

Women Education and Empowerment in Gaura Pant Shivani's selected novels

Dr.Richa Sharma*

Abstract

The present research has been done with the intention of critically evaluating 'Women Education' and 'Empowerment' in Gaura Pant Shivani's selected novels. Hindi literature is the oldest and greatest literature of the world. Novel is one of the most sought after genre of literature, through which the ties between new generation and ancient Indian culture, customs and traditions of the society can be built. To promote women empowerment by bringing out the hidden truths, illiteracy and superstitions that are among main causes of harassment of women, along with highlighting the importance, contribution of education for the society in Shivani's novels. Today, there is a massive increase of hypocrisy, pretence, pretension and tricks of deceit. Since literature has a great influence on society, its impact on the can not be ignored. Literature is a mirror of the varied assumptions, aspirations, beliefs and inspirations of the society. The present study is an endeavour to study the important and notable efforts made in literary treasure of Shivani's selected novels for women education, human consciousness and women empowerment, as she was a staunch believer of the fact that every woman of the country should be educated, independent, free of atrocities and contribute to the progress of the country.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, Education, Literature

Introduction

Born on 17 October 1924 to a family of academicians with a high repute. Shivani penned down her first creation at an early age of twelve. She has devoted her 68 glorious years towards Hindi literature. A keen observer, intelligent, with a sharp mind Shivani has produced great texts in Hindi Literature. She was a vibrant student of Shantiniketan and was greatly influenced by Guru Rabindra Nath Tagore and his philosophy. The great literature produced by her has a great significance in the present scenario as well. Her outstanding contribution in the field of Hindi Literature has been fully acknowledged and she was conferred with the prestigious award of Padma Shri.

Shivani was a versatile writer. Her novels expressed her sincere concern for the women. Her female protagonists often represent the problems being faced by women. They are the symbols of women empowerment. Shivani has also observed the Indian society very closely. Being gifted with an sense of perception, Shivani has been successful in portraying all the shades of women in her novels. Her novels were the voice of Indian women. The basic theme of her novels is to deal with the Indian sensibility that has been accustomed to treat women as mere a commodity. Indian society being dominated by male ego has always resulted in negative outlook towards women. They have been treated as a physical body used for carrying on the family lineage.

The concept of women's education and empowerment is an important part of the society today. The growth and development of the society is based on the development of values and for this very reason an all-round and multilateral development, high level of living and awakening should be created among it's citizens. Women education has become a vital requirement of society today because every person needs to be self-sufficient and strong. Education is the separator line between insanity and happiness. There have been many such elements in the society that are hindrance in the development and upliftment of the society. In today's progressive era, there is a great need for the upliftment and education of women along with men and Shivani's

* Asstt. Professor, Dev Samaj College of Education, Chandigarh.

novels have been an important contributor to this cause. Literature is considered to be the mirror of society as it is created with the influence of social growth, justice, development and realities. A writer gives expression to the feelings and situations being experienced by him through his writings. Among the modern Hindi writers, Gaura Pant Shivani has an eminent place. She is a strong believer of women education and empowerment. In addition to it, Shivani wants to root out the stereotypes, superstition and social evils that are big hindrance in the path of education and empowerment. While portraying the human sensitivities and emotions, she has engraved the pain and social constraints of women in her writings with a lot of enthusiasm and concerns. Shivani's women protagonists are always struggling and are in search for their identity, existence, freedom and rights. Garg (1993) wrote about the female consciousness and empowerment and stressed that this consciousness can be in all women, Dalits, and alliances. Their relation is not from class, color, religion or gender, which develops from the historical, social and personal journey of perception. Dubey (2002) viewed that in the novels of Shivani, people have been given more importance than society. Since they have inherent involvement with high emotions in finding the solution to personal problems, they are cut off from their context. Still the problems are timely and important. Sally (2002), 'The personal and social issues occur across women's life span. Despite a degree of feminine ability, modest issues like education, liberty, freedom of thought, dissolution of relationship cannot be resolved. Rao (2011), in his study on education and position of women in changing scenarios concluded that women's rights are important for her upliftment and well being. The economic and social growth of any society depends on the overall growth of its women.

