

A Study of Feminist Perspectives in Some of Shashi Deshpande's Novels

Sunitha Patthi

PhD Research Scholar, Dept. of English
Osmania University, Hyderabad

Abstract

*The symbolism of Shashi Deshpande is many. She works for the acknowledgment of a woman as a person and supports the justifications for English being considered an Indian language in intellectual arguments. She conveys the truth with tact and conviction, and her words remain long after she has left the room. In addition to highlighting the possibility of women clarifying themselves and escaping the situation of self-negligence to spread their wings of self-assurance, the current paper expands on the true story of women who represent themselves or the entirety of womankind in a way that is not quite the same as a man telling a woman's story. The current study, which is based on four novels by Shashi Deshpande, *That Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *Binding Vine That Long Silence A Matter Of Time* and *Shadows Remedies*, Penguin India (2000), and *On*, Penguin, explores the complexities of man-woman relationships, particularly in the context of marriage, as well as the trauma of disturbed adolescence. She illustrates what occurs to men and women during and after marriage, including who they were, who they are now, and what lies ahead for them. These four books explore the evolving nature of married relationships as well as the changes in men's and women's status following marriage. She aims to reveal the custom that trains a woman to perform her subordinate position in the home by focusing on marital relationships. The books of Shashi Deshpande also demonstrate how well she conveys the frustration and disappointment that women feel in their marriage relationships. It means that in order to establish an adult and equitable gender interaction, men and women must cooperate.*

Key words: *Women's struggles, work, self-identification, relationships, women's independence, social identity, and disaster.*

I. Introduction

Women authors who wrote about their experiences are regarded to have made a major contribution to English-language Indian literature. They mostly discussed domesticity, human sorrow, and female subjectivity. Thanks to their talent for storytelling and effectively portraying the connections between contemporary and old ways of life, they did greatly succeed in experimenting with a variety of different things at times, making them all stand out in every manner.

Their literature could provide an alternative point of view on the world. Although many notable individuals have worked for years to elevate literature to its current state, women's writing is now regarded as a major and significant modernist medium. Authors like Kamala Markandeya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, and Shashi Deshpande have received widespread recognition and appreciation for their work. Shashi Deshpande's fiction puts the emphasis on what she has contributed to Indian English literature.

With an emphasis on the adventure, mystery, thrill, and playfulness of children, Shashi Deshpande was very successful in creating her own personality. She left her mark on domestic, detective, and children's literature. While her detective books focus on male characters, her domestic novels are mostly on middle-class women, their sorrows, and issues in a patriarchal society. In addition, Shashi Deshpande is a renowned Indian woman novelist who expertly captures the psychological issues and emotional traumas experienced by the female characters. Because she consistently depicts the problems faced by educated women, identity crises, internal conflict and pain, and marital discontent and despair in her works, demonstrating her grasp of modern reality. Shashi Deshpande has established herself as a major literary force in the literary world. In her writings, she presents a realistic portrait of modern middle-class women, and the majority of the overt themes in her novels are comparable to those of contemporary European and American women's fiction, particularly in the way she describes the different stages of a woman's life. Hatini Nafisca, a contemporary Indian scholar, is accurate when she states, "Women writers by name."

According to P. 196, "Shashi Deshpande has emerged as one of India's leading female writers, winning praise for her meticulous, considerate, and accurate portrayal of Indian middle-class women in the domestic sphere."

