

Shashi Deshpande's Vision in her novel "Moving on"

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Abstract: Shashi Deshpande has many avatars. At intellectual discussions, she champions the cause of English as an Indian language, and fights for the recognition of women as individuals. She speaks her truth gently but firmly, her words lingering, long after her exit. The present paper projects the fact tale about woman, who speaking for herself or for the whole of womankind is quite different from a man telling a woman's tale Also it brings out the idea of woman explicating herself and emerging out of the cocoon of self pity to spread her wings of self-confidence.

I. Introduction

Shashi Deshpande is an award winning Indian Novelist. She is the second daughter of famous Kannada dramatist and writer shriranga. She was born in 1938 Karnataka and educated in Bombay and Bangalore. She published her first collection, of short stories in 1978, and her first novel. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* in 1980. She is a winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award, for the novel '*That Long Silence*' Her works also includes children's books. Shashi Deshpande's novels present a social world of many complex relationships. 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 the modern, creating unforeseen gaps and disruptions within the family fold. Women's understanding becomes questionable as the old patterns of behavior 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.

Shashi Deshpande an eminent novelist has emerged as a writer possessing deep insight into the female psyche. Focussing 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 women, and between women themselves. Her young heroines rebel against the traditional way of life and patriarchal values. 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 '*The Dark Holds No Terrors*', the life of Sarita who is always neglected and ignored. '*Roots and Shadows*' explores the inner self of Indu, Mini, and Akka and Shashi Deshpande Shows the '*That Long Silence*', Jaya is not a silent and make 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. In the '*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.

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

Starting a Shashi Deshpande novel is like sitting in a railway compartment and resigning oneself to an endless journey into the night of middle-class India. The very proximity of the stranger sitting opposite is disturbing. On top of this, he, or most likely she, is the kind who will stake her territory with carefully rolled bedding, one who would bring out a stainless steel tiffin carrier and insist that you partake of a meal with her. At the same time Deshpande's skill is such that by the end of the journey you are completely enwrapped in the lives of the people that she forces you to contemplate. The very blandness of her characters, the ordinariness with which she anoints them at the outset gradually works in their favor.

Every life, she seems to be telling us, has its own meaning and in the general bleakness, this itself becomes a source of strength. That life is not only a parade of colors and sounding of distant trumpets, as the more flamboyant storyteller has told us, but an examination of the way in which people get on with their lives, one step at a time.

II. Indian women in her novels

In the changing scenario of post colonial Indian society that observed crosscurrents of traditional ideals and newly imported ones, Shashi Deshpande's was burdened with the task of giving then women characters the specific roles that would fit in the socio-cultural modes and values of the changed society. A new generation of women emerged, embracing the changed values according to which women have a voice of their own, a voice that had been suppressed for centuries. These women, who have the capacity to make free choice and need not therefore depend on the choice of the male, are portrayed in the novels of the new generation women novelists. These new women characters are not however the same everywhere dilemmas are exposed accordingly.

In Deshpande's view, when women undertake their journey in pursuit of self-knowledge, they do not start light, "... we are already burdened with a baggage that has been given to us. The fact is that we don't start with a picture of ourselves on a clean slate. Inscribed on it already are things told to us by others that determine our behavior, ideas, expectations and dreams". [1] Simone de Beauvoir's statement, "one is not born a woman, one becomes one", [2] has a special relevance to India where conventions, religious and social taboos dictate and inhibit woman's individuality. Femininity as a cultural construct inscribes the society's views about women. The behavioral patterns for the Indian women are pre-determined by the caste into which one is born and the values and traditions of a culture that upholds archetypal images of woman.

