

A Study of Shashi Deshpande's a Matter of Time

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Abstract - Famous author Shashi Deshpande is well known for her works, which mostly highlight the struggles women face and their search for personal identity. The goal of the current essay is to examine how Shashi Deshpande's novel A Matter of Time depicts the position of women across time. The focus of the book under examination is the development of the man-woman connection across four generations as they attempt to face the truth by delving into the past. The lives of four women, Manorama, Kalyani, Sumi, & Aru, who are victims of prejudice brought about by patriarchal society are depicted in this book. Without a successful marriage, the measure of a woman's success is her married life, and without that, all of her other accomplishments are deemed useless.

Keywords - Eminent, Admeasurements, Evolution, Individuality.

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INTRODUCTION

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.

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.[1]

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.[2]

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.[3]

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.[4]

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*. [5]

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*. [6]

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. [7]

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. [8]

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.

Gopal's abandonment of the family in *A Matter of Time* (1996) causes distress for everyone involved, but in his absence, she is able to reveal her true, latent power. Sumi has been a perfect wife from the beginning, always putting her husband's needs before her own. She takes all the sorrow, devotion, and perplexity in the wake of her tragedy in stride, showing an extraordinary capacity for tolerance. She "had the impression of being lost, of having no place," even at her parents' home. She has come to terms with the reality of her situation, declaring, "Gopal is going his route and I have to go mine". She hopes that her girls' lives will be smooth sailing, filled only with "easy and pleasant". The only thing that pays off in life, she knows, is keeping a level head and a reasonable perspective on things. [9]

She has such composure that she refuses to discuss Gopal's abandonment. People who are sensitive and self-respecting like her experience the pain of their situation much more acutely. There are moments when the heroic dimensions of her quiet suffering are revealed. She bravely faces the realities of life head-on. She creates a tomblike environment around herself, believing that the eerie stillness would better portray her anguish than any words could. Sumi is the only member of the family to greet Gopal without resentment after he had left the others with curses, tears, and agony. Her pride would not allow her to cry in front of him. And she doesn't try to rein in her emotions enough to ask him to return. [10]

The true Sumi character emerges. Neither her parents nor her sister, a doctor, nor Gopal's always-helpful doctor nephew, Ramesh, would lend her any money. She is adamant about beginning her search for a permanent teaching position right away, and she has no interest in accepting a temporary one. She takes the first bold move toward asserting her independence by teaching herself to ride a bicycle. [11]

It is not easy for a woman to pick up the pieces of her life after a divorce, but Sumi does it with strength and independence. A woman's future is still determined solely by her marital status. The only way for a woman to be respected in society is to have a husband and live with him.

Even-keeled and driven by a desire to restore her own identity, Sumi's strategy of resistance is effective. She achieves financial independence, begins to pursue her passion for gardening, and begins to create and direct plays, leading her to a profound personal transformation. The dominant worldview in Indian society places women in a

subordinate position, which is reinforced by societal structures and conventions that restrict their autonomy. She isn't allowed to have her own identity. On top of that, she may not decide to go against the established norms and authorities.

At the book's conclusion, the protagonist finally finds some reason to believe. Not Sumi's death but Aru and Kalyani's "smile of encouragement" for Gopal as they stand at the door is the last picture the author uses to finish the book. The lesson here is that feeling sorry for yourself won't help. The only way to get from hopelessness to optimism is via an exercise of brave self-reflection and discovery.[12-13]

The character of Kalyani, who remains silent for over forty years with her husband Shripati in the film *A Matter of Time* (1996), stands out as an extreme example of quiet. There is marriage between Kalyani and Shripati. Their inability to talk to one other impacts larger patriarchal concerns that affect future generations. Sumi's life is a rerun of events from the past. But neither Kalyani nor Sumi are making any noise. The pain is unbearable for Kalyani, but she keeps it to herself. Like Sumi, she worries that she may meet an untimely end. Kalyani's worries stem from the patriarchal tyranny that forces women into the background. She learns the hard way that by giving up her kid, a male heir, she has also given up her right as a mother and a wife.[14]

But her inaction, which she expresses via her silence, becomes a potent kind of resistance since it challenges established social power relations. Kalyani puts up such a strong fight that the author, in one of her interviews, says that Kalyani doesn't come across to Aru "as a victim but as a lady came out of all of the victimization intact" (Ramarao : 1998 , 256). Silence is an act of strength rather than helplessness when it is purposeful, serving as a shield against the permeation of the soul by a perceiver. Withholding information makes it a more effective resistance tool.

Deshpande lauds Kalyani's independent spirit and tenacity in the face of her tortures.[15]

When Kalyani thinks of her mother's role models, she thinks of Yamunabai, whose guiding principle was "Nimitmatram Bhava Savyasachi," which may be translated as "Be true to yourself and others at all times." –

... Arjuna, be yourself merely the tool.
The destination is outside of
ourselves, in a world apart from our
own. None of us are more than tools.

Indian women often have this mindset, which helps them deal with adversity. The novelist's last message, communicated via Kalyani, is to take on life's obstacles head-on and with determination.

The main character, Sumi, deals with the shame and humiliation of being a forsaken wife quite well.