She was reared in Dharwar, a tiny but intellectually active town in northern Karnataka, where she was born and raised. Shashi, the daughter of famous playwright and Sanskrit scholar Adya Rangacharya, well

regarded as the Bernard Shaw of Kannada theater, had her early schooling in Dharwar before moving to Bombay to complete her economics degree and eventually settling in Bangalore to pursue a law degree. Only at the start of the 1970s did her literary career really take off, with short pieces appearing in several journals. The *Legacy*, her first collection of short tales, was published in 1972 and used as the material for a modern Indian literature course at Columbia University. The *Miracle*, *It Was the Nightingale*, and *It Was Dark* were the other short tales. She also wrote important books, including 1. *Roots and Shadows*, which was the first book to get the Thirumathi Rangammal Prize for the finest Indian novel published between 1982 and 1983.2. German and Russian translations of *The Dark Holds No Terror*

The *Tying Vine* 4. In *That Long Silence* (1988), the author discusses her own writings as having a significant influence on women's life. The author, Shashi Deshpande, claims:

It definitely seems to have changed throughout the years. Furthermore, I think my books have given women a lot of power since I keep getting letters from women saying me how freeing it was to read them and that it gave them courage. Additionally, I had a male write me a lengthy letter expressing that I had never known what women thought of me until I had, presumably, read your works. Some streets have been enlarged.(Online source)

She is well-read and familiar with other authors, but she does not want to be a part of any other group of writers, not even the Indian writers in English.

She was still significantly affected by English authors including Jane Austen, Doris Lessing, Eric Jones, the Bronte Sisters, and Margaret Drabble. She was inspired to write by authors like Virginia Woolf and Simon 'De' Beauvoir, and she also loved reading Charles Dickens and Leo Tolstoy. Her writings often explore the tumult, convulsions, and annoyances of Indian women as well as how they communicate via silence. Since her fiction is female-centered and feminine awareness has evolved into the main topic of her works, she is given with the ability to observe everyday situations, vividly depicting the ordinary with wisdom and insight. She is also deeply entrenched in the society in which she lives. It won't be long before this feminine becomes "feminist," though not in the Marxist or Lesbian sense, as her feminism is peculiarly Indian in that it is tied to the plight of women who are caught between two poles: tradition and Modernity, family and career, culture and nature, and she combines "Humanism" and "Feminism" in her fictional world.

One of the most influential social, cultural, and political movements in modern North America is feminism, which has challenged male orthodoxies about women's abilities and duties and emerged as a topic of great importance in current thinking.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of the second wave of feminism. The 1980s saw the emergence of feminism, a school of thought centered on the fight for women's equality. The feminist objective of equality with males has experienced major development in recent years. The political and historical fight for equal rights has highlighted the importance of women just as they are. Women have equal importance as people, each in their own way. According to Linda Garden (sign 8), "Feminism is an analysis of human subordination with the aim of determining how to change it."The women's liberation movement included feminist critique when it first appeared. Women's exclusion was criticized, and the movement gave the criticism momentum. Elaine says, "We began to notice the disparities between the identifications and ambitions that had drawn us, along with thousands of other women, to the study and teaching of literature and the limited and secondary rules granted to fictional heroines, women writers, and female scholars, as feminism, through the women's liberation movement.

Women's treatment changed throughout the feminist era beginning in 1918. There have been many different ways to identify as a feminist since 1969, but what distinguishes contemporary feminism is its polarization of certain things like the body, employment, voice, and power. The prevalent themes addressed in writings by so-called feminists include men's dominance over women's ideas, the connection between men and women, sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, women's writing, women's financial autonomy, and the female voice in all matters. Feminism is a concept that aims to give a whole new understanding of women's place in today's complicated society and a new angle for critical analysis that connects the study of literature with actual life conditions and context.

The Indian lady's predilection for people of a certain sexual orientation and her erratic behavior have consistently been unique and astounding, making it easier for us to recall the events in some ridiculous dramatizations. She is a Goddess in one sense—Grih-Lakshmi, Durga, Saraswati, Kalyani, etc. But on the other hand, she is a tool of corruption and evil, a vamp, a sex object, an entrance tangle, or a housemaid. Jayant Mahapatra claims that a woman cannot see her own image in a mirror when it is dark: "We are recounting women as sages, researchers, and driving an autonomous life." However, the comparable Vedic eras have also revealed to us the tales of Draupadi being stripped in front of a court full of sages, scholars, and warriors, as well as Sita being tossed aside and banished. Her life has almost definitely changed somewhat since a tiny percentage of them now enjoy a life filled with multiple advantages, possibilities, and some respect. I'd like to use the opinion of Dr. A. N. Prasad here: Women have been the target of sexist insults since the Vedic era, albeit some of them are also eulogistic. The great majority of psalms in the Vedas are attributed to only children and

