

OUTCOME OF REDEFINING RELATIONSHIPS IN SHASHIDESHPANDE'S NOVEL 'SMALL REMEDIES'

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to bring out the Outcome of redefining relationship pertaining to ShashiDeshpande's novel Small Remedies. In general, women writers writing in English present with insight and understanding the dilemma, which modern women are facing in traditional society where dual morality is the accepted norm, self-willed and individualistic women have to face suffering created by broken relationship.

Among Indians women English novelists Shashi Deshpande occupies an outstanding position. Though her works show strong feminine sensibility, she has stressed that she is not a feminist rather she likes to be seen as one fascinated in human relationships. It is clear that the relationship she is concerned in is that between husband and wife. Her female protagonists are tolerant and submissive but do not seem to be ready to compromise their identity and individuality. As they feel the need for self-expression and individual fulfillment, they begin to question the conventions and traditions that question their importance and individuality. This awakening has led to the redefining of husband-wife relationships. In the man-woman relationships she depicts, Deshpande stresses the predicament that is always seen in the heroine's life. They seek their selfhood with in the orbit of family relationships. Thus redefining relationships helps them to gain confidence and to assert themselves.

Keywords: *Shashi Deshpande, Relationship, Redefining Relationship*

I INTRODUCTION

ShashiDeshpande as a writer brings out the process of self-identity through various techniques. Redefining relationships is one of such technique, which she follows to bring out the true identity of her protagonists. The objective of the paper is to bring out the outcomes of redefining relationship pertaining to ShashiDeshpande's novel *Small Remedies*. In this novel ShashiDeshpande explores the lives of two women, SavitribaiIndorekar, one obsessed with music and Leela, a passionate supporter of communism. Both Savitribai and Leela break away from their families to seek fulfillment in their chosen life.

The protagonist of the novel, MadhuSaptharisi is a motherless child, brought up by her father and Babu, a male servant. Her father was a self-sufficient man who marked his identity as doctor. He cared her daughter Madhuso much that her mother remains a blank space throughout her life. The smell of the cigarettes and the aroma of drink when she remains in the company of her father mean security to Madhu. She states that, “Ours was a relationship built, not on information, but on trust” (175). But, her father’s sudden demise made her a stranger to her own life. My father dead, Babu gone, I knew not where, the home that had been mine ever since I could remember, no longer there-these things made me suddenly a stranger to my own life (41). She is left under the care of her aunt Leela and Joe, whose relationship proves to be a wonderful companionship for her. With Leela in my life, I’ve never felt the lack of a mother (151). In her stay at her aunt’s house she meets with Paula’s hatred in the form of unkind behaviour. Unable to withhold Paula’s cruelty, Madhu decides to stay in hostel for her studies. When Joe and Leela aspire for Madhu’s higher education, she ignores it showing her curiosity to be independent. She states her condition thus:But I have one good reason not to go on. My father’s money is over (82). So, she determines to work and be independent. As god sent gift,Hamidbhai offers her a job in City Views. She even takes her colleague Dalvi’s sexual harassment as fleabite and feels pride in her work. At certain point of time her friendship with Som turns to be true love. Her initial stage of hardships subsides when she marries Som.I’m not only happy, I’m little complacent too (182).

Two years after her marriage Adit is born. Motherhood absorbs all of me, I’ve nothing left for anyone, for anything (146). She is totally obsessed with Adit.Her life centers on the needs for her son. She even expresses her fulfillment as, What can you give me, my Lord, I, who have everything? (89). Her happiness gets totally collapsed when Adit dies in a bomb blast. She first does not accept it and starts a vague search for her son. Som, in agony says, Cry of him, mourn him, but don’t wait for him (303). His death engulfs them in grief and emptiness.

