

Status of Women in Shashi Deshpande's Novels

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Abstract - One benefit of feminism is that women's roles and position in society have gained attention and are now important concerns. It reframed the problems in a way that sparked a massive, rational conversation and called attention to many facets of women's involvement in history. Literature enthusiastically embraced this free discussion and helped to raise topics from a variety of angles as a carrier of ideas. Indian literature may also claim a very rich legacy in this way, although a significant part is unquestionably much influenced by western concept. In an effort to preserve the option of choosing and free sex without providing a true notion of the outcome, the family and the institution of marriage have come under vehement attack, even without a justifiable justification. To evaluate Shashi Deshpande's books in this respect is the task of the current test. To select the focus of the problems relating to family and the basis of marriage, it is necessary to balanceably consider the role and position of Indian women.

Keywords - Feminism, Indian woman, Marriage, Status of Indian woman.

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INTRODUCTION

Renowned author Shashi Deshpande offers a unique perspective on female consciousness. A woman's role in the household is shaped by her family's traditions, as she demonstrates in her essay. Her works reveal the contemporary Indian woman's dissatisfaction with the man-made patriarchal setting she was born into. She depicts the truth of life for women in the society as she knows it. There are moms and children, wives and dads and sons and spouses of all kinds in the world that she depicts. Her heroes defy the norms of society and the patriarchal ideals of their day. She depicts women with just an ideal of sacrifice, patience, dedication, and quiet suffering, which she explains.¹ Throughout *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita's story is consistently undervalued and underexamined. Indu, Mini, and Akka's inner self is explored in *'Roots and Shadows'*. Jaya is not a quiet suffering in *"That Long Silence."* According to Mira in *'Binding Vine,'* her mother's submission to her husband was something she despises. *'A Matter of Time'* examines Kalyani, her daughter Aru, and her sister Sumi. A woman's place in society, her identity, and her psychological maturation are all reflected in Shashi Deshpande. She focuses on the plight of women and their struggles to succeed in a rapidly changing environment. Reading her book is like to submitting oneself to a never-ending train ride through the darkness of middle-class India. It's unnerving how near the stranger sitting across from you is. Additionally, he or she is a generous person who offers to take his land with meticulously wrapped

bedding. You'd be forced to have a lunch with her if she brought out a stainless tiffin container. That's how good Deshpande is at it. The voyage ends with you immersed in the people's stories and pondering.²⁻³

She started her career as a writer for *Femina* and *Eve's Weekly*, two major American women's magazines. Many female authors have contributed to the literary canon. They portray a world where women are opulent and powerful. They have emphasised the study of socio-cultural differences and the fundamental insensitivity of the female population. Modern Indian women are shown as self-aware and conscientious in these works. They categorise the ladies because they may be able to break free from the constraints of customary bondages and work for their own emancipation.⁴ Feminism is a unique component of current intellectual and literary conversation. In Shashi Deshpande's works, this is the case. Her fictional works are said to be heavily influenced by Indian culture. She occupied the top spot in the ranks of English-language Indian authors. Observing the problems faced by Indian women, she tries to find answers to the issue faced by the Indian women. She fights for the liberation of women from the constraints of society as they have known it. She pondered the societal silence of women. She is a staunch advocate of raising awareness about the oppression women face in a patriarchal culture. Throughout the years, Shashi Deshpande has been regarded as a second-tier employee. She gained notoriety for her efforts to raise awareness

of women's concerns. In certain cultures, women are ostracised and oppressed. There are a few possibilities for their well-being. A mother fights for her children, her husband, and her whole family. Man, on the other hand, shows favouritism for women when it comes to equal treatment. Men developed the image of a woman. This is Shashi Deshpande's life's work: making sure that men and women can connect. She is in a repressed state if she has lived under the protection of her parents, spouse, or children. After tying the knot, an unmarried lady becomes the possession of her husband. She was obligated to follow her husband's orders. Since she was a child, she's been playing the part of a chaste and quiet lady. The author has taken a risk in expressing the frustrations and disappointments of women.⁵⁻⁷