never to females. The Atharva Veda states that "the entry of a young lady gives someone else a child." A woman is "portrayed as a fitna, one who entices a man and causes inconvenience" in the Koran. According to the Bible, God created a woman out of a man's ribs. The outcome was the long-standing gap between men and women. Gloats, brags, and tries to dominate or reign over a woman only because she is a woman and a woman came from a man; she is one of his ribs. In any event, those who denigrate women's sex shouldn't take pleasure in suggesting that worry is an inherent quality of a woman. They should keep in mind that women sometimes lose their warmth and compassion merely because they are composed of ribs, the portion of a man's anatomy that is crooked.

A woman is no longer a doll in a man's hands nowadays. She is seen shaping her identity in many contexts. Women have also raised awareness in the literary world in addition to many other professions. Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Nay Antara Sahgal, Kamala Mark Andaya, Shashi Deshpande, and Anita Desai Indian authors who have written in English, including Geeta Mehta, Rama Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Shobha De, Bharati Mukherjee, Mahasweta Devi, Manju Kapur, and many more, have permanently etched their names into the minds of their readers.

In any event, not much has changed in an average Indian woman's life. Whether educated or illiterate, a working woman or a housewife, her status and position have essentially not changed. She still has to follow the orders of her father, husband, and kids in turn since she is still under their dominion.

The hubbub around the Woman's Emancipation Movement is easily explained by honor murders in Northern India. Indian culture is still governed by the gender divide; for instance, men will be men and women will be women. The one is born with all of the rights; the alternative is given the rights that are granted to her. Anyway, it might be beneficial to quickly recap the historical backdrop of feminism in literary circles before we get into the feminist methods of Indian authors.

Themes in Shashi Deshpande's Novels

Deshpande's woman believes that her work is natural, but education and preparation, along with a loving marriage, occurs when it is least expected, putting her in the difficult situation of starting a lifetime relationship only to have it end when children are born. The main social structures that comprise a woman's existence in India are the mindset for motherhood, wifehood, and marriage. The ideal femininity in India, according to Swami Vivekananda in "Women of India," is motherhood, that magnificent, unselfish, all-suffering, continuously compassionate mother. The partner ambles along behind the shadow. 'I'. In keeping with his advice to the American ladies, the Swami says, "In the west, the lady is a wife." Every woman wants to have children in order to get respect from her family and the wider society.

According to Indian tradition, the mother is the giver of gifts, the protector of life, and the provider. She is a creative and protective goddess who deserves respect and awe. For a lady, being a mother is the ultimate achievement of femininity.

Deshpande keeps up her commitment in her writing to the women's perseverance. She makes the assertion that she belongs to a group. According to Suman Bala, "Shashi Deshpande's novels depict the suffering, misery, and conflict of the advanced, instructing Indian women to integrate into man-centered society and conventions from one perspective and self-articulation, distinction, and autonomy from the other." In a patriarchal culture, women are forced into an optional position and are debased, as Shashi Deshpande emphasizes. Her books' overarching subject is "human connections," with the female protagonist defending herself as a woman, wife, or mother as well as a person. A persistent topic has been the ongoing search for oneself and the confirmation of it as a free, integrated identity within the circle that may be referred to as one's own. Deshpande tackles the man-centric request on a more philosophically expansive level than just a few small grievances.