In almost all societies, a woman is culturally assigned norms of behavior in which standards of conduct and decorum set the boundaries for her as external signs of what it means to be seemingly proper and respectable within the differentiated hierarchy called gender. Any form of deviation from prescribed norms or any display of transgressive potential in violation to the ideal image of womanhood makes her an unruly woman to be ostracized by society. As Bartky points out, the situation of woman is such that she, a free and autonomous being, finds herself in a world where she is compelled by man to assume the status of an inferior to whatever man imagines him to be. Women are bound to their oppression, "by male control of the dominant institutions and the dominant ideology..."[3] Hence, in order both to gain equality and to realize their human potential, women must transcend their distinctive femaleness to lead the kind of life men do, in other words, they must be autonomous. Beauvoir exhorts women to achieve autonomy, to discover and nurture their authentic self through lived experience for self-realization. This argument may apply in case of Manjari, as she negotiates many opposed discourses and moves forward in a quest to know who and what she is.

Shashi Deshpande as a writer offers feminist critiques of the patriarchal Indian society. Her art lies in selecting situations with which most Indian women can identify. Her focus is on the woman within marital, domestic relationship. According to Deshpande, there is a sharp division between women's world and men's world, "even today, you'll notice, to insult a man, you say, 'go wear bangles.' Bangles mean identification totally, and absolutely, with a woman". [4] The Binding Vine projects the issue of resistance to such patriarchal ideology. The protagonist Urmila is the voice of resistance in the novel that voices a protest against the patriarchal attitude to the issue of rape. Two forms of gender violence are juxtaposed here in the case of Kalpana and Mira. If Kalpana lying in an unconscious state represents the silenced subaltern, in Mira's poems and diaries, writing itself becomes a mode of resistance. Urmila's account of the incident of Kalpana's rape is loaded with ideological undertones. Shakutai's insistence that the police should not be informed as it will lead to Kalpana's disgrace and exposure is, in reality, an exposure of the societal attitude toward the rape victim and the patriarchal ideology that rape disgraces the victim rather than the culprit.

In the context of the changing world we live in, it has become imperative to do away with separate domains for woman and man and to redefine man-woman relationship as equal and complementary and not on terms of domination and subordination. For Deshpande, "A world without frightened, dependent, trapped, frustrated women is a better world for all of us to live in."[5]

Women have the power to assess and judge their condition and situation. Family is their priority and is of the most important thing but how much the family provides space and freedom to the individual is also a most question. Sometimes it reduces personal space and imposes aspirations and expectations which the individual take as burden in lack of capability to hold it. Rejection by a family can make the individual alienated and rejection of the family lead to feelings of loneliness and guilt.

Shashi Deshpande usually describes Indian women in her novels. Basically, the condition of women in our families. Shashi Deshpande's sincere attempt to break the silence of women has been widely acclaimed in home and abroad. Her clear understanding of human relationship, her close observation of the way of the world, her unbiased attitude to dogmas and movement is really appreciable Shashi Deshpande's novels are extraordinary attempts at exploring the essential aloneness of an individual while simultaneously celebrating the amorphous entity called family, which can by turns be claustrophobic and supportive, her special valued lies in an uncompromising toughness, in her attempts to do what has never been attempted in English, her insistence on being read on her own terms and a refusal to be packaged according to the demands of the market. Deshpande's major concern is to depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated Indian women caught between

patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self-expression, individuality and independence for the women on the other.

Her fiction explores the search of the women to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role as daughter, wife and mother. She has examined a variety of common domestic crisis, which trigger off the search. Deshpande's concern and sympathy are primarily for the woman. While revealing the woman's struggle to secure self-respect and self-identity for herself, the author subtly bares the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by women in our society. The two latest novels of Shashi Deshpande *Moving On* (2004) and *In the Country of Deceit* (2008) – are about single women, one widowed the other unmarried. Both are women who want to be independent, who are living outside joint families or marriage, yet both need to negotiate their emotional and sexual needs. *Moving On* works through contrapuntal narrative voices. First person narration is interleafed with Baba's Diary and emotional situations are woven into the theme of land mafia and childhood friendships, dreams are juxtaposed with hard reality and stories of three generations are heaped one upon the other. Between them they reflect on the art of writing.

