

Image of Female In The Selected Novels of Shashi Deshpande

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Abstract

Shashi Deshpande is one of the prominent female writers in India succeeded in delivering the real face of gender discrimination and the male domination over the female of the Indian society. The characters in her novel tear apart the patriarchal norms, which stood against them. Writing of Shashi Deshpande reflects her image of middle-class Indian women in most of her novels. Her protagonists are modern, well-educated, and financially independent women. The female characters in the novels of Shashi Deshpande have to go through various types of circumstances or conditions in their life. The main themes of her novels are problems of women belonging to the middle class in society who were trapped between tradition and modernity. The protagonists of Deshpande's novels always try to maintain their marriage despite, of the fact that they are mentally and physically tortured by their husbands. The objective of this study is to show the feminist perspective of Shashi Deshpande's female characters in her three novels '*The Dark Holds No Terror*', '*Roots and Shadows*', and '*The Binding Wine*'.

Keywords: Feminism, Disillusionment, Sufferings, Protagonists, Subjugated, Discrimination, Compromise.

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Introduction

Shashi Deshpande is one of the eminent and prolific female novelists of the contemporary Indian literature in English. Western readers align her with Anita Desai. Indeed, both the writers work centers around women's lives in modern Indian society. However, only Deshpande lives and writes in India, and she explicitly addresses Indian readers, not the international marketplace. Deshpande was born in 1936, in Dharwad. She is the younger daughter of the Sanskrit scholar, novelist, actor, and dramatist R. V. Jagirdar (1904-1984) and his wife Sharda Arya. Under the name of Adya Rangacharya, and under the pseudonym of Shriranga, her father published a huge literary oeuvre that includes translations of Sanskrit plays. He enjoyed great success and fame; his work has become part of the national Indian heritage. Shashi Deshpande's writings have become a powerful tool of her literary expression. Today she is a recognized Indian voice with four children's books and six novels, several perceptive essays, now available in a volume titled *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays* (2003). Shashi Deshpande is also one of the prominent short story writers. Deshpande's short stories have, like those of Jane Austen's, a narrow range. Her stories are written by keeping in frame the socio-literary themes and institutions such as family, home, middle class society in India. They are a fictionalization of personal experiences. They are collected in five volumes: *The Legacy and Other Stories* (1978), *It Was Dark and Other Stories* (1986), *It Was the Nightingale and Other Stories* (1986), *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1986) and *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993). They had also been reorganized into two collections: *Collected Short Stories I* (2003) and *Collected Short Stories II* (2004). Shashi Deshpande's publication of twelve novels excluding a number of short stories and travelogue feel gravitated not only to issues just relating to women but having an extended appeal to all humanity.

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The Dark Holds No Terror

Deshpande's first novel seems to have grown out of this story. Sarita, the heroine, defies her mother to become a doctor, and defies caste restrictions by marrying the man she loves. Her husband Manu is a failure, and resents the fact that his wife is the primary breadwinner. She uses Boozie to advance her career, and this further vitiates her relationship with Manu. Sarita goes to her parental home, but she cannot escape her past so easily. She realizes that her children and her patients need her, and finally reaches a certain clarity of thought: "*All right, so I'm alone. But so, everyone else.*" The discord and the disillusionment of the educated woman in a tradition bound 'Indian Society' is the theme of the novel. This novel explores the trauma of a middle class working woman who has been trapped in the male dominated society. Deshpande posturizes her men and women characters as the victim of modern society. She has mastery over the depiction of her characters as natural and genuine.

Roots and Shadows

'*Roots and Shadows*' is an English-language Indian novel, written by Shashi Deshpande in 1983. The novel focuses on Indu's interactions with others in her large family and the manner in which this helps to resolve their future and her own personal crisis. Indu considers her education and wit as her medals of superiority but fails to show her strength in her individual battles. All her life she pretends to be a rebel but her life ends up being a summation of responses to others, be it retaliation against Jayant and Akka or persuasion of Naren and self-indulgence. The story is based on the themes of tradition, family life, marriage, patriarchy, domestic abuse, self-delusion, and adultery. The author has tried to display the complex web of interpersonal conflicts and interpersonal contradictions affecting all our lives. The work has been widely analyzed and criticized for its feminist orientation. It has been a source for many theses and papers on the role of women in society of today. The work is widely appreciated for bringing out the joint family system in Indian society.

The Binding Vine

Shashi Deshpande's '*The Binding Vine*' (1993) is very much like her earlier novels, as it sketches her middle-class female protagonist predicament in a male-dominated world, where she has very little scope to give voice to her concerns. Although the story in this novel at the superficial level appears to be very identical to her other novels, if one explores it deeply, he can easily sense the peculiarity in it. In all other novels we find that the protagonist is of paramount importance and all the other characters are used to feature her concerns and feelings. But in this novel the minor characters play a very significant role; the protagonist Urmi plays the role of anchor; it is she who is used by the novelist very cleverly to expose the sufferings of women from different sections of our society. The study articulates the Love, sex, and rape Victims in the Binding Vine, is explores the all relationships, gives the power to survive. Like her other feminist works, this also voices the angst and oppression suffered domestically or publicly by women who are judged with an unfair standard when it comes to the prism of honor, privilege, conduct, rights, duties, and abilities. The story is a bold and hard-hitting exposition of the life for millions of Indian women who suffer neglect, pain and even crimes in isolation, silence, and submission. The story foregrounds the theme of rape, violence, loss, etc. but also celebrates the spirit of women and individuals who rise above their ordeals and attain deliverance, victory and even salvation.

