

Feminism in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande

Javaid Ahmad Mir

Research Scholar GVISH, Amravati, MS, India

Abstract

Shashi Deshpande is a highly-regarded Indian author of English literature. Her writing explores the issues of female subjugation in a patriarchal society. For centuries, women in India have been oppressed, both physically and mentally, financially and in terms of privileges. A plethora of obstacles and limitations have been constantly placed in their paths, preventing them from leading autonomous lives. However, the emergence of education has enabled them to begin to challenge the oppressive social set-up. Despite having become educated and even breadwinners, they continue to be subjugated in a myriad of ways by the male-dominated Indian society. This research, therefore, seeks to examine the lives of women as portrayed by Shashi Deshpande in her novels.

KEYWORDS: Feminism, protagonist, subjugation, suppression, oppression, marginalization, patriarchal system, social –construct etc.

Shashi Deshpande the great Indian fiction writer claims that she is not a feminist. But by reading all her novels one can conclude that she is deep down a feminist, voices out for the modern Indian working class women. All women characters created by Shashi Deshpande like Jaya, Indu, Saru, Urmila are all oppressed by the males in the novels. Hence the aim of this paper is to study the feminism in the novels of Shashi Deshpande through her heroine. Caught between tradition and modernity, her protagonists search for identity within marriage. Deshpande's novels contain much that is feminist. The realistic delineation of women as wife, mother and daughter, their search for identity and sexuality as well, leaves the readers in no doubt where her real sympathies lie.

Shashi Deshpande has made educated women the subject of her writing and voiced the anguish of such women who have to rely on their male counterparts for the selections, decisions and choices in their lifestyles. In the phrases of Y.S. Sunita Reddy, "She gives us a peep into the country and condition of the modern-day female who is sensible and articulate, privy to her abilities, however thwarted beneath the weight of male chauvinism" (Reddy 146).

In fact, the woman characters in her novels understand their rights and they raise their voice against the male domination and oppression. Through her novels she raises diverse issues related to women and her function in human society. Shashi Deshpande has uncovered the gross gender discrimination and its fallout in a male-dominated society in her first novel **Roots and Shadows**. In the novel, she depicts the suffering and suffocation faced by the protagonist Indu in a male-dominated society. She refuses to play the straitjacketed role of a spouse imposed upon her by the society. Her quest for identity is tellingly expressed within the novel. In the **Dark Holds No Terrors**, novel, the protagonist Saru suffers as her husband refuses to play a second-fiddle to her. Saru undergoes splendid humiliation and forgets as an infant and, after marriage, as a spouse. Deshpande discusses the blatant gender discrimination proven

by means of dad and mom closer to their daughters and their choice to have a male child. After her marriage, as she gains more importance in the society and her social status and standing is higher than her husband Manohar, with this all problems starts in her life and marriage starts to fall apart. Her husband experiences inferiority complex and the humiliation, his behavior changes towards Saru and he becomes a sadist toward Saru. Her husband Mann vents his frustration on Saru in the form of sexual sadism, which has been vividly portrayed by way of Deshpande. In **That long Silence** novel, Jaya who is regardless of having played the position of a spouse and mom to perfection, finds herself lonely and estranged. Jaya realizes that she has been unjust to herself and her career as a creator, as she is frightened of inviting any displeasure from her husband. Her worry even discourages her from acknowledging her friendship with another man. These three novels belong to her early section and portray a mild form of feminism. **The Binding Vine** offers the private tragedy of the protagonist Urmi, as she narrates the pathetic tale of Mira, her mother –in regulation, who is a sufferer of marital rape. Mira, within the solitude of her sad marriage, would write poems, which have been posthumously translated and published by Urmi. Urmi additionally narrates the tale of her acquaintance Shakutai, who have been deserted through her husband for another woman. The worst part of her tale is that Shakutai elder daughter Kalpana is brutally raped with the aid of Prabhakar, her sister Sulu husband. Urmi takes up cudgels on Kalpana behalf and brings the offender to be booked.

In her novel, **The dark Holds No Terrors**, Deshpande paints a bright portrait of the struggles of a young woman in a patriarchal society. The protagonist, Divya, is a female in her Twenties who lives together with her mother and father in a small village in India. Divya is an independent and strong willed woman who is decided to make her very own selections in existence. However, her family isn't supportive of her choices, and she is compelled to face the cruel realities of residing in a patriarchal society. Through her struggles, Divya is capable of having advantage and experience of self-self-belief and a new found understanding of her location within the world.

Thus the research scholar in this paper has tried to high light feminism present in the novels of Shashi Deshpande through her heroines.

WORK CITED.

1. P. Rajya Lakshmi, Dr. N. Arvinda (2017). "Feminism In Shashi Deshpande's Novels" Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL) Vol.5.Issue 3. 2017 (July-Sept) pp. 164-166
2. Sarla Palkar (1991). 'Breaking the Silence: Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence,' Indian Women Novelists ed. R.K. Dhawan Set. 1, Vol. V. (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1991), pp. 169-175.
3. K.M. Pandey (2001). Dimensional Depth of Female Consciousness: Shashi Deshpande's the Binding Vine (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2001), pp. 74-76.
4. N. Krishnaswamy, John Varghese and Sunita Mishra (2001). Contemporary Literary Theory: A Student's Companion (New Delhi: Macmillan, 2001), p. 77.
5. Naik, Chanchala K. (ed.) (2005). Writing Difference: The Novels of Shashi Deshpande. Pencraft International.

6. Ranganathan, Mala (2009). "Indian Woman at the Cross Roads: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's Heroines". *Journal of literature, Culture and Media Studies*, No. 1, June 2009.
7. Sharma, Siddhartha (2005). *Shashi Deshpande's Novels: A Feminist Study*. New Delhi: Atlantic.
8. Kamini Dinesh (1995). 'Moving Out of the Cloistered Self: Shashi Deshpande's Protagonists' Margins of Erasure: Purdah in The Sub continental Novel in English. Ed. Jasbir Jain and Amina Amin (New Delhi: Sterling, 1995), p. 200.
9. *Feminism and Recent Fiction in English* ed. Sushila Singh (New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1991), p. 50.
10. Shashi Deshpande, in the Afterword by Ritu Menon, 1999. *Matte of Time* (1996. New York: Feminist, 1999) pp. 248.
11. Deshpande, *Roots and Shadows* 116.