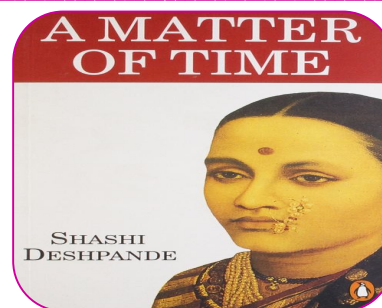




"HUMAN BONDS AND BONDAGES IN SHASHI DESHPANDES "A MATTER OF TIME".

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ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpandes novels present a social world of many complex relationships. She is the first Indian Novelist and the second Asian whose work is published by British Virago Press. To her creative writing is not a means to an end, but an end in itself. She deals with the inner world of the Indian women in her novels. She portrays her heroines in a realistic manner. Her writing is feminist. Basically, she writes about the situation of women and their failures in the fast changing socio-economic milieu of India. She writes about the conflict between tradition and modernity in relation to women in the middle class society.

Shashi Deshpandes writing not only reveal the inner psyche but also represents the authenticity and real world. In her fictional world, her main concern is with human beings and a balanced relationship between the sexes. Her other novel like "In the Dark Holds No Terror", "Roots and Shadows" ," That Long Silence" mostly deals with the related issues. In "A Matter of Time" three generations of women of the same family come together and discover the strenght and reality of the other. In the present paper, I am going to highlight on the human bonds and their bondages which affects them. My question is that, Being a Women do i have certain bondages? and if yes, than Why?. During writting this article, many questions mingled in my mind which i tried to resolve them on a satisfactory note.

KEY WORDS: Human bond , Bondages, Human relationships, generation gap, human predicament, trapped.

INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpandes novel present a social world of many complex relationships. In her fictional world many men and women live together, journey across life in their different age groups, classes and gendered roles. They are related to each other through marriage and other forms of kinship. These persons are bound by a deep awareness of the presence and pressure of their social world. Shashi Deshpande presents the extended middle class families in her novels. Two or three generations live together. The old tradition- bound world co-exists with the modern. The generation gaps create conflicts and struggles between the old and the new. These struggles become intense quests for self-definition. Deshpande has presented in her novels modern Indian womens search for self-identity. It can be clearly seen in the present novel "A Matter of Time".

Human Bond and Bondages in "A Matter of Time"

Shashi Deshpande is almost incompaarable for her portrayal of Indian middle-class women with their turmoils, convulsions, frustrations and that long silence which has been their lot for many centuries. Her novels centre around family relationships. In her own opinion, everybody has to live within relationship, for there is no other way.

"Its needed", she told her interviewer,

"Its necessary for women to live within relationships". But the "rules" should not be "rigidly laid", for that would make one only "unhappy". This is what I have tried to convey in my writing".

From this confession of the writer it becomes clear that Deshpande gives utmost significance to human relationships. To another interviewer, Vishwanatha, Deshpande explains her central concerns in more precise terms:

"Human relationship is what a writer is involved with. Person to person and person to society- those are the two primary concerns of a creative writer, and to me, the former is of immense importance. My preoccupation is with interpersonal relationships and human emotions".

She firmly believes that relationships is "a theme in which epics after epics can be written". It is the most mystifying thing in the Indian context and deserves to be thrashed properly. She says,

"I will continue to wonder about it, puzzle over it and write about it. And still find it tremendously intriguing, fascinating". Family is the nerve centre of all human activities in the fictional world of Shashi Deshpande.

She says, "Undoubtedly my novels are all about family relationships. But.... I go beyond that because the relationships which exists within the family are, to an extent, parallel to the relationships which exist between human beings outside.... When I am writing about the family, it is not just about the family. It definitely does not limit my canvas. On the contrary, that is where everything begins".

As "A Matter of Time", it retains her old concerns and at the same time it is about the larger issues in human life. There is some change in this novel. She writes in it on issues of a wider dimension. She told her interviewer, M.D. Riti,

" But you know, sometimes I feel trapped in this womans world- you can see that in That long silence. I do want to get away..... So many be I want to reach a stage where I can write about human beings and about women or men".

Further more she says,

" But basically, it is the human predicament. I am always concerned about people, their predicament and moral values. It is search in every human being, something more than more mundane life"

"A Matter of Time", presents three generations in the same family under the same roof. They have "a finely individualised unconventional relationship" with each other. The novel begins with a crisis. Gopal abandons his wife and children. The relatives are shocked and they try to find out the root cause of Gopals desertion. Major part of the novel is devoted to find out why Gopal deserted his family.

Kalyani - Shripati relationship is of old generation. There is a crisis in Kalyani's married life and Kalyani suffers for thirty five years for that. She remains silent and suffers submissively as traditional Indian women, for, her family relations is a great concern. Kalyani become unhappy after listening to Gopal's decision. She fears of the repetition of past family history.