Objective of the Study

In these novels of Shashi Deshpande, The female characters have to go through various types of circumstances and difficulties in their lives. The conditions of middle class women and their difficulties and their sacrifice for their families is described here.

Important Themes of the novels of Shashi Deshpande

Shashi Deshpande is a very famous female writer of India who talks about the existing subject matter with females in the society. However, the female candidate of the house has been at any position as high or low but treatment of males is always there in the house as in the role of father, brother, husband. Here are some highlighted themes of society for females in the novels of Shashi Deshpande.

Man and Woman Relationship

This theme explores man-woman relationship in Deshpande's works especially in her selected novels and short stories. It focuses on the predicaments, the mental abilities and satisfaction and dissatisfaction physically and mentally in the husband-and-wife relationship. Deshpande exposes the conventional notion of a wife's duty to fulfill her husband's expectations, allowing her to be molested by him even at the cost of losing her own self and personality in "The Stone Woman". Facing humiliation before the husband and friends as well in *The Dark Holds No Terror*. Becoming a devoted wife means submitting to the wishes of a husband, who is very often a total stranger for a young bride, and who will take her regardless of her fears and emotions. This slavish attitude of the women is criticized in "The Intrusion". A woman who has a successful career must be willing to give it up in favour of her husband and this sacrifice is taken as a matter of fact in "A Wall is Safer". In such a context the decision to get on at work implies doubts, remorse, and a deep sense of guilt which are discussed in "It was the Nightingale". A Hindu wife may even sacrifice her sexual life if her husband's ideals require it is brought to light in "The First Lady".

Portrayal of Spirit and Envision in Women

This theme examines the feelings of all kinds of Deshpande's women protagonists of married, unmarried, teenagers, children toward other relations to see how these roles react to each other. It also examines the subjugated position of women in Indian society and their positive reaffirmation. In some of her novels Deshpande has portrayed the power of mothers and grandmothers over their daughters and granddaughters. In some other stories, the mothers are portrayed as isolated figures, working within their limited purview. They are dominated by their men-folk, harassed by their in-laws and misunderstood by their daughters. According to Deshpande, the women's operative sensibility becomes an imposition only when the woman faces rigid rules of how she should behave. But if the rules are rigidly laid for her, as a wife or a mother that she should do this and no further, then unhappiness and uneasiness dawns for a woman, Then she finds herself ways to get out of the suffocating relationships. Moreover, the problems of women facing the infidelity of their husbands go unnoticed.

Explorations of Woman's Self

Deshpande's central focus is on gender equality as all her writings strive to suggest small or right changes required for the welfare of not only women but also of men but the thrust is never to reject any social structure or institution. Her desire is to transform or modify which is wished for in her works. In every work she tries to show how women characters are in the clutches of patriarchy in one or the other way, but each one of them tries to break free from patriarchal shackles. The women characters are gleaming as protagonists in her novels.

Conclusion

Deshpande shows how women suffer due to the ruthless behaviour of men who marry them for the sake of their parents without considering the plight of women. Such men in many cases abandon their wives. Like all the women writers who focus their works on gender discrimination Shashi Deshpande too depicts in her works the society's biased treatment towards man and woman. Compromise and sacrifice in the life of a woman do not end with marriage. In fact, they start from marriage. At every stage of her married life, a woman is expected to make some sacrifice. She has to sacrifice her personality for the sake of her motherhood and have as many children as her husband wishes to have. If she refuses to do so, she is looked at as an adamant woman. The looks are so fierce that after some time she on her own starts feeling guilty of her act. The consciousness of guilt will not spare women in whatever they do. If they go against traditions, they feel guilty. Even if they go by traditions, they feel guilty for what they have lost. Deshpande is unconventional in this case and does not feel that marriage and childbirth alone are essential for every woman. Shashi Deshpande has exhibited in her novels current Indian women's scan for these definitions about oneself and society and the relationship that are fundamental to women. Shashi Deshpande's novel arrangements with the theme of the journey for a female identity. The complexities of man-lady relationships particularly with regards to marriage, the injury of an aggravated puberty are highlighted. The Indian lady has for a considerable length of time been a quiet sufferer. While she has assumed diverse jobs as a spouse, mother, sister, and little girl, she has never possessed the capacity to guarantee her very own independence. Shashi Deshpande's novels manage the women belonging to the Indian working class. She manages the internal universe of the Indian women in her novels. She depicts her heroines in a practical way.

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