The relationship begins to split after her disclose of the past truth. Som becomes estranged when he comes to know about Madhu’s sexual encounter at an age of fifteen with her father’s friend. Suddenly, Madhu again becomes stranger to her affectionate husband Som. This makes Som so cautious that he even ceases to touch her and not to make physical contact with her. This fearful struggle locks them in silence. He wants hard facts. I could not speak the words he wanted to hear (256). In such circumstance, their son’s death lays between them. Adit’s death changed everything. To remember is to make living impossible. And therefore it is that Som and I prefer to be apart. To see Som is to remember. In the face, in his eyes, I see my own grief, my guilt, my anger (107).Som’s behavior was inconsiderate towards Madhu who becomes inarticulate when he starts speaking ill of her relationship with her brother Tony. To recover from the extreme hardships faced after her son’s death she decides to write the biography of SavitribaiIndorekar, Doyen of Hindustani music.

Savitribai, proves to be a person who rejects the conventions of her times, a feminist who lives her life on her terms, great artist who struggles and sacrifices everything for the cause of her love for music. She who is self-

centered and uncaring has managed to turn her back on her past and her child when she began her journey to success and fame. We were a very wealthy family. Lakshmi has made her home in this family—that's what they used to say about us (27). She is born in a wealthy family where her mother showed her the beauty of music but her father-in-law started her on music. "I was so desperate I was willing to disguise myself as a man and go for a public performance" (128).

Though Savithribai belongs to a conservative Brahmin family she takes a bold step in expressing her love for music to her father-in-law who in turn helps her by arranging music class for her. But she indulges in an unimaginable height of criminality when she develops a relationship with Ghulam Ahmed, a tabla player who was a muslim and finally comes out of her dwelling to meet her Guruji. A woman who'd been, both as a child and as a married girl, part of a large family, living in a strange town among total strangers. With the added burden of being a Hindu woman, living with a Muslim partner, and, of course, the greater alienation that not knowing a language bridge (38). Finally, she never feels to abandon Ghulam Ahmed, when the need for him gets over.

Savitribai confers that it was not easy for her being a Brahmin woman in a respected family to take music as her career. Madhu comments on Bai's attitude towards life as, The feminist who lived her life on her terms. The great artist who struggled and sacrificed everything in the cause of her act. The woman who gave up everything in the cause of her art. The woman who gave up everything - a comfortable home a husband and a family – for love (116). Munni, her daughter rejects her relationship with her parents. She rarely speaks about her mother. Though Munni resembles her mother more and disclaims her father her light grey eyes indirectly authenticates the relationship she hates. She affirms her friend Madhu that Ghulam Ahmed is not her father and her true father lives in Pune, a lawyer who earns lot of money. She in her dislike for her identity as Meenakshi Indorekar ultimately becomes Shailaja Joshi. Fighting with her back to the wall for the identity she wanted to have, the one she claimed finally, successfully denying her old one. Shailaja Joshi-a long way from Munni, daughter of Savitribai and Ghulam Saab (77). Madhu considers that the rejection by her daughter Munni, is the price Savitribai pays for her fallacious relationship with her daughter.

Madhu also finds the relationship between Joe and Leela as incomparable, even without much of communication as best communicators are always wordless. Leela, strong-willed, gives her life to aid the factory workers of Bombay. Even after her husband, Vasanth's death she does not go to her parent's home as she determines to support herself and tolerate a hand to her brother-in-laws. "As long as my limbs are fit-I can move, I'll do my own work" (200). She even marries a Christian, widower with two children which is considered as an act of rebel in a wholly conventional and traditional-bound family.

II CONCLUSION

Madhu finally decides to redefine her relationship with her husband Som, after his letter stating, “We need to be together, we need to mourn him together, we need to face the fact of his death and our continuing life together” (323). The outcome is her self-realization and her determination to move on even after facing much intense hardships. Thus, the desperate exploration for meaning, the effort to find a sense of one’s identity and one’s relationship to the world outside, culminates in the understanding that loss is never total, and it is essential to realize it because, in any event, life has to be made possible.

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