

Feminism in Shashi Deshpande's Novels

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Abstract - The purpose of the research is to see if Shashi Deshpande's ladies really express themselves or whether they eventually give in to endurance. All of her books have been taken into account for this study's purposes, although the focus of this research is on three of her main works: The Dark Holds No Terrors, Roots and Shadows, and That Long Silence. These three books have received honors and have been published in many different languages. The goal of this essay is to examine Shashi Deshpande's portrayal of women characters in her books in order to comprehend and respect their struggles as a result of the competing influences of modernity and tradition. It evaluates how they react to new situations in life critically in order to make them fit within modern society. The research takes into account the issues that her characters face without delving too far into the novelist's belief in the perfect solution for various types of difficulties. which have faced the aforementioned challenges

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INTRODUCTION

Women have a unique perspective. Observations and values drive the interpretation of their surroundings. A woman's vision is her most potent weapon since it expands her sphere of influence inside the home. Despite the extraordinary power and positive effects of women's vision on society, it is impossible to quantify. Here, the researcher want to introduce the chapter with the aforementioned idea about women.[1]

To build on what has already been said, a woman's "female vision" is the way she imagines her circumstances and the answers to her issues. The lady notices the issues that plague her environment, and she seeks reasonable answers to them. In many cases, she is able to see a way forward that will bring her family closer together and improve their quality of life. Indian feminism as reflected in the outlook of the modern Indian woman is neither openly subversive of patriarchal norms or an attempt to evade domestic and professional duties. This group of women, particularly when dealing with marital troubles, is less likely to seek refuge elsewhere than to face them head-on. In contrast to men, women are often seen as having a more holistic perspective that prioritizes home and hearth.[2]

Despite everything that has been said about how deeply rooted in culture and family a woman is, it is ironic that she is the one responsible for passing that heritage on to the next generation. This is despite the fact that she cares deeply about the

welfare of her loved ones and wants nothing more than to keep the peace inside her own home and promote everyone's sense of pride in its history, values, and customs. This is the perspective of Indian women authors the academic has absorbed from her reading.[3]

Stories by authors like Shashi Deshpande address these issues. Generally speaking, the heroines in Shashi Deshpande's novels are strong, independent thinkers who have a high level of education. The ladies she depicts are feminist, and references to Virginia Woolf & Betty Friedan are made. They identify as feminists because they care about women's oppression, trauma from rejection and estrangement, and internal strife. Her writings represent the modern independent woman.[4]

An independent-minded woman is one who recognizes that she, too, is a person and not only a commodity for men. Because of the pain they've been through and the way they've processed it, these forward-thinking females have developed into individuals who not only refuse to play by society's rules but also create their own. This strikes a unique mix between rebellious and autonomous actions, making it a really novel view on the world. It's possible that not all Indian women authors that explore the topic of women rebelling against a male-dominated Indian culture have come to the same conclusions as these three.[5]

Several prominent Indian female authors, including Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Gita Hariharan, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Anita Nair, Nina Sibal, Namita Ghokhale, Dina Mehta, Sara Banerjee, Bapsy Sidhwa, Shashi Deshpande, Bharati

The shifting responsibilities of women in modern Indian society are reflected in the works of Kamala Markandaya. The women in her society do all the heavy lifting at home while saying nothing. One such lady is Rukmini, discussed in *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), who remains silent and ultimately places her faith in a brighter future. Silence, however, is the prevailing feminine worldview in this work; it is what keeps the woman alive & strong, propelling her to maintain positively despite the many types of oppression she faces.[6]

Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, like Markandaya, focuses on the Indian upper-middle class in her writing. Relationships, families, and societal concerns are common themes in her writing. Their marriage is fraught with miscommunication and conflict in her book *The Householder* (1960). They finally agree on something and are able to make amends to one another.[7]

