



SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *SMALL REMEDIES*: ARTICULATION OF HUMAN EMOTIONS

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Abstract: *Shashi Deshpande very strongly articulates human emotions and feelings experienced by women. The novel is based on the story of Madhu, a lonely daughter, sensitive and talented woman, humble wife and kind mother. She encounters a lot of troubles in her life. The element of discrimination is vivid in her novel 'Small Remedies'. The novel concludes with a positive note.*

Keywords: *Emotions, Desire, Freedom, Discrimination, Hope.*

Shashi Deshpande articulates human emotions and feelings experienced by human being especially by women very brilliantly. Barbera Berg expresses the desire of freedom of women in simple words:

It is the freedom to decide her own destiny, freedom from sex-determined role; freedom from society's oppressive restriction; freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them freely into action.

(Berg 13)

The novel is based on the story of Madhu, a lonely daughter, sensitive and talented woman, humble wife and kind mother. She encounters a lot of troubles in her life. Her miseries start with the immature death of her only son, Adit. The confrontation with the lives of two brave women brings a bit relief her life. Savitrabai Indorekar, a great singer of the Gwalior gharana and Leela, her aunt have provided her an opportunity to overcome her grief.

Madhu accepts the offer of Chandru, a family friend to visit Bhavanipur to write the biography of Savitaribai. In this way, she has left her desperate and lonely life in the hope of bright future. In an interaction with Savitrabai, she explores her desire to forget her despair and anguish. She recalls her as a small-sized frail woman: "*Age and illness have so shrunk her that she is a doll-sized woman now*". (SR 14) Madhu observes strong discrimination towards women in our society in the case study of Savitrabai Indoreka:

Right from her childhood, she had sensed the gross discrimination women had to undergo in a society that had one law for men and another for women.

(Sharma 65)

Madhu takes the interviews of Savitrabai with keen interest. Bai boldly explores her feelings. She belongs to a wealthy family. She says: "Lakshmi ... made her home in this family." (S R 27)

She was the first issue of her family hence she was a very 'pampered child' (SR 27). She got the art of music from her mother. Her mother was broad minded and played her role not only as a mother but also as a teacher. She had recognized the inner talent and caliber of her child and would encourage her to sing before the family. But the family did not allow her to choose her own career in the field of music. Her father never allows her to have a music teacher at home. After marriage she gets lessons from her music teacher. Her father in law who was a great music lover noticed the talent of Bai. He engaged a middle aged woman to teach her. Getting music lessons was not an easy work for Bai. She had to encounter many huddles in the family.

The orthodox family of Savitrabai never encouraged her to shine in the field of music. She narrates her feelings to Madhu that she was broken into pieces when her grandmother asked her to stop singing immediately during her performance at a family gathering. She never gets acceptance in the society though she was the only female singer in her

locality. Though she belongs to a traditional orthodox Brahmin family yet she becomes a great classical singer.

She wants to get her own identity and with great courage she is eloped with a Muslim tabla player, Ghulam Saab and had a child from him.

It is heard that Bai has a love affair with a Station Director during her pursuit of a career as a classical singer. Bai comes closer to him and he frequently visits her. During that period she delivers a daughter and as baby grows up she is tortured by calling the Station Director her mama.

Our society has been so conditioned as to categorized women as immoral on the slightest deviation on their part from the normal course of behaviour.

(Reddy 132)

Bai choose music above all denying even her liaison with Ghulam Saab and Muuni, born out of wedlock from Ghulam Saab. She had also given Munni her name 'Indorekar' which she gained as a singer. Her ardent desire has to get respect and fair identity. Hence, she decides to accept Munni as her daughter born out of wedlock in public. Obviously, it is very comfortable to lead a conventional life following the norms of the society but to go against the established norms it would be a work of 'great courage'. (SR 221)

She wants to get lesson from Pandit Kashinath Bawa. She desires to be his disciple but again tradition does not allow a man to have a married young woman as a disciple. She pursue him relentlessly for over a year and he finally accepts to impart the art of music to her. His guidance makes her able to reach the pinnacle of her profession. (SR 225)

"In her single-minded pursuit to be the disciple of Pandit Kashinath Bawa, she bears unaccountable hardships. Her efforts bear fruit as she becomes a professional singer and gradually "reaches the pinnacle of success".

(Sinha 125)

No one likes Bai's relationship with Ghulam Saab. Bai receives unstinted support of Ghulam Saab in

pursuit of her dream. Her relationship is not accepted by anyone. Bai is obviously 'damned by everyone'; (SR 223).

Bai wants to get her identity in the society. She believes in herself. She knowingly gives up all her comforts, advantages and her respectability for the sake of music. She has cut "the umbilical cord severed it wholly leaving no scar behind". (SR 283)

She wants to live in the world of music and does not feel necessary to talk about Ghulam Saab and her daughter, Munni. While talking about her life Madhu finds: "*She had drawn a line through Munni's and Ghulam Saab's names and erased these from her life. This is something she did long back, when she turned to respectability, when she began her journey to success and fame*". (SR 154)

Bai craves to reclaim her lost dignity. Madhu's friend finds that after separation from Ghulam Saab. she looks like a married woman wearing her old *mangal sutra*. It is obvious that she might have got her dream but her life is dull of struggle and huddles. She left no stone unturned to get her lost identity. She desires to "live the life she wanted steady in the pursuit of her goal, pure of purpose". (SR 170)

Simple, the aspiration of Munni to be a part of the society as an ordinary woman from a respectable family is acquired. She passes away in the bomb blast which takes the life of Aditya also; her recognition as a Shailaja Joshi, the only child of Savitrabai.

Jasbir Jain remarks: *Deshpande's novel are not about women but social institutions and the nature of freedom.* (Jain 40) Madhu observes keenly the life history of these two women and finds herself close to them. "*To know that I am linked to these two women is to drink the draught of strength, the magic potion, the elixir of courage.*" (SR 223)

Summary:

The novel ends with a positive note. Deshpande has projected the image of new women who have confidence and inner strength. She has explored the realistic picture of the society.

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