There are several characteristics of detective fiction that are highlighted in the book *If I Die Today*. It illustrates the difficulties faced by women. The effects of marriage are depicted in the work. You may see this in Manju and Vijay's tale. Neither the husband nor the wife is a horrible person in a relationship. Before she became emotional, she was a loving wife. She's dissatisfied and lacking in self-assurance. She is sad and unable to realise that she is not to blame for her state of mind. She's reduced to the role of the victim. In this section, she focuses on the most important aspect of her work: the plight of women.⁸

Deshpande depicts the realities of many middle-class women and the societal injustice in her 1983 book, *Come up and Be Dead*. She is aware of how women utilise their role as housewives to exert influence in their families.. Kshama serves as a case study in the narrative. Both the unsystematic brutal deed and the marriage harm the lady. In Sonali's case, her mother endured a harrowing ordeal. He teaches her about the sexual and physical bond between a man and a female. When her spouse touched her, she felt soiled. She is unable to reveal this information to any other person. Unfortunately, she has little choice but to put up with it owing to the fact that she has met opted in the world.⁹

The Thirumati Rangamal Award for the finest Indian book of 1982-83 was given to *Roots and Shadows*. Women's sorrow in a male-dominated society is shown in this film. The story revolves on the dissolution of a joint family that was only kept together by an elderly aunt who was a childless widow. When she's a teen, she runs away from home to pursue her education in the big city. Since then, she's worked as a journalist and married to the guy she really wanted to be with. She's given up the country life in favour of a more urban one. There is a depiction of the tension between principles learned via conventional upbringing. In the story, we see the influence of education and job on the character of women.¹⁰⁻¹¹

The Binding Vine symbolises a woman's knowledge at many social levels. Here, Urmila symbolises the contemporary lady, whereas Vanna is a caseworker by profession and represents the traditional woman. Obedient to her spouse, she is willing to follow his commands. Urmila's mother accuses her of abandoning her grandparents because she didn't want to live with her. We see a contemporary lady in the story.¹²

The lady in Shashi Deshpande's work looks out at a conservative society. She carries the weight of both tradition and progress on her shoulders. New women often look to physical relationships as sources of fulfilment. The new lady demonstrates her ability to maintain emotional and moral equilibrium. Restructuring and rethinking their judgments and choices is a constant battle for her characters. They've come to terms with the fact that they're limited.¹³

Gender is a derogatory word invented by the patriarchy to dehumanise women and men. It's not the continuance of life in same old conventional way, but the struggle to find a new condition.¹⁴

Today, the lady is acutely aware of the prejudice she is subjected to. It's not her belief that women have to be submissive and subservient because they're defective, she insists. In every way, the lady is content with her own existence. The only thing a woman needs is to feel secure in her own skin. One of the major obstacles to women's empowerment is a lack of unity among them. When an Indian woman thinks about herself and her social and cultural replacement in the patriarchal system, she is thinking about herself. Slowly but surely, woman is making her way toward liberation. She focuses on the subject of her lack of relevance and sexual uncertainty in the conventional culture she was born into.¹⁵ She is aware that her existence is a series of traps imposed on her by marriage's shackles. Throughout her publications, she has attempted to shed light on the representations of women that exist. In the area of feminism, she has expanded society's horizons. She tries to get to the bottom of different social ills that are festering in society. Traditional Indian values may be seen running through the country's social fabric. Women in Shashi Deshpande's stories play an important part in reflecting the shifting social and cultural norms of our day. A new generation of women came into being. These ladies are capable of making their own decisions. They're not the same as the previous generation of female characters in this series. Women's issues are brought to light.¹⁶⁻¹⁷

There are culturally imposed rules of behaviour for women in society. The ideal of femininity depicts her as a rebellious rebellious rebel. Their human potential is realised in order to attain equality. To

be successful in life, women must rise beyond their inherent femininity. Each one of them must be able to work on their own accord. Feminists like Shashi Deshpande are speaking out against the patriarchal culture of India. Her talent comes in picking the right conditions for her work. Her works dealt mostly with women in their marriage and domestic roles. The novel's central struggle is depicted in *The Binding Vine*.¹⁸ Protesting against the patriarchal view of rape, it calls attention to the subject. Gender violence takes on two different forms in the stories of Kalpana and Mira. As though she represented the oppressed subaltern, Kalpana laying unconscious would be a good starting point. When Urmila tells the story of Kalpana's rape, she does it with a heavy dose of ideology. Shakutai's request that the police be kept in the dark. Disgrace and public exposure will ensue for Kalpana as a result. Victim-blaming and the patriarchal mindset discredit the victim, rather than the perpetrator, in this case. A woman's ability to self-evaluate and make judgments about her life circumstances is unquestionable. They place a high value on their family. It's one of the best significant, but how little room and independence the family provides for the lady. Aspirations and expectations may be imposed on women without their consent.¹⁹

