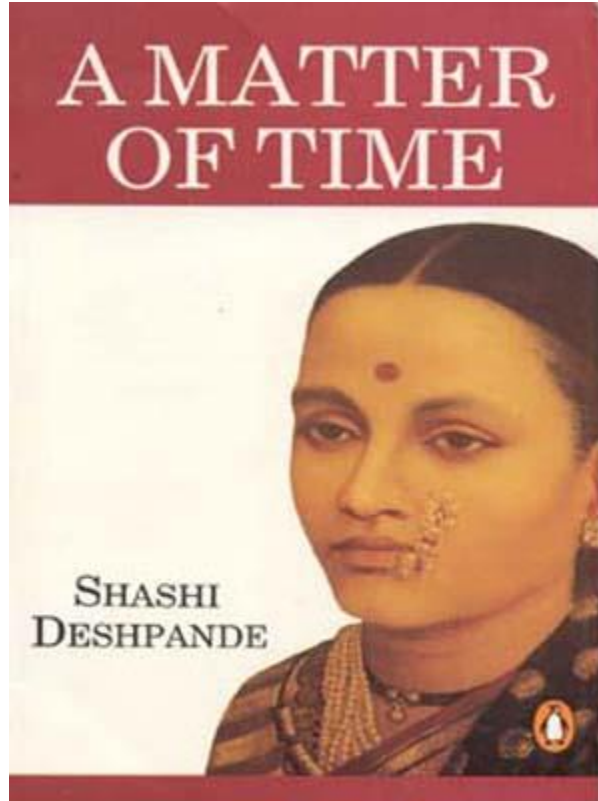


Victimization of women in Shashi Deshpande's Novels

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Abstract

Shashi Deshpande is an award winning Indian Novelist. She is an eminent novelist with a deep insight into the psyche of middle class Indian women. She has presented in her novels modern. Indian women's search for the definition of "the self and society and the relationship" that are central to women. With more than a dozen fictional works to her credit she has successfully captured the true emotions of Indian women. She writes of the conflicts and predicament of the Indian middle-class women. She published her first collection, of short stories in 1978, and her first novel. She is a winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award, for the novel '*That Long Silence*'. *Shashi Deshpande's* novels present a social world of mammy complex relationship. This paper presentation focuses on a study of suffering of woman in the works of Shashi Deshpande. Life is full of suffering, full of choices, full of compromises and an adjustment. Even a silent self-

suffering, becomes a survival strategy. This paper also throws light on the different aspects of suffering the woman undergoes.

Indian Women: Socially and Psychologically Oppressed

Indian women, unlike their western counterparts, have always been socially and psychologically oppressed, sexually colonized and biologically subjugated against a male-dominant social set-up. Any attempt by a woman to rise above the oppressive forces rooted in the middle-class margins has either been curbed mercilessly or ignored in the name of social dignity. Shashi Deshpande all through the gamut of her ever-expanding creative horizon always makes it a point to provide a separate space for her characters.

Shashi Deshpande Focusing on New Indian Woman and Her Dilemma

Shashi Deshpande portrays the new Indian woman and her dilemma. She concerns herself with the plight of the modern Indian woman trying to understand herself and to preserve her identity as wife, mother and above all as human being. Girls are a silent part of the family and society. What they think or feel about their social eclipse does not interest most writers or social thinkers.

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Focus on Feminine Issues

Most of her novels '*The Dark Holds no Terrors*', '*That Long Silence*', '*The Binding Wine*' and '*Roots and shadows*', deal with feminine issues. In her novels she presents a sensitive portrayal of Indian womanhood with a rare gift for sharp psychological insights. The women in her novels are subjected to continuous physical and sexual assaults in the society. But the writer feels that a woman has her own existence and place in the society and therefore she should not be reduced to the level of a breeding machine. She also dares to "expose, question and challenge the age old traditions and prejudices in the male dominated society.

My Focus

Through this paper, we want to present the condition of suffering women middle class of India. I would like to present that the women belong to Indian middle class are brought up in a traditional environment and struggling to liberate themselves and seek their self-identity and independence in the novels of Shashi Deshpande.

Marriage – Set as a Vital Goal for Girls

Marriage is set as a vital goal for girls. Women have to accept, accommodate and convert themselves to go well with the interests of their male counterpart and in this process suppress their

self-identity. In the Indian context, once a girl is married –it may be a love marriage or an arranged one, husband has full control on her. Whether the husband is right or wrong, the wife has to follow him blindly. A woman is never free according to old traditions.

