation, undergone violence, denial of justice, not given freedom and equal importance everywhere. Though there were many laws and rules to protect women, they are in the midst of discrimination and suffering.

As a woman grows, she is educated with the ideas of self-reliance, patience is to be pride, and make her to accept the lower status by pin pointing the mythological characters who sacrificed them for the sake of others. They want a woman like Sita, Savitri, Gandhari who blindly followed their husband's command. Though woman is grown with all the potential, she has to be a dependent of father, husband and son for her survival.

Twenty first century saw a metamorphosis in women from education to all the fields of life. This makes women writers and feminist critic to get into the deep insight of women's experience to reassure and revalue their position. Indian English writers examine the power relations and the existing power politics in the Indian patriarchal society. So it is the duty and important thing for the women writers of India to lime light the neglected, unnoticed and marginalized position of Indian women. They come forward to eradicate the threat which is inculcated on women and try to improve their position in the society as well as the home. In order to voice forth their opinion, they use the tool as writing. They use different genre also to voice forth their opinions.

Shashi Deshpande, fixed herself in the category of Indian English women writer and chose to write the genre Novels. With her own advent and curiosity voice forth her opinions to the frustrations of women. She doesn't want to identity herself as feminist but her writings reveal her a feminist.

Shashi Deshpande has strongly defended her position not to be branded as a feminist author; her work nonetheless vouches for some vital feminist issues that cannot be ignored. She cites Betty Friedan and Virginia Woolf in her narrative, and in a subtle way brings into

focus feminist issues of identity, self-hood and autonomy, of bonding and its disruption in her work.

The form short story provides, excellent training ground for Shashi Deshpande. Her idea to choose to write in the short story as a form allows the author to take deep in the issue which have been out of place in the narrative or the plot of the novel. Shashi Deshpande talks to Lakshmi Holmstrom which was published in a journal Wasafiri. Shashi Deshpande says,

“And then I think that in the short stories I hit on most of the themes that I later wanted to work out in my novels. They are all actually there”

In the story “The Inner Rooms” Shashi Deshpande portrays the Predicament of Mythical characters in The Mahabharata Amba, Ambika and Ambalika. Bhishma’s power over these three sisters is the model of patriarchal society. Bhishma took the power to rule the world of these sisters. But Amba doesn’t want to be her sisters. She could understand the game plan of Bhishma and reused to marry Vichitravirya. She expresses her desire to marry Salva before everyone in order to free herself from the power of Bhishma. But Salva is not ready to accept her. She feels worst at this situation. Amba plans to embrace death because instead of living a life of indignity, she wants to end her life. She wants her own decision at least in death.

Shashi Deshpande used woman as her main characters. She wants to focus their sufferings and oppression in the patriarchal society. Her characters are not from anywhere but from her own land and situation. They are bound by the social taboos and could not come out of the situation and blindly follow them without any question. Through her writing Shashi Deshpande free her woman characters from the chains she is bound with. In Legacy G.S. Amur rightly pointed out this.

“Woman’s struggle in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and most important of all, as human being is Shashi Deshpande’s major concern as a creative writer and this appears in all her stories.”

“The Inner Rooms” renarrates the story of Amba already narrated in The Mahabharata. Shashi Deshpande delineates the same story in one of her earlier collections of short stories, It was Dark (1986). “The Inner Rooms” expresses the predicament of Amba and her two sisters Ambika and Ambalika. The inner rooms are deemed to be the right place for these women. The sufferings of these three sisters by the most reliable Bhishma is an ample display of the male – oriented society. Amba seeks vengeance against Bhishma for having captured her and ruined her choice of life with her betrothed, the king of Saubha. She declines to marry Vichitravirya. The puny stature of Vichitravirya and Bhishma’s terrible vow of celibacy do not allow her to find her destiny in Hastinapur. Spurned from all sides and not finding any solution to her bizarre predicament, Amba seeks to immolate herself. Death alone could bring solace to her. Amba has to sacrifice herself in order to wreak her vengeance. Shashi Deshpande shares her experience to write the story of Amba: The picture haunted me and I could almost hear this woman saying to me urgently, ‘Write about me, write my story’ which I did a story entitled “The Inner Rooms”. (WFM 91).

In “The Inner Rooms”, the author viewed the story from the technique of Myth. Myths play a part of history, which forms the background of the story. Myths are still important to everyone. “Myth” says Shashi Deshpande, “have given us a moral framework by which we live” (qtd. in Mohan 34).

Myths play the role of the human psyche, part and parcel of our cultural histories. They continue to live and human beings have so internalized them that they are a part of human psyche, part of human personal, religious and Indian identity. They give the image of Ram-Lakshman for loving brothers, Ram-Sita or a Lakshmi-Narayan for ideal couple. But nowhere we hear of a man being expected to be a Rama or a Krishna, Arjuna or a Lakshmana; these remain unattainable ideals to him. The basic problem is that, myths have not only originated with men, their interpretation has also been in male hands.

Amba finds her woman identity at first a fractured self because of the secondary status carelessly heaped on her by the dominant man-made law:

“She was only a woman, she was to be disregarded, ignored; her will, her determination had to be set aside as nothing because she was a woman.” (Collected stories)

A work of art must have a captivating beginning, otherwise it does not deserve the name ‘art’ “The Inner Rooms” captivate the readers’ attention by saying, “PERHAPS SHE LOOKED a little mad” (Collected Stories 87). It arouses curiosity in the audience to know who that “SHE?” is.

Shashi Deshpande portrays her woman characters in a critical condition. They want to lead their life without the interference of man. They want to prove their individuality, talent, self-thinking. They don’t want to be a mere doll in the hands of man or the soul which always works on somebody’s command. Her characters are living example and have their own ideals. They don’t want to portray themselves in the books of Myth. Amba is different from her two sisters Ambika and Ambalika. She is the most obstinate of the two. She walks out of “The Inner Rooms”. Shashi Deshpande wants her women to take decision on their own and come out of the quagmire called Patriarchal oppression or the dependent of man.

References

Primary Sources

1. Deshpande, Shashi. Collected Short Stories Volume-I. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2003.---, Writing from the Margin and other Essays. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2003.

Secondary Sources

1. Mohan, Indra.T.M.J. Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Spectrum. New Delhi: Atlantic publishers and distributors, 2004.