Many people have applauded Shashi Deshpande's genuine effort to shatter the silence of women. Appreciation is warranted for her acute comprehension of human relationships, her thorough observation of the world, and her unbiased approach. She makes great efforts in her works to convey the need of a person's solitary existence. Modern Indian women's hardships and conflicts are shown by Deshpande. Between patriarchal and tradition and women's uniqueness, she is unable to choose one or the other.. A wide range of common family problems have been studied through her research. A woman's battle for self-respect and self-identity is vividly depicted in this book while exposing the systemic oppression she faces in society.²⁰⁻²¹ Two of Shashi Deshpande's most recent novels, *Moving On* (2004) and *That in the Country of Deceit* (2008), deal with the struggles of single women attempting to live independently outside of traditional family structures. Both parties should openly share their desire for sexual stimulation and satisfaction. In *Moving On*, the narrative voices are counter-punctuated. Baba's journal is intertwined with the plot of the land mafia, and emotional issues are incorporated into the narrative. Three generations' worth of tales are stacked one on top of the other in this retelling of childhood friendship. Modern Indian women's quest for these ideas about themselves and society has been shown in her works. All books revolve on the characters' interactions with women. Her books explore the idea of a woman's search for her own identity, and she gives her heroines a grounded, down-to-earth persona.²²

India's foremost post-independence writer, Shashi Deshpande (born 1938) She is well-known among urban-educated middle-class women for her candour

and ability in speaking their language. Indian cultural concerns are imitated in her writings. Women writers in Indian English literature might look to her for inspiration. Seven novels & four anthologies of short tales are among her works. As a female artist, her work depicted women with a feminine perspective. She's a fresh writer who's bringing a unique viewpoint to Indian women's life. She depicts the lives of women who really are breaking through social and cultural boundaries in order to express themselves in society. Throughout history, literature has always been a mirror of the world and a tool to address societal issues. She speaks up on the issues facing Indian women of middle class and higher education.²³

The Dark Holds No Terrors

The Dark Holds No Terrors, Shashi Deshpande's first book, depicts Sarita's quest for self-identity and her fight for equality with her brother and husband. Saru is a fascinated animal, entranced by her will to achieve at any cost. This is the narrative of Saru. She needs to be taken care of by someone. When she learns what her mother had said about listening to the conclusion of the battle in the Mahabharata, she realises how pointless her quest has been.²⁴

The masculine gender enjoys more esteem in Indian culture than the female. The supper must be prepared by women for the whole household. She eats last in the household, just after the men. She manages to eat her meal despite the lack of food. Pregnant or breastfeeding women are more vulnerable to malnutrition as a result. A small percentage of expectant mothers see the doctor since pregnancy is seen as a passing phase. The high rates of maternal and newborn mortality in India are mostly due to this factor. Parents and society do not provide enough attention and assurance to females. A lot of attention is paid to a little boy. In order to provide her body with the nutrition it need, new newborn girls are only breastfed for a brief length of time. This is in anticipation of the possibility of a son in the future. Until the age of 14, all children in India are entitled to a free elementary education.²⁵

