ANNEXURE

List of Publications


- Published an article titled “A Study Of Creativity And Achievement in English Among High School Students” in an international Journal named ‘Notions’ Vol-2-No.4 issued on December 2011 by Journal Anu Books, Meerut with ISSN:0976-5247.


Redefining Feminism: A Study of Indian Writing in English

Published by
PG and Research Department of English
V.O. Chidambaram College
(Re-accredited with ‘A’ Grade by NAAC)
Thoothukudi – 628008
Redefining Feminism: A Study of Indian Writing in English
(Proceedings of the UGC sponsored National Seminar)

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To construct is to build something. A social construct is an idea or concept that people have built and then they organise their actions and thoughts around it. It is a social mechanism, phenomenon, created and developed by society, a perception or idea that is ‘constructed’ through cultural or social practice.

The social construct theory states that a social construct is anything that exists as a product of human-social interaction instead of by virtue of objective, human–independent existence. Social constructs are said to be the result of social facts. Example of social constructs is such things such as governments, money, language, race, gender and nationality.

In India, a woman is a creation of masculine gaze. She is constructed with multifarious roles like – an ideal wife, a mother and an admirable home-maker in the male dominated society. As wife and mother service, sacrifice and tolerance are her required attributes. Modern feminist writers deal with these women’s suffering, frustrations and the existing social construction. There are many important writers of this genre. One important writer is Shashi Deshpande. She wants to redefine feminism by transforming the women and our social construction.

We can see how women were constructed by this society in their relations with men, love and marriage. Simone De Beauvoir, in her book The Second Sex says that “Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered by society” (45). The main aim of this research paper is to throw light on the concept of women and social construct and how it is handled by Shashi Deshpande in her recently published novel Ships that Pass.

This novel is a subtle exploration of love and marriage within a murder-mystery. A fourteen year old marriage, leading to angst, anger and tragedy and alongside the start of a parallel romance. Tara and Shaan are near strangers to each other after fourteen years of being married.

Tara’s sister, Radhika recently engaged is almost on a whim to marry someone she barely knows. She is in a hurry to get married, because she feels bored and has nothing special she wants to do in life and marriage, as the society often points out, seems like a perfect solution. “One of the certainties of life was marriage. An arranged marriage seemed sensible and practical; uncertainties, all the facts lay bare” (9-10).
When staying in her sister’s house, Radhika meets Ram Mohan, her sister’s old friend and loyal admirer. She is irritated by his adoration and close relationship with her beautiful sister but she also believes he is extremely kind, compassionate, and sincere. Gradually, she begins to trust him and in certain moments of distress, she finds herself turning to him. She feels that it is not sensible to marry the young man Ghan Shyam selected by her parents.

Further Radhika realises, “Ghanshyam, I had come to realize, was a man on his way up, he was determined and ambitious. Whereas this man had obviously done with ambition . . . I could never feel sorry for Ram Mohan” (70).

Radhika grapples with the crumbling relationship between her brother in law and sister. She finds herself becoming closer to her sister, whom she had always been envious of. Closer up, she realizes her sister’s life had been far from easy and completely different from what everyone else had expected or anticipated it to be. From outside, her sister’s marriage looked perfect. Except that from inside, there was nothing left, not even anger, bitterness or indifference. It was like an empty box. Tara tells Radhika, “You can’t know him even after years. It’s all a big gamble, Radhu. If you’re lucky you win, otherwise . . .” (32). Thus through the character Tara, Shashi Deshpande severely attacks the conventional way of marriage system of our Indian society.

Radhika feels disappointed by the lukewarm reaction between Tara and Shaan. She tries to understand how a once ideal marriage has come undone. She comes to know about the social construct on marriage in an Indian society. One of the profound statements that underlie the core of this novel reads like this:

Marriage is a very strange thing. It’s a very public institution, it’s meant to tell the world that two people are going to live together, to declare that their children will be legal, that these children can inherit their property. It’s meant for social living, to ensure that some rules are observed so that men and women don’t cross the lines that are drawn for them. At the same time, marriage is an intensely personal affair. No outsider will ever know the state of someone else’s marriage. It’s a closed room, a locked room. (60-61)

Tara advises Radhika to take a good decision about her marriage:
Things were different in Aai’s days. They didn’t want anything of their own. To be married was the final goal of their lives. To have children and look after your husband
and kids, maybe even your in-laws – that was all there was to life. But now . . . (90)

Tara adds, “Never, never marry a man who doesn’t seem right to you” (91). “But do what you want, not what others think you should do” (92).

Tragedy strikes, Tara dies in mysterious circumstances and Shaan is arrested for murder. In the aftermath, Radhika realizes that while life may seldom turn out as expected the only hope lies in finding the courage to take one’s chances. She accepts the fact, “I had thought of my life as a piece of clay I could mould into any shape I wanted. Now, I was understanding that it was actually the other way round; we are shaped by the things that happen to us” (109).

In moments of despair, Radhika turns to Ram Mohan who is older and wiser by several years. Thus Shashi Deshpande empowers her new woman by transforming the existing social construct on love and marriage.

This novel is beautifully written, emotionally provocative and gives perfect details that construct the institution of marriage as it happens among Indians. This novel deals with the confusion and disappointment that can build behind the façade of a middle class marriage. *Ships that Pass* sails through turbulent seas but still remains a perfect journey. Kaur in his work *Shashi Deshpande: A Feministic Interpretation* says that, “Deshpande sees the need to harmonize the man-women relationship as equal partners. There is no victory in the subjugation and destruction of the male. The need is to see each other’s need for space, freedom of expression and love” (24).

We can conclude this paper with the lines of Beena Agarwal from his work *Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande*. “The fictional world of Shashi Deshpande is not directed towards the annihilation of the existing order, but it seeks a reorientation of society where a more balanced relationship might have been possible” (217).

**Works Cited**