III. Her vision in the novel 'Moving on'

Shashi Deshpande's latest novel, *Moving On* was released in Hyderabad recently. *Moving On* is, in many ways, a departure from Deshpande's earlier novels. Here she ventures even deeper into the territory of the mind, dismantling our comfortable notions about the relationships within families. The two voices, distinct and separate, are those of Manjari, the narrator, and Baba, her father. The past is unraveled through Baba's diary that Manjari finds after his death. As Manjari grapples with a challenging present, she reviews the events of the past in the retrospective light of Baba's self-disclosures. While Deshpande confesses she worked hard to give Baba and Manjari their individual voices, she emphasises the futility of segregating past and present.

Moving on is a beautiful example of the wide encompassing of memory as it renders the real fluid, unstable and multiple. Projection into another's reality is an act of empathy and reaching across. If Meher Pestonji opens out the slums for Pervez, Rupa Bajwa walks across to a male protagonist from a lower urban class, through Ramchand, a sari salesman in the Sari Shop, a move which allows her to debate issues like education, class, capitalism and culture. The novel also reveals the secret lives of men and women who love, hate, plot and debate. A father who delights in the human body, its mysteries, its passion, and the knowledge that it contains and conceals. A mother who wields the power of her love mercilessly. A sister separated in childhood. An uncle who plays games of life and death as a member of the Bombay underworld. A passionate love affair that tears the family apart. And a young woman left to make sense of the world and of her own sexuality.

It is a story that begins, conventionally enough, with a woman's discovery of her father's diary. As Manjari, the female protagonist of the novel unlocks the past through its pages, rescuing old memories and recasting events and responses, the present makes its own demands: a rebellious daughter, devious property sharks and a lover who threatens to throw her life out of gear again. The ensuing struggle to reconcile nostalgia with reality and the fire of the body with the desire for companionship races to an unexpected resolution, twisting and turning through complex emotional landscapes.

IV. Role of Manjari as a female Protagonist

Deshpande's novels, featuring female protagonists, reconstruct aspects of women's experience and attempt to give voice to 'muted' ideologies, registering resistance and on her own admission, in her novels she charts, "the inner landscapes of women," [6] where she provides her women characters a context to understand themselves. Deshpande consistently explores the nature of the female world and reconstructs the suppressed records of female experience. She constructs contexts, representing different facets of the trapped female psyche, and attempts to transcend its boundaries. These narratives function as modes of women's experience underlining its resistance and simultaneously subverting it, which opens up a space where the, "marginal comes into being and retains its difference". [7]

Shashi Deshpande's novel *Moving On* also projects the protagonist Manjari as a woman who resists the patriarchal ideology and tries to live her life on her own terms. She displays enormous courage and steadfastness in her decision to give up studying medicine to marry Shyam, and again during such trying moments when it is revealed that her sister Malu is made pregnant by her husband. When Malu dies after giving birth to Sachi, followed by Shyam's suicide, Manjari faces a painful period of struggle and strain. Estranged from family, she grapples with innumerable difficulties to support herself and to survive with her baby son. She turns down Raja's repeated proposals to marry him because she thinks that marriage without the foundation of love and only as a means of social security for a single woman is not acceptable to her.

Manjari shocks Raja, the upholder of patriarchal norms, by learning to drive her car and even trying to run it as a taxi, by installing and operating a computer at home and typing out manuscripts for others as a means of self-employment. When she is threatened by the mafia underworld and subject her to psychological pressure, and then, coerce her to sell out her ancestral home, Manjari disapproves Raja's role of the protecting male in her

life saying: "I want the brakes under my feet, and not someone else's. I don't want a dual control, the control should be mine, mine alone." [8] And later she dismisses the driver, telling him, "I'm quite capable of looking after myself." [9] Manjari's struggle for freedom and for being autonomous is theoretically a challenge to patriarchy, not confronting it headlong but in discovering one's own strength as a woman.