Nayantara Sahgal promotes women's autonomy over marital choices and contentment. The female characters in *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) & *Rich Like Us* (1985) put an excessive amount of value on their own achievements. Like her masculine counterpart, her feminine vision is articulated via the struggle of women for self-determination. This necessitates the beginning of a search understood in terms of a woman's desire to be accepted, her desire to carve out a special place for herself, her desire to have an identity that she has forged through her own abilities, her desire to be recognized for her efforts, her desire to be the master of her own self, in which she can assert and express her will, feelings, desires, etc.[8]

In the same vein as Sahgal Author Anita Desai, well known for her book "New Woman," also touches on the topic of women's search for self-identity. Her writings provide a pessimistic image of the solitude that women experience, whether they are single or married, and this is true even when they address topics such as interracial marriage, the horrors of dowry, and women's loneliness. While Tara has a happy husband and two healthy children, she still struggles to find fulfillment in her life, a theme explored in the book *Clear Light of the Day*. [9]

Even though Shobha De, also known as the Jackie Collins of India, writes about women who are extremely self-reliant in every way, her vision seems to shed light on the hollow, shallow relationships depicted in *Starry Night* (1991), as well as the importance of sex and how its absence can kill

relationships and marriages. The sexual needs of women are portrayed in *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy from a female perspective. By having her heroine challenge convention and pursue a marriage with a guy from a different caste, she offers a socially conscious depiction of the lives of women. Manju Kapur's female heroines are still struggling to find themselves. This is the story of a married lady who is unhappy with her life and finds fulfillment in relationships outside of her marriage, as told in the novel *A Married Woman*.

The women in *The Better Man* (1991), *Ladies Coupe* (2001), and *Mistress* (2006), all directed by Anita Nair, are obedient and generally seen as nice daughters, wives, mothers, etc (2005). The women characters in her works, however, value autonomy and respect for oneself above all else.

Jhumpa Lahiri does not focus on female subjectivity, but the anguish of women who feel they have lost touch with their heritage is a key theme in her work. The short story's female protagonist.[10]

Mrs. Sen yearns for the comforts of home: the traditions, the language, the cuisine, the friends. Relational identity, rather than biological identity, is what binds members of a family together.

Her art reflects a feminine perspective on life by shedding light on a migrant woman's experience of upheaval and exposing the distress she feels at being torn from her family and her way of life.

Shashi Deshpande's writings include strong female protagonists, in line with the aforementioned Indian female authors. Her female heroines are also shown as strong, intelligent, and independent thinkers. Many of Deshpande's intelligent female characters express dissatisfaction with the traditional gender roles in India's patriarchal society. These ladies can and do understand the cultural and societal oppression that women face. As a result, she feels stifled by the constraints she must adhere to in order to maintain the harmony of her home life. This kind of Deshpandian lady is incapable of rebelling since she would never reject her heritage or rebel against her social and cultural norms. This often leaves her wondering how to balance her roots with the opportunities presented by modern life.[11]

In this way, her works, which are firmly rooted in sexual, moral, and social fiction, serve as a clear echo of women's issues, sorrows, and concern. The chapter "Female view of life" examines the perspective of women in Shashi Deshpande's short stories, focusing on the author's critiques of issues related to women's culture, women's roles in society, and marriage. Deshpande, as a writer, shows real concern for the societal issues facing women and middle-class women in particular.

Undoubtedly culturally rooted, Shashi Deshpande does not let her tradition to overlook the commonplace struggles women face on a daily basis. Thus, her works show a high level of knowledge, insight, and learning as it observes the commonplace and everyday. The psyche of women is a common theme in her writings. As a result, the "female consciousness," as conveyed by the novel's female protagonist and narrator, serves as the novel's driving force. Her writings reflect the impact of feminist philosophers like Simone de Beauvoir & Virginia Woolf and feminist writers like Margaret Drabble & Doris Lessing, among many others. Her kind of feminism differs greatly from the Western ideal of the female protagonist since it is rooted in the Indian setting.[12]