Need of the Study

21st century is believed to be progressive and well equipped with modern amenities for education. Women are supposed to be the focal point of progress for any society. Her education and empowerment are equal contributors in the development of the society. Women in our society are still subjected to discrimination, unjust, domestic, physical and mental violence. Literature is a mirror of the varied assumptions, aspirations, beliefs and inspirations of the society. The present study is an endeavour to study the important and notable efforts made in literary treasure of Shivani's selected novels for women education, human consciousness and women empowerment. In order to analyse the vision and perspective of Shivani towards education and empowerment of women and for a better understanding of various social aspects affecting women, the present study has been taken up. Investigator has explicitly identified the meaning, objectives, content of education for women and her empowerment with special reference to profound ideology, theoretical formulation for understanding the society in Shivani's novels.

Objectives

1. To study and interpret the barriers for women education and empowerment in Shivani's selected novels.
2. To make a critical appraisal of women education and empowerment in Shivani's selected novels.
3. To study the struggle for female autonomy in Shivani's selected novels.
4. To find the psycho-social aspects of women education and empowerment in Shivani's selected novels.
5. To study Shivani's profound intellectual maturity, ideological and theoretical formulation for understanding the society in general.

Method and Procedure

The methodology employed in the research work was descriptive, analytical and interpretative study. The present study has analyzed and interpreted Shivani's selected novels in the context of the women education and empowerment. Due to time constrain, only four novels of Shivani have been selected for the research. These novels are, Chaudah Phere (1972), Shamshan Champa (1971), Atithi (1987), Mayapuri (2006).

Findings and Discussion

Shivani's literature presents a live portrayal of the traditional Kumaoni culture, lifestyle and their social customs. Having belong to Kumaon region, Shivani has been able to present the very essence of Kumaoni's social life such as the cuisine, the attire, the household, the matrimonial rituals and the social values and the position of women in the hilly communities. She is neither an educationist nor a philosopher but still her writings convey her vision, concern and desire for progress of women which are quite significant for society in general and women education and empowerment in particular. She emphasised on the image of woman and her continuous struggle for an identity of her own. Her writings present the true picture of Indian society and the various ups and downs being confronted by its women. She focused on raising the status of women in the society. Her literature raised her concern against molestation and harassment of women. She laid stress on domestic violence which women encounter at their home. Her female protagonists are the symbols of the desired change in social traditions, women empowerment and women education. Her vision is society-centric. She has given special attention to the various situations and problems of women in society. Being a woman herself and having witnessed the sensitive issues like dowry, human trafficking, love and divorce, degradation of human and moral values in the society, Shivani, like a responsible writer and citizen has given a revolutionary voice to these challenging issues in her writings. The female characters in her much acclaimed novels are revolutionary and want to progress through education and empowerment. Whether it is Shobha or her maternal sister Manjari from *Mayapuri* (1971), Jaya from *Atithi* (1987), Parvati from *Pootonvali* (1998) Kumud, Mariyam or Malti from *Chal Khusaro Ghar Aapne* (1982), Ahalya from *Chaudah Phere* (1972), Nandi Tiwari from *Kainja* (1973) or Champa from *Shamshan Champa* (1997), all of them are victims and survivors who fought against the social connotations of life such as the dowry system, the problem of illegitimate children, the situation of displaced families, prostitution and corruption. The various characteristics of women psychology like indecision, unrestrainedness, panic, frustration, despair, anxiety and silence have been taken as the major hindrance on their road towards success, education and empowerment.