Her books expose the male-dominant, man-centric customs and the persistence of the modern Indian woman as one of them. She introduces the social realities that women encounter using this point of view. She indirectly depicts dads, kids, and husbands as well as the interaction between individuals and women in order to depict the world of moms, daughters, and spouses. The goal of her "center is to investigate a typical example of human encounters that follow the rigid traditions of sexual orientation jobs," according to her website. In all of her writing, Deshpande describes the prospects for Indian women within the framework and development of socio-social respect. She described the Indian woman as being forced to choose between tradition and progress.

The process of searching for one's identity necessitates a fierce battle with tradition, culture, innovation, expectations, and desires. Shashi Deshpande's 10 books are intertwined with sporadic themes, with the goal of identity serving as the main one. Other minor supporting themes include: -Theme of human connections, such as an annoyed man and woman, a frazzled mother and young girl relationship, distance, depression, embarrassment, mental distress, and the social theme with regard to male supremacy, and the inconvenience of conventions, traditions, ceremonies, and general attacks on the male culture. The male's conception of fatherhood restricts women's quest for completeness. Parenting is equated to giving up, reaping

the rewards, and being damaged forever. The works of Deshpande are quite coherent both thematically and ideologically.

Roots and Shadows deftly examines the inner conflict of socially active Indians as they grapple with pressing issues like love, sex, marriage, settlement, and uniqueness. It examines a woman's struggle to claim her uniqueness and independence and shows how doing so puts her at odds with her family, the masculine world, and society at large. Shashi Deshpande invents Indians in her feminist philosophy of existence.

An Indian returns to her ancestral home to attend Akka, the elderly, powerful family tyrant's burial service. Although no one is aware of it, the vast family is about to undergo transformation, and India holds the key to their destiny. India has always been a strong-willed young woman who has yearned for freedom and independence. But now she is being asked a number of things that have confused and baffled her. She is unclear whether she has managed to free herself from the odd hold of family and tradition only to let her husband's affection, which she feels is not genuine love, rule her. She understood that, contrary to what she had previously thought, she had accepted Jayant in order to prove to her family that she was successful rather than out of love. In her return to her parents' home, she looks for the roots but discovers darkness. It turns into a moment of truth for her.

She considers her own life, work, love, the conventional view of marriage, her own union founded on love, etc. She sorts out both her future and the futures of her family members after having insightful conversations with the many personalities inside her family. She makes the choice to return to her own house.

The heroine of *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Saru, is a contemporary lady with her own requirements and goals. She studies to make up for a lack of support in her life and strives to be financially independent. Her awareness and a need for self-identity are sparked by education, something the preceding generation lacked. She is in love and desires love. She grows up as a kid with a very necessary and typical desire, but she never experiences parental love in the regular family structure. The author of the story paints a vivid image of gender prejudice that exists in affluent, educated homes. All of Shashi Deshpande's books exhibit gender awareness. She outlines the typical middle-class social structure in India. She experienced gender prejudice since she was raised in a conventional middle-class home. A boy is valued more since it is believed that he will carry on the family line, but a girl is seen as an unwelcome burden. Dhruva, Saru's brother, is the center of attention, always given more weight, and even shown more affection. Saru does not even remember her childhood, which was full of dread, sorrow, and turbulence, unlike many people who want to go back to their youth. Saru remembers,

"There was always a puja on Dhruva's birthday. In the afternoon, there will be a festive lunch and anarti. In the evening, my birthdays were almost identical. But there was no puja" (DHNT 169).

The patriarchal system created gender in order to support male dominance. A patriarchal social structure, which is founded on oppression rather than reciprocity, strongly maintains men's dominance over women. Girls were consistently mistreated and given solely domestic responsibilities. As a little girl, Saru was often overlooked. Her heart has been shattered by her mother's love and preference for her brother as well as by her own ignorance. Savabjit Sandhu accurately notes that Saru is despondent and resents her mother's favoritism:

"The mother has a strong bond with her son. She behaves normally.

One..... Male children are prioritized above female children.