Deshpande's female heroines are a composite of many admirable traits: they are independent, intelligent, practical, hopeful, protective, and radical. Her strong, independent female protagonists reflect the author's own outlook on life. Thus, her woman is seen and built to play a pivotal role in a variety of personal and professional contexts, and her experiences are filtered through a distinctly feminine and feminist worldview. Similarly, society views women as being at odds with their sexual, cultural, and natural responsibilities. These ladies aren't your typical females, so don't expect them to take things quietly or come up with fresh solutions to old issues. That is, the ladies of Deshpande won't go to extremes of revolt, but they also won't take things lying down. In doing so, she demonstrates a keen understanding of her numerous duties as a woman by rejecting severe disobedience and instead choosing to accept her circumstances. Deshpande lady is thus a moderate.[13]

Of an interview with the academic, Deshpande reflected on the literary climate in the 1970s, when she first began penning her short tales. Women before then had various obstacles, therefore they sought solely to escape the confines of their own narrow world. I found that questioning more helpful than having a good outlook on one's life. Simply put, women yearned for freedom. Women were slow to even make it to the starting line, while males were far ahead from the get-go.

Women have surrendered quietly throughout the years, doing their work without complaint. From Deshpande's further description, the academic may infer the following: Women have always held roles as nurturers and caregivers. Then there comes a moment when, despite having fulfilled her responsibilities and done her best, she knows that she is losing out on something and is thus never really satisfied. This requires her to do some introspective looking, questioning, and probing of herself, and even after she's done what she's supposed to, she still doesn't feel whole. A deep, mysterious loneliness lies just beyond the surface of her. Consequently, this prompts additional inquiry

and insight. This kind of event might be seen as an introspective journey. Understanding the cultural context and worldview of women of her generation might provide light on the origins of the feminine point of view. Consequently, Deshpande states that: "The difficulty that was the most constant then was to ask questions; more than anything else, it was asking the questions from inside oneself of one's own life, to wish to get free of limits.[14]

The woman's calm, methodical, and consistent reaction to her surroundings is what makes her the story's female protagonist, as seen above. In "The Inner Rooms," Amba wonders to herself who she really belongs; her feelings of rejection and isolation drive her to go within and examine herself for answers. When she starts looking for solutions to her problems inside herself, she finds them. She takes her own life in order to preserve her pride, integrity, sense of worth, and sense of security.[15]

Amba's dilemma serves to highlight the reality that women have fixed social and biological roles in society. Patriarchy allows for a reversal of these cultural and biological norms. The reason Deshpande emphasizes these roles is to stress that a woman can never be more than a wife, daughter, mother, etc. More than everything, she wants the independence to think for herself, to make her own choices, and to be set free from any constraints. These many obligations keep her tied to her family and limit her freedom. The true essence of who she is is stifled and buried deep inside her. Consequently, Deshpande explains the ways in which these women struggle to break out of their assigned positions. There is no way out of their biologically determined responsibilities, such as having a sexual partner, but they may run away from their cultural ones. Deshpande's heroes see love, marriage, etc. from a fresher perspective, and therefore they are able to take on a more feminine perspective while dealing with marital issues, such as the woman's responsibilities as a sexual partner.[16]

Marriage is seen as an implicit expression of passion and is thus seen as two individuals being purchased together like animals after much haggling solely to mate, stay together, and breed in India. Deshpande points out that true love is seldom observed in marriages, and that even in some cases when the pair gets married out of love, that love eventually fades as time goes on and other variables enter the picture. Similarly, in Indian culture, marriage is seen as the pinnacle of a woman's existence, and she must spend her whole childhood and teenage years preparing for it. However, once she is married, she discovers a world quite different from the one she had imagined, and is thus very disappointed.[17]

The search for one's own identity is another dominant theme among women's literature. Having an identity that is her own, one that she has acquired or developed by her own powers and skills, one that is recognized for her successes or efforts, and one in which she may assert and express her will, emotions, ambitions, etc., is central to a woman's search for identification. Anita Desai, author of the acclaimed book *The New Woman* and considered the "mother" of the Indian English psychological novel, also addressed the issue of women searching for their place in the world.