That Long Silence

It tells the narrative of a man and woman from both their perspectives in *That Long Silence* (1988). They show Jaya's muteness as a result of her quiet. A contemporary Indian housewife's tranquilly is captured in her expression. Only the emotional gravity of their characters could be provided by female novelists. They imagined a new wave of feminism in the form of a romantic love story. Shashi Deshpande's insight, on the other hand, comes from her description of real-life experiences. She accurately portrays Jaya's internal conflict and her search for self-identification. The narrative

maintains its credibility that Jaya is an English-speaking, convent-educated lady with a penchant for literature. Between the narrator's divided self and the housewife, the furious lady is shown. Jaya is a modern, middle-class lady who lives in an urban setting. As a result, she is apprehensive about her educational obligations and the tyranny of the self. She is content with her role as a caring wife. She, too, fails to lead her spouse as Seeta did. Some days she is in a terrible state of mind. This book is a feminist classic. It accentuates the idea of women in the middle class caught between their own traditions and the demands of the contemporary world. It's all about racial and social inequity in the workplace and in society as a whole. She began to oppose the suffocating patriarchy of her day. The new woman's feminism is evident in her fiery demeanour. This leads her to believe that her marriage is a safe haven. She assumes the role of a traditional Hindu wife once again.²⁶

The contemporary Indian housewife's powerlessness and controlled quiet is portrayed here. It illustrates Jaya's universe and her desire for self-discovery. It seems that her spouse is engaged in some kind of financial blunder. An investigation against him has been launched. Jaya comforts Mohan. Rahul and Rati had gone on a lengthy vacation with their family. Jaya notices that he hides from her. For the last 17 years, Jaya has been able to keep her emotions under check. More important to her, she believed, is being a good wife than being an accomplished writer. She has kept her desire a secret. She has fulfilled the roles of a loving mother and a devoted spouse. Her literary profession and connection with a former neighbour, Kamat, are kept under wraps. Despite the fact that she is a talented writer, Mohan has taken issue with one of her stories. The protagonist of the narrative is a father who has ignored his family. There are a few things that Mohan isn't sure about the guy in the tale. For a while, she stopped writing.²⁷

A Matter of Time

In *A Matter of Time*, four ladies who represent four of the same household are shown in a human crisis. These women's lives are a good illustration of the uncontrollable agony that they suffer. Women's domestic and societal difficulties are depicted in the book. Indian societal structures are shown as sarcastic in the book. New women in Deshpande's work are empowered and satisfied in their quest to solve their family problems. Gopal's decision to leave Sumi & their three kids opens a crucial door. It meant addressing the mental anguish of every family member. Women's oppression and conventional patriarchy are prominent themes in this tale. In *A Matter of Time*, Kalyani and Shripati's marriage is a central theme. Unfortunately, Kalyani's marriage is in a state of disarray, as is her husband's complete lack of communication. Kalyani finds herself in the same predicament she was in before. She tells the story of her own life, which is full with hardships and

disappointments. Her marriage and responsibilities as a married woman were shaped by the unique Hindu institution of marriage. Feminine awareness and human connections in all their varieties are thoroughly examined in *A Matter Of Time*. Sumi and Aru's connection is one of the most enjoyable components of the story. Gopal and Sumi's relationship is also a joy to read about in the novel. The story makes a variety of observations on the relationships it depicts. The work features imagery of mother-daughter connections, a forsaken wife, and the marginalisation of women.²⁸⁻²⁹

Readers are taken aback by Gopal's decision to leave the family. There is a marriage of the heart. Their initial physical need is to meet and fulfil the needs of both parties simultaneously. That's when I realised that guys give up their aspirations of independence because of this: losing you to another human being. Students at Sumi's college had dishonoured their father, according to his daughter Premi. Because of this, he resigned from his position. That his sister Sudha was not fathered by the same man breaks him to pieces. "That was a violation that took away at the basis of my existence," he says afterwards. For Sumi, being a forsaken wife is humiliating and shameful. She doesn't make a peep about it and becomes silent like a stone.³⁰

CONCLUSION

In Shashi Deshpande's works, women and their issues take centre stage. As a result, the attitudes and ideals of the female characters, as well as their interactions with men as well as other women, play a larger role in the books' overall design than the storyline. Throughout the three books by Shashi Deshpande, it is clear that she cares deeply about women's concerns. All of her characters are portrayed as a variety of various types of women. They are well-educated ladies from a middle-class background. A housewife and creative writer, Saru (DHNT) is a doctor, and Sumi (MT) is well-educated but hasn't worked since college. Educated and imaginative women, according to Shashi Deshpande, would liberate themselves first and actively contribute to the women's liberation movement via their work.³¹

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