

The Resistance Of The Protagonist Manjari Against The Patriarchal Society In Shashi Deshpande's *Moving On*

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Abstract:

This paper aims to bring out the resistance of the protagonists in Deshpande's novel *Moving On*. Manjari, reflects the inner-self of women through her characters who rebel against society and try to live their own lives. Deshpande's female characters have struggled in their lives, and try to move on for the future in order to achieve something. She tries to project the voice of women, not opposing men but society and its stereotyped mentality towards women. Manjari is a warrior who is persistent and a survivor.

Key Words: Resistance, struggled, voice, stereotyped, warrior and survivor.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the most famous contemporary Indian novelists in English. Basically, she presents about the sufferings faced by women and their struggles in the fast changing socio-economic milieu of India. She portrays the conflict between tradition and modernity in relation to women in patriarchal society. In many ways, *Moving On* is contrary from Deshpande's earlier novels. Here she goes

even deeper into the territory of the mind, dismantling our comfortable views about the relationships within families. The novel also reflects the secret lives of men and women who love, hate, plot, and debate, a father who delights in the human body, its mysteries, its passion, and the knowledge that it contains and conceals. A mother who wields the power of her love mercilessly in her writings; a sister separated in childhood; and an uncle who plays the game of life and death as a member of the Bombay underworld. A passionate love affair between Manjari and Shyam tears the family apart. And a young woman left to make sense of the world and of her own sexuality.

Life is not the same for all the people who live in the world; they have to undergo a lot of struggle and suffering to get the life they want. Especially when a woman decides to live her life apart from men or in a male-dominated society, she is not only opposing her family but also society as a whole. It is not as if it is normal for women to lead a life without any one's support. Because when a woman leads her own life, she shakes the society and its patriarchal foundation, which has lain for generations in India, which obviously

disturbs the male community. To keep them as a subject, men call for the support of culture, heredity, and society. On that account, if a woman tries to break it, they call it a war against the male community, which is known as society. Yes, man is society; society is men. There is no difference between them. Patriarchal society believes that they are the guardians of society, the carriers of culture, and the pillars of the family, which allows them to overstep their boundaries and subjugate women. What they think, what they do, and how they act take priority over women's wishes. Men don't want to lead a life without women and don't allow women to live without men, as it's not safe for them to be independent, but the irony of the truth is that "unsafe" is because of men.

A man needs a woman to unburden his internal stress, frustration, and sexual feelings. Every woman in an Indian family, one way or another, has been a victim of her husband's anger. Though she is not responsible for it, it is the reason for her being a woman. Duties in the house exercised by women cannot be replaceable if they would like to enjoy autonomy. Thus, patriarchal society subjugates women into the small world in the name of culture and heredity by accepting their husband as a guardian and surrendering themselves to them without question.

Shashi Deshpande's protagonist, Manjari, reflects the inner-self of women through her characters who rebel against society and try to live their own lives. Deshpande's female characters have struggled in their lives, and try to move on for the future in order to achieve something.

She tries to project the voice of women, not opposing men but society and its stereotyped mentality towards women.

Deshpande' Manjari, one of the challenging characters, challenges the patriarchal society by choosing her own life partner against her parents' wish. Deshpande pictures her with an idea of autonomy by choosing her life as her wish, though it is not accepted by society. In India, women have no right to choose their husband. After her marriage, the life of Manjari is not as pleasant as she thinks. Her husband, Shyam, lost his job, which made him an inhuman and he started showing his anger by torturing her physically and sexually.

Torturing women, especially the wife, is common in India if the husband is not good at what he is. Shyam lost his job; he tries to prove the point that he is a man. As a result, he tortures her in all the ways to show he is stronger than her. The mental health of men, changes abnormally when they are not successful in their careers, leading them to show the defeat of loss over women, who never resist their ill-treatment. In *'The Dark Holds No Terror'*, written by Deshpande, Saru, the protagonist, suffers a lot because of her husband, Manohar's unsuccessful career, which changes the relationship between them, and he behaves brutally towards his wife to indicate that he is better than her. Women's physical bodies become the source of suffering for them.

Manjari's husband tries to make amends for Manjari's inability to communicate. To unburden his sexual feelings, he seduces Manjari's sister, Malu. Manjari's actions after the incident are

confusing to the readers because she arranges the marriage between her husband and her own sister, which proves the point of patriarchal society. Though it happened against Malu's wish, she has to marry the person to whom she was victimized. But the guilt of Shyam made him commit suicide, followed by Malu, leaving her child Sachi in the hands of Manjari.

Responsibility is another icon of women, though men are not. It is mandatory for women to move with their families, though they don't get any support from men. As a responsible woman, Manjari takes care of the children as if they were her own. It is evident from her statement, "I had no time to brood or grieve. It was down to the basics, work, eat, sleep, wake up, and go back to work". (215)

She suffered a lot to get them in line. At the same time, to make her worries worse, she takes threats from the outer world. As the underworld threatens her, "We don't want to hurt you...You're a woman, don't forget that" (167). She is tortured mentally and physically by underworld don. As a woman, she is helpless, voiceless, and she tolerates the violence of the patriarchal world in a way that she faces problems both internally and externally. As Manjari knows, she is in danger of either being killed or raped. She is scared of it. It is evident that Manjari likes her life and she doesn't want to die because her husband Shyam's death caused a huge trauma in her mind.

Manjari is a warrior who is persistent. She is jobless, homeless, and alone in society, yet she finds her life moving. Social barriers and stereotypes do

not deter her from pursuing her dream. She has thought of her mother and husband. Without them, life is tough for her to lead her life. Society takes advantage of a woman if she leads her life alone without anyone's support. Manjari expresses herself thus: "It was like being in paradise after the total despair of finding myself jobless, homeless, and above all, unable to cope with the memory of Mai's death." (223)

Manjari is a survivor. She is courted by her cousin Raja, asking her to marry him. He thinks that she is lonely and needs a man to continue her life. But Manjari is not ready to put her life once again in the hands of a man. She experienced matrimony once. The marriage institution brings no harmony in her life except suffering and hurdles. She says, "I never thought you would sink so low". (283)

She challenges society by allowing herself to be with the tenant who lives upstairs. The contact is only physical. She doesn't want it to develop into a relationship or take it to the level of marriage. She says, "Only the body, his body, only my body, and my starved body, No thoughts, no feelings, only sensations.". (257) Nobody would dare to do something like that as Manjari did. Here, Deshpande clearly projects that Manjari at last attained autonomy over her body. In a patriarchal society, women's bodies are considered property of men, which they do not want to share or touch by anyone, and they do find it hard to accept that their wives would marry someone after their death.

Autonomy over her body is the initial indication of Manjari, who prepares herself mentally, after many struggles to

lead her life by shattering the code of society. Finally, the protagonist, Manjari, understands that life is full of struggle and suffering. It is an internal voyage into life itself. The more she tries to run away from the problem, the worse it gets. She stops herself escaping or running away from the problem. Instead, she finds an answer to the miserable life, which offers no salvation or solution but to move on.

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