Considered from a female viewpoint, a survey of life that includes a woman's perspective on love, marriage, and sex provides a wide swath of the woman's perception of the world. What makes this perspective stand out is the fact that it assumes women in patriarchal societies will not let their own pain and suffering get in the way of their families' pleasure, despite the fact that they often do undergo significant amounts of pain, insult, suffering, subordination, etc. While this outlook is characteristic of the conventional approach to life, the endeavor of a woman to speak out for the voiceless or to share her innermost thoughts is one of a kind. To speak out is, therefore, central to the feminine worldview. You may find this distinctively feminine perspective on life in many of Shashi Deshpande's other short works. The writer's perspective is shown via her consideration of topics like feminine subjugation, women's quiet, obedience, patience, and her unwillingness to upset family unity.[18]

Deshpande often presents female characters as passive, submissive victims of patriarchal authority. As a rule, they keep their mouths shut and quietly accept their fate whenever possible. For the sake of their families, women often cede their autonomy and individuality to their dads, husbands, and the rest of society. They understand that submitting to authority is necessary for maintaining harmony at home. One of the defining characteristics of the feminine perspective on life in Deshpande is a willingness and acceptance to submit.

The author's view on women is powerfully communicated via female silence. For, as a first perusal of her short narrative demonstrates, being subservient is never adequate for the Indian woman, but she would not publicly express her worries. Rather, she suffers in silence, yielding to her sorrow. However, the writer shows how she has control even when she says nothing at all, which is a fresh perspective. The wife's silence in this case is as shocking as it is in the short tale "*The Legacy*," in which she agrees to have sexual relations with another man at her husband's insistence so that their child may have a better chance at life. That's why Shashi Deshpande makes his female characters so quiet and meek. Deshpande is attempting to provide a voice to the voiceless through her work. She gives a voice to the

powerless woman in "*The First Lady*," whose goal isn't to upset the peace at home so much as to find some measure of happiness within the confines of her routine and routine existence. Even as a young woman, she sacrificed her dreams of marrying the man of her dreams for the sake of her family, numbing her senses and resigning herself to a life of routine and monotony. Like many of Shashi Deshpande's characters, the lady in "*A Liberated Woman*" pretends and lies to those close to her, to the larger society, and even to herself in an effort to create domestic tranquility and stability for her husband and children.

According to the interpretation of the aforementioned works, Deshpande's articulation of the feminine perspective is not a violent form of revolt. In the eyes of a phallogocentric critic, a woman writer's scope of imagination is limited to domestic matters. Deshpande's creativity, on the other hand, is highlighted by her deliberate decision to depict a lady who is limited by her adherence to family or tradition. Deshpande's focus on the inner lives of women is evident in her decision to depict a domestic lady.[19]

The author's decision to depict mundane household life from a female viewpoint sheds light on her feminist worldview, which seeks to provide a platform to those who have been marginalized by society and give a voice to those whose opinions have been silenced. The resentful female protagonists of "*The Legacy*" are Deshpande's vehicle for articulating her feminist worldview. It shows women as victims in a male-dominated Indian culture but also shows their struggle for independence. Since her spouse is sexually inadequate, a woman's natural desire for a son goes unsatisfied. So, a young physician agrees to be the surrogate's spouse. She becomes pregnant as a consequence of her unromantic intercourse with the doctor. A medical professional relates what happened:

Imagine that for a moment: you and I are the original Adam and Eve, living in a perfect garden. Nothing romantic was spoken between them. No empty assurances. I've never encountered someone who could make me laugh as effortlessly as she did, and our brief time together is a bright spot in an otherwise drab existence. Fun-filled days.

The female characters may come out as accepting and docile, yet they never give up their own unique identities. However, they end up much more alone since they can't meet the demands of their own mind despite their outward acquiescence. As a result, they have a pessimistic outlook on life and project a sense of hostility onto the world, which leads to negative emotions including hostility,

resentment, bitterness, melancholy, hopelessness, and anxiety.