He decided on the girl since he was entitled to donate to his departed parents. The dealmaker's soul, according to PP 19-20, "would most likely be concerned about the fermentation."

Sashi Deshpande's Women Protagonists

Shashi Deshpande has shown the unique and depressing situation of Indian women, whose rights are denied by society. Society expects women to be vassals. Thus, their individuality is continually marginalized. Feminism according to Shashi Deshpande liberates women legally and socially. Women cannot recover unless they are socially accepted as humans. Conventionalism and progress torment even financially independent women. Shashi Deshpande, an Indian, has meticulously and piercingly examined Indian society and women's expectations.

She plays educated, white-collar Indian women who must regain their identity and reconnect with family. Each of her works has female heroines caught in varied marital complications and seeking relationships. They want to grasp their life powerfully. Shashi Deshpande depicts many ladies. In her early works, Saru, Sunitha, Cynthia, Shantha, and Meera were tame, aloof, nice, and weak. Shashi Deshpande said Vanamala Viswanatha, "My characters have their own manners. Strong female characters are needed. However, my writing concerns women as they seem. Most of the women I've known make their decisions for them. Oversecure people think and act differently." (235). In her works, Shashi Deshpande shows that modern women are self-assured yet nevertheless bound by their jobs.

Deshpande is not a feminist, yet her narrative is both feminine and feminist. A woman wrote about her life in India. It's also an attempt to psychoanalyze the woman till she gains the self-knowledge to answer the novel's question. Many female writers, such as George Eliot, Sylvia Plath, Margaret Atwood, Doris Lessing,

Anitha Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Dalip Kaur Tiwana, Bharati Mukherjee, Shobhaa De, and others, as well as a few male writers like Thomas Hardy, Mulk Raj Anand, and R.k. Narayan, have examined the female mind, the inner unrest of women, their way of life, and context-specific issues.

Shashi Deshpande's works explore women's minds and life's mysteries. Shashi Deshpande's stories explore a woman's inner world and life's mysteries. *Roots and Shadows* (1983) is Shashi Deshpande's first book. Indus addresses working-class women. The hero overcomes several obstacles and seizes chances throughout the tale. In a strict male- and custom-bound society, she seeks to discover her originality. As a renegade, Indus often wants freedom and extravagance. Thus, she becomes a role model for older women."

In *That Long Silence* (1988), Jaya becomes a wife and mother after her loss and is left sad and outraged. The hero realizes she has strayed from herself and her writing career. The hero's insubordination to the public's malecentric strength expresses her road to authenticity. Her opposition to the public's malecentric might express her hero's inventiveness and selfhood. Her creativity and artistic passion liberate her from local and social tasks. She broke her long-held quiet on writing to announce her individuality.

Unique Female Characteristics

Shashi Deshpande is a pragmatist on a fundamental level. She has created authentic female characters, including vulnerable living beings and flesh-and-blood characters with notable qualifications. She presents a plausible story with believable characters and no ambiguous deliberations. She has confidence in presenting life as it is and not as it should be. There are many Indian novels that address women's issues. However, the treatment is frequently unjust, and the novels end up praising the stereotypical values of the Indian woman, such as tolerance, devotion, and subservient acceptance of whatever is given to her. Shashi Deshpande's heroines are utterly unanticipated in that they explode the myth of man's superiority and the mythology of the lady as the ideal, all things considered. Every novel begins with a character. In her novels, female characters play an essential role. She carefully refrains from creating artificial characters in order to fulfill her fantasies, preferring instead to create characters from everyday life.

The novelist's portrayal of female characters exceeds expectations. However, she opposes the concept of superwomen and their glorification. She continued, "My characters have their own distinct manners." I've heard that strong feminine characters are necessary. Regardless, my writing focuses on women as they appear to be." Deshpande's female characters have a unique quality, and despite difficulties and dangers, they remain unbowed. Each brave woman in the author's novel rejects customs that are relics of the past. In their demise, they discard useless customs such as circling the tulsi plant. Both Indus (*Roots and Shadows*) and Saru (*The Dark Holds No Terror*) refuse to participate in these ceremonies, which are designed to increase the longevity of their spouses. The dismissal is evidence of their autonomy and ability to view their lives independently. She argues that a woman is more than the sum of such capabilities. Based on her potential, she must determine whether or not to reside with her male companion.

