

# Shashi Deshpande's Women's are New Women

## Abstract

Indian novel is an instrumental in bringing out social, political and theological changes. During 19<sup>th</sup> century this genre came into prominence with the publication of Raj Mohan's wife in India. After this work Novel became a selling accessory in India. Indian novel can be categorized into main periods. First period expanded till pre-independence era when novels were focused on partition, struggling movement for freedom and poverty. The second period stretched vastly from 1947 to the current days. In this period writers took stock of new emerged issues and set up certain measures to settle them. The new era that began after 1980's when new thought came in India

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## Introduction

Before independence and after independence, fiction writers portrayed woman as a mere commodity that has no spirit and mind. They depicted woman imbued in values of patriarchy who never involves into family decisions. Especially the male writers constructed coquettish image of women who born on earth for lovemaking only. By the turn of century many woman writers entered into the field of writing they reprimanded fair sex on their dependency and pretended weakness. They insisted women not just to show culinary potentiate in kitchens but they willingly try their hands in picking up professional careers. Though Indian women writers motivated common women to raise their status and create inner space for themselves but they suggested females to maintain balance between family and career. Shashi Deshpande is one such women writer who objected to radical feminism but insisted every woman to create a place for them. She expressed her view on her fictions by saying like this " My novels are about women trying to understand themselves, their history, their roles and their place in this society and above all their relationship with others" (3)<sup>1</sup>. Deshpande started her career in early 80's and produced seven novels and many short stories. In each and every work of her, she presented those women who are beset with the domesticate issues and society in place of mitigating their crisis just suppressing them on the name of resilience and traditionalism.

T.S Eliot expounded a theory in his world wide famous essay "tradition and the individual talent" that focuses on the value of learning the tradition and history of the past ages. However if an artist aspires to honk his individual talent he can enrich himself with the erudition of ancient literatures. The amalgamation of history and individual talent can make an artist intellectual one. Shashi Deshpande, an avade grande writer of the 21TH Century made use of Eliotic theory in her works, she puts more emphasis on this theory while portraying her women characters. Deshpande described how her females have been imbued herself with conventional values with current nitty-gritty in vague. Deshpande is one of those modern fiction writers in India who worked only on the issue of middle class women Deshpande justified her choice of middle class by saying that it is only a class that represents most of the population in India, therefore while dwelling on middle class, writer like her tried to highlight the dilemma of the larger part of population. Sarita in "The Dark Hold No Terror", "Indu in Roots And Shadows", Jaya in "That Long Silence" all are descended from middle class. They are educated, sensible, knowledgeable and exhibited extravagant courage to flout all meaningless constraints in their lives but they are silent fighter not rebellious. Sarita lives a double life. She is a doctor by profession. She works in a hospital as a paediatric during the day time and spent night at her home as a terrified animal. Sarita is a professional lady, whatever works she does as a doctor is doing

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for her family only. She has given comfortable luxuriant life to her children. In spite of having well settled life she found herself in a muddle. Deshpande depicted Sarita is doing well professionally, people recognise her personally but suddenly her life fumbled when a journalist came for her interview as a career woman. She said "How do you feel when you not only earn bread but most of the butter"(178)<sup>2</sup> During the interview Sarita realised Manu, her husband behaved normally and when so called interview had come to an end and night fell he behaved differently. He assaulted Sarita physically as well as mentally at night. Sarita could not perceive why Manu behaved desperately; even their life is going on well. Deshpande by showing the sadistic behaviour of Manu tried to show how a man like Manu lacerated the soul of a woman only because she is a more successful in profession but he is just a lecturer in third rated college. The success of wife became bone of contention for him. Manu was so desperate to destroy Sarita's reputation that he adopted inhumane way towards her but at the same time he wanted her money to spend life comfortably. Since Manu's behaviour proved a last nail in their relationship's coffin though Sarita did not agree on parting ways she still has a vision that she and Manu will stay together after sorting out their differences. One of the critic M.R. Haru labelled Deshpande as psychoanalytic writer as she examined her character from their psychic aspects "She reveals the subconscious and unconscious psyche of her character"(72).<sup>3</sup>

Deshpande described Sarita is struggling against the reverse waves of life she is determined to have her own way of life. That's why she decided to introspect on her mistakes. Indu does the same she is a free lance writer she has been tired of living under Jayant's control. She wants liberation from chains and restrictions; luckily at a moment she gets the message of Akka who is too ill to survive. It was Akka's last desire to meet Indu before her death. Indu who has never been to her parental house since a long time ago now has the chance to be there. Indu and Sarita are in similar circumstances. Although both of them had taken vow never to return their parental home yet as soon as they got first chance of been there they rushed to their parental homes. Deshpande recommended time off to all protagonists from their fixed schedules since they are in great need of a respite. This respite would definitely provide them a chance to ponder over their impasses. Sarita and Indu are learned, conscious but not hardcore females who only think about themselves. Deshpande elaborates that their education has enlightened their wisdom and both of them found modern education can easily convert an educated woman an outcaste in society. One more thing they realised which is quite destructive that the modern education has uprooted their feet from conventional rituals and without observing these rituals they are not in their family folds. Sarita realised the more she has become educated the more she got alienation from her culture. Even the definition of womanhood has been stuffed in her mind since childhood proved unreal, fake and obsolete.