Instead of ranting and raving, she maintains a spooky level of stillness around her. However, her lack of speech speaks volumes about how much she is suffering. [16] Because language has developed around the needs of mankind, the meanings of words cannot be universal. The creation of new words has traditionally excluded women. To quote "Writing From the Margin," by Shashi Deshpande":

Because of these differences, we each have a limited view of the world. Fictional characters have their own universes, which authors use to inspire their own. The fact that I am a woman in the culture in which I was raised had a formative impact on my work. Because I am a woman, my perspective on the world is shaped by the unique experiences and challenges faced by women throughout history and in today's society. It's possible that my topics, characters, and possibilities will diverge from those of a male.

Even though Sumi knows Gopal has left the home, she has no idea why he would abandon his family. The couple's marriage is in danger since they are unable to recognize each other's needs due to a lack of communication. Sumi's imagination is sparked to life after Gopal's departure.

Sumi's ability to think creatively as a writer wilted in Gopal's company since she was preoccupied with Gopal and their girls. She couldn't put pen to paper at all. But without him, she is free to develop fully as a writer.[17] Her perspective begins to shift and she begins to think for herself.

Gopal's abandonment is the catalyst that causes Sumi to open herself to the world and find her voice as an artist. Sumi's capacity for self-relation is a significant facet of her character. With the passage of time, Sumi begins to explore the field of creative writing. As a result of the popularity of her debut play, *The Gardener's Son*, she feels emboldened to tackle more taboo subjects, such as the sexuality of women. "It's great," she says, "and now I want to do a lot of things" . She makes up her mind to tell the tale of *Surpanakha*, Ravana's sister. The *Surpanakha* incident is indicative of Sumi's progressive outlook and her desire to put the man-woman relationship on a firm, non-ideological foundation. "Writing From the Margin," a book by Shashi Deshpande, makes reference to:

Patriarchy refers to the idea that society and culture should be ruled by men. Thus, laws, practices, and beliefs are all structured in a way that prioritizes males, their wants, their professions, and their interests.... As Virginia Woolf noted, women have always been

marginalized and silenced in public discourse. And so, just as women's lives are devalued in comparison to men's, so is women's literature, which is dismissed as insignificant, unimportant, and unimportant. There is an expectation that serious works of literature will be produced by men about men, and when women write, their work is automatically labeled as "women's writing."

Sumi's daughter Saru takes umbrage with her father's choice. And yet, Sumi is there to comfort her. Aru, Sumi, and Kalyani are all women who have fallen prey to patriarchal rule, but who find their voice and strength through their resistance.[18] To reclaim what she believes is rightfully hers, Aru resorts to angry protest; Sumi rediscovers her sense of self when her achievements as an individual are acknowledged; and Kalyani regains her strength upon hearing the reading of Shripati's will, which refers to her as Vithalrao & Manorama's daughter rather than as her wife. She has no regrets after losing her marriage:

As we've already established, Urmila has her own personal issues that are causing her unhappiness. Even now, years later, Urmila can empathize with her suffering and understand how she feels, linking her agony to Shakutai's who is asking the same question: "Why does this have had to happen to me?" (67). Urmila alleviates her pain by finding and empathizing with the anguish of these ladies. Urmila knows Kalpana and Shakuntala's struggle, their pain as well as every flicker of their emotion.[19]

Urmila is completely aware of the unfair treatment meted out to women. She sympathizes with Shakutai, pushes Vanna to be more forceful and is entirely fascinated with the writing left behind her deceased - in-law, Mira. According to Indira Nityanandan:

This work makes progress by introducing female bonding, the concept that one woman would want to aid another who is in need. Urmila raises awareness to the victim of rape and works tirelessly to get Mira's poetry published. This is a great change for our hero, Sarita, since before she, Jaya, and Indu were all focused on their own personal conflicts.

Helping Kalpana or Shakutai, Urmila hopes to make others see how terrible these crimes are for the victim and how important it is to provide a severe penalty to the perpetrator.[20-21]

Urmila and Vanna are there for each other when they're down and out. Vanna assists Urmila in recovering from her mental breakdown. The

connection of women is therefore presented via the interaction of the female characters. Urmila, in contrast to Vanna and Priti, does not want to be submissive to a guy but rather to stand on her own two feet. She makes up her mind that she won't give in to her emotions. She brazenly confronts both rape and death. This allows the reader to get insight into the inner workings of the protagonist's female protagonist's heart.[22]

When Sumi's husband leaves her, her parents, sisters, and cousins all rally around her to aid, empathize, and encourage her, providing a soft landing while she deals with the harsh realities of life in *A Matter of Time* (1996).[23]

As Premi, Sumi's sister, she is overwhelmed with wrath "at their recklessness in tossing away what they had, indifferent it appears to her of the worth of what they have wasted" (Deshpande : 1996 , 136). Sumi's mother Kalyani, who has been left by her husband but has spent years of her life alone, nonetheless pursues a reconciliation with her son-in-law. She has been able to get beyond the initial shock, anguish, shame, and trauma of being abandoned with the aid of the other women in the family.[24]

CONCLUSION

Deshpande has made an effort to provide workable answers to women's problems in the rapidly changing social environment for their comfortable living. The worlds of a man and a woman radically transform one another. The patriarchal culture does not depict men as henpecked spouses, but rather as being blessed with complete dominance and sovereignty. Men have always been the natural leaders and have absolute control over the ladies they interact with. Females have always been seen as little more than a commodity or piece of furniture. In the hands of men, women are the only puppets. The rights to liberty and equality are not upheld in their entirety even in the current situation. But Deshpande works to create the woman as a unique person who rejects conventional limitations and develops her personality in line with the current world's altered social climate.

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