II. Conclusions

Through her novels, Shashi Deshpande endeavors to depict the rationale of women. Women, like their male counterparts, need autonomy in all aspects of their methodology and recognition in life. They contend for women's rights equality on a large and political scope. They stress the significance of the public's perception of women. The novels of Shashi Deshpande depict contemporary Indian women's search for these definitions of themselves and society, as well as their fundamental relationships. The inventive configurations of Shashi Deshpande are based on the voyage of a feminine identity. The Indian woman has been a silent sufferer for a considerable amount of time. Although she has held various roles as a wife, mother, sister, and child, she has never been able to ensure her independence. The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande's novels are women from the Indian working class. In her novels, she oversees the inner lives of Indian women. She portrays her heroines in a realistic manner.

In literary circles, Shashi Deshpande is known for depicting the everyday life of a typical Indian woman, as evidenced by the selection above from one of the author's own expositions. Deshpande is certain that uncovering her own voice for her did not imply a female voice, but rather her own literary voice. No enchantment of authenticity, no concessions to "attractiveness," no themes or circumstances that cater to an assumed western audience, no adjusting her style to what an objective readership may prefer, without the demeanor of intriguing components fermented in her style that are characterized by the absence of flashiness or literary completion. She had spent the preceding three decades writing discreetly about human pickles. She has achieved the synthesis of tradition and modernity, demonstrating that "Modernism is not a negation of tradition; true modernism is merely an enrichment of tradition and an extension of its boundaries" (Chand 99). Thus, Shashi Deshpande stands at a crossroads between tradition and modernity.

Work Cited

- [1]. Adele King (1990). Shashi Deshpande: Portraits of an Indian Woman," *The New Indian Novel in English* ed. Vinney Kirpal (New Delhi: Allied, 1990), p.166.
- [2]. Berhane T, Ephrem R., and Gaikar V., (2021) 'Leadership Styles and School Performance: A Study within an Eritrean Context of Eastern Africa, 'International Journal of Management (IJM)'. Volume:12, Issue:4, Pp.:56-73.
- [3]. Beauvoir de Simon. Trans. And ed. H.M Parshley (1953; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) pg 309. Print.
- [4]. Cherian, Jacob; Jacob, Jolly; Qureshi, Rubina; Gaikar, Vilas. 2020. "Relationship between Entry Grades and Attrition Trends in the Context of Higher Education: Implication for Open Innovation of Education Policy" MDPI, Switzerland, *Journal of Open Innovation Technology, Market and Complexity*, Vol- 6, Issue- 4: 199.
- [5]. Clinch Dermot: Time for a Good Whine, *Rev of The Binding Vine, The Independent*, No.22, May 1993. Print.
- [6]. Jain Jasbir. *Gendered Realities, Human Spaces: The Writing of Shashi Deshpande*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2003. Print.
- [7]. Mala. R. *Indian Women Novelists, Set 1, Vol. V*, 56-57. Print.
- [8]. Sathupati Prasanna Sree Sree, S. Prasanna (2003). *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*, New Delhi; Sarup and Sons Publishers, 2003. Page. 118.
- [9]. Shashi Deshpande (1991). *The Writing of a Novel, Indian Women Novelists*, ed. R.K. Dhawan, New Delhi, Prestige Books, p. 35.
- [10]. Showalter, Elaine, (ed) *The New Feminist Criticism: Essay on Women literature and Theory*. New York: pantheon, 1985
- [11]. Suman Bala (2001). *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* (New Delhi: Khosla Publishing House, 2001), p. 127.