Gopal and Sumi are unusual people. Sumi appears to be a silent sufferer. Even Gopal does not find the real cause of his strange behaviour. Sumi and Gopal had been married for twenty years and had been happy together. Gopal's desertion leaves Sumi in confusion about the future of her daughters. Sumi goes to her parent's house called "Vishwas" or "The Big House". In this house Sumi's parents also live estranged from each other. For about thirty five years Shripati had not spoken to his wife Kalyani. Sumi remembers how she and Premi and always been scared to their father. He lived all by himself in a room on the first floor.

Sumi bers her emotional turmoil in complete silence, like her mother Kalyani. But she rediscovers her mother's courage, tenderness and light heartedness. Kalyani takes charge of her grand-daughters and Sumi finds them coming closer to each other. The old and young women form a bonding within their small group, providing emotional and moral support. When Sumi and Shripati die in a scooter accident, the young girls find an anchor in Kalyani. Kalyani reveals her strength while dealing with the calamity. The passage of time has not changed family and social structure very much. But there is a very important change in the way in which women define themselves and relate to their family. For Kalyani the family history defines and distinguishes her. It gives her sense of pride. The history talks only about male initiative enterprise. Sumi and

her daughters are different in this respect as they try to look for feminist interpretations. Sumi's rewriting of the "Rice and Curds Tree", a story she had heard from her aunt Goda, makes for an interesting exercise. She thinks of the ways in which women use riddles, stories and even "boons" as ways of manipulating men and authority, their own interest. Sumi writes a play on these lines which is enacted by her students. Then she realises her talent for writing of this kind.

Aru is torn between her love for her mother and that for her father. She is enraged by the injustice of her father's act. She even sees a women lawyer, Surekha for help. Surekha tells Aru that the law cannot be of any help. Both Aru and Sumi hold on to the traditional concept of family, though they are also modern in their self-images. Their feminist perspectives, self confidence and self-concern make them look afresh at the family relationship. Sumi tells Gopal that she does not wish to hold him back forcibly, for she tells him, they had a "complete life full of love and understanding". In giving Gopal his freedom, Sumi gains not only her own freedom but also immense dignity and respect from him. Gopal feels a renewal of love and desire for Sumi that he had not felt for many years. As Sumi dies in an accident soon after this meeting, Gopal comes back to his daughters to take care of them.

The single parent family leaves a void-emotional and psychological. The woman's self-respect however, grows as she manages her duties as wife and mother. Women's lives within the society take them towards a new understanding of the significance of family. The roles do not remain closed. But through them, women gain fulfillment and self-awareness. Creative self-awareness can be realised from within these relations, if they can become open and provide space for growth.

Besides Gopal and Kalyani relationship we see a very strong bond between Kalyani, Sumi and Aru represent the mother- daughter and grand - daughter relationship. Kalyani-Shripati relationship is tragic. In Sumi- Gopal relationship, Gopal does not want to feel any bond, not even like Vanaprastha. To him possessions are a burden. Gopal feels this very strongly with his children when his wife dies. Shashi Deshpande's depiction of the mother-daughter relationship is unlike Indian, for instance, Sumi and Aru, Charu and Seema. There is a problem of the relationship being defined. But for Deshpande, the focus is between two human beings, not on the relationship being defined for example, Kalyani and Aru. Kalyani's relationship with Aru is hardly grand-motherly. They have a finely individualised, unconventional relationship. Kalyani and Goda are sisters, by their reckoning. Deshpande shows that human relationships tend to have a continuity, and human beings have potentials of corresponding with each other in certain significant respects. It is this continuity of relationship that gives meaning to life in the long run.

Shashi Deshpande has portrayed the familial aspect of human relationship through Kalyani-Sumi and Aru. She presents the philosophical aspect of it through Gopal. One of the core issues in A Matter of Time is the nature and cause of Gopal's renunciation. Gopal's walking on his family has been thought in terms of sanyasa. Gopal is neither physically nor mentally fit to renounce the world. It would be better to read Gopal's transformation from the existentialist point of view. Deshpande has quoted Camus and Kierkegaard. Sumi thinks of Gopal "as if he has been suspended in space, in nothingness". Gopal himself says Camus is right. "We carry our places of exile within us. It entered into me too". "A man is always an outsider", he opines. "Fear, Silence and Pain" are the recurrent motifs in the novel. Gopal tried to escape "piercing pain", but he could not. He is not free from the other attachments also. There is a reference to Buddha when Gopal says, "You have got to be the Buddha for that emptiness to be filled with compassion is not possible for him. He knows that one can find solutions when one is "Armed with knowledge". This is again, "A Matter of Time".

CONCLUSION:

"A Matter of Time" is a saga of Human bonds and bondages. There is an intricate web of human relationships. Although life is mixed up, nothing is over, things keep coming back over and over again, they are all connected. This is possible only because of human relationships. Human beings are Time's captive. Gopal says,

" If it is indeed time that we are bound to our destinies, that there is no point struggling against them, even then this remains- that we do not submit passively or cravenly, but with dignity and strenght. Surely, this, to some extent, frees us from our bonds".

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