Shashi Deshpande's Characters

In her novels many men and women living together, journeying across life in their difference age groups, classes and gendered roles. The old tradition bound world consists with modern, creating unforeseen gaps and disruptions within the family fold. Women's understanding becomes questionable as the old patterns of behaviour no longer seem to be acceptable. These struggles become in tense of quests for self-definition, because it would not be possible to relate to others with any degree of conviction unless one is guided by clarity about one's own image and role.

Suffering means the act of distress, pain. Shashi Deshpande gives minute details of development of girl-child in her novels. She has displayed a series of girl-children, where each girl faces a different problem within the family. Violence against women, whether physical, mental or emotional, is an issue that crosses all borders and all classes of women. Feminism and its crusade against a male dominated society are of special importance in the Indian context.

Novels of Shashi Deshpande

The novel *Roots and shadows* projects the educated women who are unable to enfranchise the traditional background in which they are reared. The cruse of all the prevailing problems of women is their subjugation which is always present in the form of silent servitude. In *That Long Silence* she retrieves facts from the depth of the past to reconstruct the missing links in the chain of women's suffering, self-discovery by all means is a mature act, act and also a cathartic one. In *'The Binding Vine'* Mira's poems and diaries engage her attention.

Shashi Deshpande's novels highlight the image of the middle-class women sandwiched between tradition and modernity.

The novel *A Matter of Time* moves beyond feminist concerns in that it raises the existentialist question itself. The important truth revealed is that self-pity is not the answer. It is only through a process of self-examination and self-searching, through courage and resilience that one can change one's situation from despair to hope. The novel highlights the image of the middle-class women sandwiched between tradition and modernity.

The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* deals with the problems of career women and her martial constraints. The Indian women has for years been silent sufferers. It is reflective of the feminist aspirations. The situations in which Sarita has placed herself is rather unwarranted. The lack of perfect understanding emotions between husband and wife causes of domestic life, there should be a blend of acceptance and rejection, flexibility and rigidity and above all revolt if the occasion demands and compromise for peaceful life.

In the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita achieved position and the ascribed position of her husband. The financial ascendance of Sarita, renders another less significant and important. But his action at nights terrifies and humiliates Saru.

In *Root and Shadow*, Akka's desire to educate her was not because of giving her an independent stand but because she feels that educated girls get a good match and Indu experiences disillusionment in sex and suffers a silent sexual humiliation.

The novelist brings out powerfully the psychological problem of a career woman and discusses it artistically without crossing the barriers of art. Shashi Deshpande's novels deal with the women belonging to Indian middle class. She deals with the inner world of the Indian women in her novels. She portrays her heroines in a realistic manner. As *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the novel reveals the life of Sarita, who is always neglected and ignored in favour of her brother, she is not given any importance.

Root And Shadow explores the inner self of Indu who symbolize the new women, who are educated and married to Jayant but her feminine instinct for articulation is suppressed and Mini inculcates in her all the traditional feminine qualities since her childhood. Akka got married to a man who has much older than her. She has to tolerate the scathing and bestial sexual advances of her husband. In the novel *That Long Silence* Shashi Deshpande reveals that consciousness of Jaya is not totally a silent and mute sufferer. In *The Binding Vine* Mira's poems and diaries engage her attention.

Urmila establishes a communion with her and tries to reconstruct the tragic tale of an energetic girl, who suffered and write poems in the solitude of an unhappy marriage. In the novel 'A Matter of Time' is an exploration of a woman's inner life. Kalyani's fears are based on patriarchal oppression that condemns women to the margins of silence. Sumi like her mother is a suffering oppressed and wronged woman. Yet she does not question the man; her oppressor.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the famous contemporary Indian novelists in English. Basically she writes about the situation of women and their failures in the fast changing socio-economic milieu of India. She writes about the conflict between tradition and modernity in relation to women in middle class society. In the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* all the characteristics are inextricably blended in Saru who represents a reaction of society. Saru is brought up in a traditional atmosphere but the education she receiver makes her a changed person with a rebellious attitude towards tradition. In *Roots and Shadow* through the character of Indu, who is educated and who lives in close association with society, brushing aside all narrow social conventions. Akka, the strict and disapproving matriarch of the family.