By means of education she found women are women because their body functioning like this and this biological structure of male is quite different from female. Indu respected her womanhood she felt woman is a pure being she need not to do any sorts of ablutions for doing anything as Jaya in "That Long Silence" is struggling against opposite strands of lives with determination and commitment she confronts the challenges of hard realities when her husband Mohan got entrapped himself in a forgery case. Mohan was frustrated and remain silent. In fact after moving to Mumbai from Dadra Mohan talked very less. Had Jaya not acted intelligently her relationship would be broken down. She was aware of this fact that Mohan has been undergoing such a miserable moral degradation and he could take any step but she remains stay with Mohan till he regains his former position. In spite of having so many calamities in life Jaya didnot utter anything about her life before anyone else. Like Jaya Indu too had kept her emotions inside her being, she never disclose any secret to anyone She has been working as a free lance journalist since a long time. She realised, been in job for so many years has made her mind stagnated and she is not keen on her present career as a writer. Same is the case of Sarita whose job as a medical practiser does not provide her solace whereas she wants to escape and wants to have introspection of her life. Deshpande through her three protagonists portrayed the dilemma of modern woman. Actually the status of woman as a mother, wife and daughter is acceptable her earning although supplement in the incomes of family yet a woman's earning matters a little lesser than man's earning. Sarita, Indu and Jaya are working ladies having salaries but it is very unfortunate their foibles are more highlighted that their financial independency. This is a slap on the face of societal norms which value only patriarchy. All the three protagonists want to live their own lives but their family drag them into sloughs of slavery again and again. The sloughs of patriarchy persuade them from attending other duties. Indu was fed up with Jayant who always took her granted he wanted her money and status but he never allow Indu to live in freedom. He poked his nose into her every affair. He snubbed Indu when she expressed her desire to give up the job, Jayant uttered "We need money, don't we?(21)<sup>4</sup> Don't forget we have a long way to go"<sup>4</sup> Even when she expressed her desire to go at Akka place as she was on her death bed, he opposed her decision. Jayant just showed abhorrence for old lady and tried to prevent Indu to visit thereby saying this "What she is to you"(56)<sup>5</sup> Indu realised if she really wants to come out of the dominancy of Jayant she must give her a chance and a little sojourn from Jayant .

Sarita like, Indu has a career to follow, She remains with Manohar till she consciously get to know that Mohanor is just adding to her woes by crushing her body during night. Sarita left him when she found first opportunity and took refuse at her parental home. Here she got enough time to ponder over all her calamities. Sarita and Indu realised having left their irrespective homes provide them a chance to resolve

their issue and to halt at parental homes is creating another problem, not a solution to any crisis. Jaya got many days to outwit her crisis she found it is only she who is thoroughly responsible for chasm that has caused an eternal pain in her and her husband life because she never explored her problem. In the end when she received the message of Mohan that he is coming and they would move to their house at Dadar. Sarita tried to resolve the impasse stage. She alleged her mother for bringing conflict in her life. The death of her brother Dhruva who died accidentally at the site of brick making when both Sarita and Dhruva were playing, Dhruva's feet slipped and he drown at pond proved a turning point. Only mistake Sarita had made that she had turned her back to her brother she did not paid any attention to screams of Dhruva. After death of Dhruva the circumstances became so pathetic and unbearable for her that she began to look herself a second class citizen at her own home. The abuses and accusations had turned her mind completely. In spite all these conflicts Sarita did not succumb to all allegations she sustained in awkward situations. With the passing of time she would overcome all the obstacles. Not only this when she decides to tie the nuptial knot with Manu her mother emulated all their relationship with her. Indu's Akka who was her surrogate mother herself got her married to Jayant but still somewhere Akka did not approve Jayant for Indu as Indu herself chosen Jayant as her husband. Jaya married by the choice of her parents but she underwent all those suppressions whichever have been done to any woman in family. One of critic gave her opinion over Deshpande protagonists like this "From the traditional roles of daughter, sister, wife and mother Deshpande's protagonists emerge as individuals in their own right"(58)<sup>6</sup>

#### **Conclusion**

These protagonists came to realisation that to be remaining alone is not a solution to any problem. They should include themselves in the family folds but

on their own convictions. More importantly their convictions are not on radicalism they want reconciliation, proper understanding, equality, sharing of love and mutual respect for each gender. Sarita wants to live with her family she has put off her responsibilities for the time being but she wishes to start her life optimistically with family. She wants to give a last chance to her husband for bringing healthy reform in their relationship. Indu wants to sell out her parental property and establish herself as a writer after resigning from her current position as a free lance writer. Jaya determines to break her silence and a writer would speak out of her now and she will continue her writing. Each protagonist wanted to assert themselves as individuals first and later on other beings. Each Protagonist carved out a space for themselves by dint of their work hard, dedication, concern for families and intelligent decisions. The words of epigram in DarkHolds No Terror gives reply to each crisis in life "You are Your own refuse\There is no other refuse" (1)<sup>7</sup>

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