Committed to the upliftment of society in general and women in particular, Shivani has repeatedly mentioned many elements such as corruption, superstition, conservatism, exploitation, misery, selfishness, moral degradation, indecency, promiscuity, communalism, hypocrisy and apathy that obstructs women's growth and development. She considers woman as the centre for the growth and development of society but she will be able to contribute towards social progress only when she will be educated and able to use her education in the struggle against exploitation and acquisition of her rights. Only then women will be truly empowered. She emphasized upon the practical use of education. Being educated means not just taking degree or offering knowledge, but it is a practical use of education that enables a person to face every challenge of life, every problem and difficulty with great zeal. In her much acclaimed novel *Chaudah Phere* (1972), the woman protagonist Ahalya and her mother confront various situations that have made them realize the feeling of disrespect, distrust and disgrace. Ahalya's mother faced continuous rejection from her husband just because she was illiterate. After suffering a lot, she decided to leave him and moves to an Ashram in Kumaon. Her place in the family was soon filled up by a well-educated Bengali woman, Malika. Her father, despite having a modern outlook and approach, rejected her willingness to marry Raju (an army officer) and tried to get her married to a highly egoistic and chauvinistic officer without asking for her consent and sentiments. Shivani has successfully portrayed Ahalya's suffocation, her loneliness, her emotions. Tied in the shackles of her father's social prestige she decides to make a life-long sacrifice. But with the intervention of her paternal aunt she broke down the shackles of the so called social morality and gets married to Raju embarking her freedom and empowerment. Another female character Champa, from *Shamshan Champa* (1971), is strong and rebellious. She stood against all the odds and accepted the proposal of a job in a hospital situated in a very remote area. Her education is her strength. She encounters many situations and has witnessed very intense situations in her family life. Being a doctor by profession, she always looks forward to help others. She always pretends to be confident and contented from outside but deep down she was lonely in this world and suffered the miseries of life quietly. Jaya from the novel *Atithi* (1987) is another revolutionary character by Shivani. She moves out from her wedlock as a revolt against indecent demands by her husband and in-laws. She fought for her dignity, self respect, self image and identity. She pursued her studies further and during this period she met Shekhar from an affluent family. Her education and empowerment gave her wings to fly high, away from the societal pressures

and rituals. Another female character who has a deep impression of westernisation in her character is Leena, she is arrogant in her thoughts and actions and has lost her way due to absence of moral values in her life. Mayapuri (1971) presents two kinds of female characters. On one side we have Shobha and her widow mother Durga, who has left no stone unturned for the education of her children. Her friend's daughter Manjari and her own daughter Shobha represent educated and dignified women of the society. Contrary to this, the character of Savita has been created as a symbol of women's inclination towards western thoughts and lifestyles.

Though these novels were written about five decades ago, they are still very relevant in today's time. Shivani has chosen plots for novels from unexplored and varied aspects of women's life. They not only throw light on women's condition but also inspire them towards self-reliance and empowerment. Shivani has psychologically depicted the problems of women's life, and has inspired women towards self-analysis so that they become aware of their distinct identity. She has given a new perspective on confronting the problems and challenges by developing strong mindsets of people in the society. She has tried to develop a positive connect with the masses on various issues related to woman. Through her novels, Shivani has introduced the importance of women education and empowerment for the society as well as advancement of the country. Her novels present a message to every section of the society that education is essential for the advancement of society and women. The purpose of education is not simply to pass the examination. The true essence of education lies in the capabilities to express oneself freely, to make timely decisions, to be self-reliant, to raise your voice against unjust at any time and in any situation. For the advancement of society, there is a dire need to educate and empower its women. By raising the position of women and empowering them with education, by recognising their rights, respecting their freedom and dignity we can contribute in the upliftment and advancement of society. With her great writings, valuable thoughts and vision, Shivani has left an indelible impression on the mind of every section of the society which are still very relevant in the present social scenario.

Conclusion and Implications

A woman is a vital part of the society and so important is her study and education. No society can perfectly be called educated if it neglects the education and growth of its women. If any society can be called civilised and cultured, then there is a dire necessity of the education of women. The society that neglects education and empowerment of its women cannot be regarded as well cultured society with high values. Men and women are the two sides of the same coin, hence it is a relevant aspect of the society that both of them are equal and they should be provided equal opportunity to get education in the society. Being a part of the man oriented society, it has been observed that the social and educational status of women still requires lots of effort and consideration. Education, being the agency of social change growth and development should be treated as fast forward way for the empowerment of the society in general and women in particular.

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