

Love vs. Lust in the novels of Shashi Deshpande

- H. Marie Evangeline & S. Rajarajan

Abstract: This article 'Love vs. Lust' discuss about connection between love and lust which plays a dominant role in each and every relationships. These two terms have similarities as well as differences. Usually lust is an occurrence between two human beings and love is a natural experience of anything, whether it to be human or object. The Indian novelist Shashi Deshpande in her novels clearly expresses this idea of love and lust through her protagonists. The female characters undergo a struggle within themselves regarding this. Due to lack of love in their life they tend to fall for lust through which they tend to fulfil their desires. But later they understand the mistake they had done deceiving their family. They understand the importance of family and its bondage and finally decide to destroy their lust they have developed which affects their family and finally understands the value of true love given by their family members.

Keywords: love, lust, life, relationship

Body is considered as a great gift by God. It is the medium through which every human being experience the world. Physical experiences or mental experiences are acquired through body alone. In Indian society the female body is viewed as a culturally coded and socially constructed one. The social and religious method always acts against the concept of female freedom, satisfaction and sexual independence. Female is depicted as goddess and has been created as an image by the society that they are only a child bearing thing to develop the family clan. This attitude is changing along with the emancipation of women. In this modern society many women writers celebrate the female body as a positive source of desire, energy and pleasure and allowing her to acquire their identity as women. Through establishing their identities they can be rebellious, emancipated and empowered. Deshpande mostly in her novels rebels against conventional sexual restrictions and portrays sex to show that women are becoming more aware of their sexual needs, whether lust or love. Deshpande allows her protagonists to enjoy her sexuality, freedom and individuality. A woman born in Indian society is always given a 'pativrata' image that is a chaste, devoted and loyal wife. She is not allowed to think on her own. Whatever she thinks and does must not affect her family, especially her husband and kids. She becomes the sole proprietor who has to take care of the family's name not causing it any harm. In ancient times women accept blindly whatever said by their husband thinking it to be the only way for them to live, since they are not educated and couldn't stand on their own legs. But in this modern society she questions ceaselessly, tackles her problem inwardly

and analyses it independently. This kind of analyzing and questioning about life and marriage supports the courage of Deshpande's heroines. After a certain extent marriage, either to be love marriage or arranged marriage becomes meaningless for them. The adjustment they make to live with their husband becomes meaningless. They strongly believe that sex alone sustains the man woman relationship. It is shocking to trace this in most of the novels of Deshpande. This causes new images of women who come out of their traditional shield as 'pathivrata' and are ready to accept the sexual realities of life. In her novels we can notice that the mother, aunt and the elderly women characters all accept their fate and live in their own world without opposing or raising their voice against the male in the family, either their father or husband or brother. They think the daughters must also do the same thing as they did. It is the only acceptable state to run the family smoothly. But the modern heroines of Deshpande sort freedom not only intellectually but also sexually. They don't want to lead a suppressed life like their mother or other women in the family. Their strife for escapism makes them to have relationship or affair with men other than their husbands to seek remedy to extra-marital sex. So Deshpande's heroines view marriage as a pretense for lust. Even though they happily get married thinking positively about marriage and family, in later stage they come to a conclusion that marriage is nothing but two different people brought together to mate and reproduce so that the generation might continue.

In *The Dark Holds no Terrors*, the protagonist Saru starts her life as a doctor but slowly struggles a lot. She is not ready to live in a dingy two-rooms flat in a suburb area. She wanted to have a house of her own and wanted to live a comfortable life. Her husband Manohar fails to fulfill her desire. She is not satisfied with her husband and begins to enjoy superior financial and social status with the help of an outsider, Boozie. She uses him as her support to develop her career. She thinks that Boozie is a handsome masterful man who has a very good language, skills and he is perfect for her. She admits that 'I would learn this instead, this skill, this proficiency, this perfection. I knew he was a good teacher. Well, I would learn from him. Everything that he could teach me, I would learn'. (TDHNT, 90). Even though Manohar notices the relationship between Saru and Boozie he keeps quite because of the benefits they get from him. But the inferiority complex in Manohar grows day by day seeing the growth of Saru as a doctor and becomes a sadist. He gets pleasure in insulting his wife, hurting her sexually during night time. Saru becomes a frightened, lonely and dissatisfied person. This fragmentation in her marital life makes her look for other possibilities. Even though Boozie don't have any physical relationship with Saru, he takes personal interest in her. He teaches her to dress with elegance, speak English, improve her accent etc. He even helps her with enough money to set up consulting room of her own in a well known and decent locality. He helps her for her betterment. Saru manages to fulfill her desires through Boozie. She