Shashi Deshpande's characters' psychological experiences propel them to search for self-knowledge in order to overcome anguish. Deshpande makes her female protagonists more introspective on purpose so that she may delve further into these issues from their perspective. Deshpande's belief that a woman's actual existence results from self-affirmation and self-control is shaped by most of the tales. At some time in her life, any woman may decide to rebel against her past humiliations. Insults, dominance, oppression, contempt, and repression are just some of the ways in which women's feelings are bottled up over time. In this way, Deshpande depicts her female protagonist as a silent voice that eventually becomes a voice of rebellion.

What, however, is Deshpande's vision for women if her female characters are steadfast in their commitment to family and tradition while also being victims of patriarchal tyranny from which they are unable to break free? As an additional question, how does this vision compare to or differ from the feminist vision? It may be deduced from the following observations: In her short tales, she explores the feminine mind at length, detailing the struggles that women face as they try to find their place in the world. But in doing so, they give women's lives, circumstances, and perspectives a voice that has not before been heard. Her protagonists solve their difficulties and get a fresh perspective by introspectively examining and analyzing the existential challenges women encounter. The reality, revealed by such a perspective, is that there is limited room in traditional Indian culture for a woman's autonomous development. In consequence, she will have to deal with limitations and confinement throughout her whole life, from infancy to old age. Deshpande's viewpoint is made clear by the way in which her female characters grapple with moral and psychological quandaries.

Sometimes a woman's drive for identification and self-definition might lead her into moral and ethical issues that can make her feel guilty, ashamed, frustrated, or afraid. This is made clear by delving into Shashi Deshpande's language, another strength of his short story. His prose is lively and lovely, with a hint of the spontaneous, uncomplicated, and free. While Shashi Deshpande's English has a decidedly Indian flavor, it is not tainted by the country's reputation for crudeness. The English she uses is quite basic, yet you can see that it is nevertheless packed with Indianness from the way she describes the country, its people, their customs, their cuisine, and their beliefs. The feminine creativity of India is brought to life via this language, which resounds with the reality of the circumstances, people, and settings it elaborates. The brief narrative

At this point in "Lost Springs," the narrator is using the following narration style:

A portuguese fort once standed here. Only its decaying walls or the name remain, the latter of which the hotel currently uses. The low walls and fort-like appearance nevertheless give it an air of security, warding off random weekend visitors. The hotel has done such a good job of blocking off the ocean that it is only a distant vista that we enjoy from our deck chairs.

Also noteworthy is the fact that Shashi Deshpande's language exposes a feminist perspective, which, like any other marginalized speech, has often prompted changes in the structural norms of fiction. Comparing the writing styles of men and women reveals that men interrupt women far more frequently than women interrupt men; interruptions are used by males as a discourse technique to control women. However, as illustrated in Deshpande's short tale "Madhu," women's speech demonstrates active engagement via cooperative overlaps and collaborative floor holding.[20]

CONCLUSION

The act of writing for her by Shashi Deshpande is a deliberate participation in the creative drive. She solely identified as a novelist and a short story writer, and she preferred that others do the same. She has written on middle-class families and individuals in Indian society. She has unabashedly shown her affinity for middle-class culture and individuals in her writings, presentations, and interviews, especially ladies who often appear in her short stories. She has so contributed to global literature by depicting the realities of middle-class women: "I recognize that I write but I have to because it is within me." I believe my addition to Indian literature is that it offers one viewpoint—a picture of the world as seen through the eyes of women. Shashi Deshpande shows the genuine concerns. She sets her characters inside the structure of family. Families function via interactions & interdependence, but they are not without their detractors. Women get into wifehood via marriage, but they also become mothers while they are wives. Her literature mostly focuses on mother-daughter relationships. Her tales often address relationships other than mother-daughter or man-woman relationships. Shashi Deshpande's literature explores the enduring issues of human existence, relationships, love, belief, and death.

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