In the novel *That Long Silence* through the character of Jaya, who adjusts and accommodates unlike the modern women who themselves "forced into the background by the claims of culture" and hence they adopt "an inimical attitude towards it". She is not the structurally patterned woman of the traditional Indian society. In the novel *The Binding Vine* Normally Urmila's meeting with Shakeitai would not have happened as Shakeitai belongs to different strata of society. *A Matter of Time* focuses on social control, and the site of violence, exclusion and abuse. Aru asks

Gopal “why did you get married at all, why did you have children. The whole novel us devoted to silent, brooding women, unhappy, yet lively clinging to their past, yet living in the present society.

Female Identity

Shashi Deshpande’s novel deals with the theme of the quest for a female identity. The complexities of man-woman relationships, especially in the context of marriage, the trauma of a disturbed adolescence. The Indian woman has for years been a silent sufferer. While she has played different roles-as a wife, mother, sister and daughter, she has never been able to claim her own individuality. In the novel ‘*The Dark Holds No Terrors*’ Manohar’s male ego tries to dominate Sarita which ultimate results in disintegration, that Sarita is an individual not a dependent but a being capable of withstanding trials in life alone. Her identity is no longer been in terms of the identity of her male counterpart. In ‘*Roots and Shadow*’, Indu accepts that she throttled her desires not because of Jayant’s pressure but because it was her own decision with which she had given her identity. Akka too has to endure and submit to insults, injuries, and humiliations with a stoic patience and never complain.

In ‘*That Long Silence*’, Jaya is being renamed as Suhasine after her marriage is not a care of the loss of identity. In ‘*The Binding Vine*’, Urmila understands that even as a child, Mira has hated the way her mother has been surrendering herself to her husband and ever she has not herself identity. In ‘*A Matter of Time*’ it is here that in a flash Kalyani realizes that Gopal and she must now move an alone and she reconciles herself to their separation. Kalyani who emerges as the most powerful character in the novel. Here is a pitiable story, but one of deep endurance and strength.

In ‘*That Long Silence*’ Jaya comes to recognize herself as a failed writer because when had continued writing, her stories had been rejected for lack of genuine feelings which she had laid aside. After all she came to accept herself as a failed writer and so she depends of her husband. We see in the novel ‘*The Binding Vine Urmila*’ is one who is ahead of her predecessors by her endeavours to help other women. She is an upper middle-class carrier woman. Anu consequently has become mighty sensitive to the suffering and despair of others. In the ‘*A Matter Of Time*’ is a composite study in human relationship. The most striking example of silence is Kalyani who spends nearly forty years in total silence with her husband, Shripati but all women’s depended of themselves.

Deep Insight into the Female Psyche

Shashi Deshpande has emerged as a writer possessing deep insight into the female psyche. Focusing on the marital relation she seeks to expose the tradition by which a woman is trained to play her subservient role in the family. Her novels reveal the man-made patriarchal traditions and uneasiness of the modern Indian woman in being a part of them. Shashi Deshpande uses this point of view of present social reality as at is experienced by women. To present the world of mothers, daughters and wives is also to present indirectly the fathers, sons and husbands the relation between men and woman, and between women themselves. Her young heroines rebel against the traditional way of life and patriarchal values.

Ideal Woman

The words which we always associate with what we consider to be the concept of an ideal woman are self-denial, sacrifice, patience, devotion and silent suffering. As in *'The Dark Holds No Terrors'*, the life of Sarita who is always neglected and ignored. *'Roots and Shadow'* explores the inner self of Indu, Mini, and Akka and Shashi Deshpande shows in the *'That long Silence'*, Jaya is not a silent sufferer. In *'The Binding Vine'* Mira has hated the way her mother has been surrendering herself to her husband and ever she has not herself identity. *'A Matter Of Time'* is an exploration of Kalyani, Sumi and her daughters Aru. Shashi Deshpande's fiction is an example of the ways in which a girl child's particular position, social reality and identity and psychological growth determine her personality.

The new Woman is primarily characterized by the spirit of rebelliousness, visibly exercising its influence on all relationships, the boundaries of time and space not with standing. This spirit is manifested through diverse means and modes. A women's rejected of her assigned role inside the family and society, refusal to follow the traditional paths, inherent revulsions to the idealism associated with normal physical functions of the body such as menstruation , pregnancy, childbirth/procreation which often act as catalysts for sexual colonialism, aversion to the practice of favouring the male child over and above the girl child and disrespect for the social taboos concerning the human body are some of the challenging issues that Deshpande comes up with as the new woman.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:3 March 2018

Dr. T. Deivasigamani, Editor: *Indian Writing in English: A Subaltern Perspective*

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