praises him saying ' And here he was, the fairy godfather, who could, with a wave off his magic wand, make things easier, miraculously, wonderfully, easier for me... if only I could please him. I knew I could if I tried. I did. (TDHNT, 92). It takes a long time to realize that Boozie is really interested in her. The interest is not that of master and student but that of a woman and a man. Even though it looks strange she responds to his flirtatious manner and accepts his behavior without opposition. She accepts 'If he put his hand on my shoulder, slapped me on my back, held my hand or hugged me... that was just his mannerism and meant nothing. It had nothing to do with Manu and me.' (TDHNT, 91). Her other extra marital relationship is with Padmakar. She often calls him Padma who was her classmate in medical college, whom she meets years later as a medical practitioner. He intends to have a deeper relationship with Saru. Both of these relationships neither sooth her nor comfort her. At one instant she becomes clear of what love is and lust is. She says 'Both, I knew too well were illusions, and not relevant to my life any way. And the code word of our age is neither love nor romance, but sex. Fulfillment and happiness came, not through love alone but sex. And for me sex was now a dirty word'. (TDHNT,133). Finally she understands that the affairs with Boozie and Padmak Rao are temporary substitutions for her unfulfilled desires and which will not give her permanent solution to her problems and cravings.

The protagonist Devyani in *In the Country of Deceit* is an Indian unmarried girl who lives alone after her parents death. She in the beginning of the novel is not influenced by her friends and relatives regarding marriage and sex. Even she is not moved by the advices such as 'anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection' (ICD, 28) or 'collective experience has value, individual experience has none' (ICD 41) or 'the generating organ is the centre of all pleasure' (ICD 43). She has an insightful temperament which gives her an independent perception of life. She lives her life in her own way uncontrolled by social conventions. She never gives importance to love or marriage or sex in her life. She feels happy living alone in her own world. After the death of her parents she lives alone. By chance she meets Ashok Chinnappa and falls in love with him. She indulges in sexual relationship with him violating all restrictions. She is guided by the pleasure and desire of her body. Her life changes completely with frequent secret meeting with Ashok. She feels intoxicated by the love and lust she has on him. She forgets about her family, her life style and everything. After frequent meeting with him love and sex acquires prominence in the life of Devi. She decides everything by head rather than heart and this differentiates their lust from love. Ashok promises nothing in their relationship but without his knowledge he gives her an experience for lifetime that she cannot forget. Devi too never expects anything from him. Even when he says he will divorce his wife she insists

him not to take such a decision. Even though Devi's sister and aunt constantly insist about the social interpretation of this relationship, she feels happy and emotional in his presence. Physical desire is what she wants and gets it through him. This desire becomes an important matter of action as she says 'I want a needle point of extreme happiness; I want a moment in my life which will make me feel I am touching the sky' (ICD, 25). Later on she understands that it is nothing but betrayal or deceit. As he is a married man and has a ten years old daughter the difficulties arise. She analyses everything and a sense of guilt crawls into her conscience. She undergoes a chaotic trip of guilt and the advice of her aunt and voluntarily decides to separate from Ashok. "I'll give up Ashok, I'm doing wrong, this is a punishment, but I'll give up Ashok, I promise..."? (ICD, 177). She remembers her father's words 'love is only an idea' (ICD, 255) and understands that nothing remains unchanged. Shashi Deshpande always leaves an open end for her heroines. If they are not able to adjust with their husbands they could think about another man comfortably. This cannot be considered as a sin in any case regarding woman. Her protagonists are always subjected to sexual liberation. But they cannot detach themselves from their husbands because due to the family and society. Even though her female characters try to change their path temporarily they think to return back to their husbands.

In *That Long Silence* the protagonist Jaya lives an empty life even though she lives with her husband Mohan. There is no understanding between them. The intimacy between them gets reduced and she thinks even sex between a husband and wife seems abnormal. She feels the relation of man to woman seems unnatural and breeding 'only treachery, only deceit, only betrayal.' (TLS, 158). This emptiness draws her towards Kamat, a man living in the apartment near her. Kamat encourages her to write good pieces of literature. He is an intelligent man unlike Mohan and understands Jaya, especially the psychology of woman. He always treats her as an equal and Jaya feels an ease in his company. She shares things that she could never share with her husband. When Kamat analyses her piece of work he suggests her to express her female anger through her writing. This thought baffles her and she says 'A woman can never be angry, she can only be fearful, hysterical and frustrated. There's no room for anger in my life, no room for despair either.' (TLS, 147). She keeps her relationship as a secret one. She finds solace in his company rather than her husband, but she feels afraid of the society and keeps it as a secret. But when he dies she feels heartbroken and feels that there is no one to help and comfort her. When Mohan leaves her house she struggles with her kids. According to the advice of Kamat once given, she decides to come out to the open world and decides to show her talents and to fight her own battle. Shashi Deshpande through her protagonists tries to make clear that modern women have not decided to

meet the same fate as that of women in olden days either be it love or life or lust. Love and lust occur in the notion of relationship. For moral reasons of value love is seen beyond lust. In her novels the meek, humble women emerge into bold, rebellious women in the matter of life, love or sex. It has its own values according to individual's perception.

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