Manjari's is the narrative voice as she journeys twice-over the same ground, first as traveler then as a distant recollector putting the pieces together bit by bit. It is here that the several folds of reality are unfolded as the narrative shifts through the different layers – the visible, the real, the hidden undercurrents of the real – which once they surface alter the perception of those events. *Moving On* has all the elements of a detective story as clues from the past and voices from the inner consciousness come together. A married home comes into being not merely as a branching off but by disrupting the continuity of the parental family. There is resentment, homesickness, replacement. At one point in the novel, Manjari reflects that the difference between fission and fusion is immense; it is the difference between harmony and chaos.

V. Various other aspects of her novel

During the survey of her novels various aspects and various dimensions of familial relationships emerge, there are mother daughter, father-daughter, brother-sister relationship with in-laws, but the much focused one is husband-wife relationship which is the foundation and base of family from where many new relations start taking shape and develop. The joint family of character is full of many more relationships uncle-aunt both paternal and maternal, their children and relation with them, the grand children's relation with their grandparents etc. But these relationships have been portrayed in a very realistic and transparent way, not always happy but full of sadness too. A family, has to live both with sorrow and happiness because it is inevitable, nobody can escape it and what kind of impact it leaves in the individual and his/her further life.

Shashi Deshpande's writings hold a universal appeal that clearly emanates from her rootedness in everyday India - a society in which we breathe and a culture to which we belong. At the Taj Krishna where her latest novel *Moving On* was launched, the writer shared her feelings and perceptions with astuteness and creativity. With her uncanny insights into the nature of human relationships and an equally unerring eye for detail, Deshpande in her latest novel, ventures further than she ever has into the terrain of the mind, teasing out the nuances and exploding the structure of familial bonds. "A novel in two voices, *Moving On* was like an unexpected pregnancy. And like a late child it is filled with surprise."

Deshpande's novels are specific, modernizing women even in their traditional milieu. Critics have said that *Moving On* will widen women's space. This is remarkable for this one time homemaker whose demeanor hardly betrays her strong convictions.

These novels raise significant issues about the nature of reality, which is never of the same kind. Writers have been criticized for their preoccupation with the real, and the unstated assumption is that creativity has to take us into higher zones of imagination. But the fictional world takes in many realms. Even as it works with history, memory and the past, even as it shapes nostalgia into a narrative, or projects the world into future time, it works with 'reality' and uses it in different ways such as experiential narratives, detailed description of landscapes, recreating visual memories reflecting concern with environment, coalescing several events together and integrating them, psychological realism which works with human emotions and responses, and at some point it also shifts into fantasy and other imaginary constructs, which do not fall into magic realism. Recurring dreams, psychological fears, even memory, which by its nature is selective and differently perceived by different people, are real enough in themselves, but nevertheless they disrupt the realistic narrative.

In Shashi Deshpande's novels, we can find the variety of characters too. In Deshpande's literary world there are characters taken from almost all the sections of life. They are medical practitioners and writers, educated housewives, uneducated ones and maidservants. Besides poverty, bereavement and such other common adversities, there are some causes of suffering exclusively for the female. Deshpande renders with sympathetic understanding the variety of suffering a woman has to undergo. Sometimes the suffering is attached to the social taboos, and sometimes the women are silenced in the name of family honor, and are compelled to digest torture.

VI. Conclusion

Shashi Deshpande has presented in her novels modern Indian women's search for these definition about the self and society and the relationship that are central to women. Shashi Deshpande's novel deals with the theme of the quest for a female identity. The complexities of man-woman relationship specially 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. 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.

Through myth and modernity, Shashi has held her own, proving an icon to younger writers. With tremendous feeling, she pleads: "You've got to read women's writing differently. If you're going to say this is

only a story about a kitchen, and belittle it for that, that's stupid. It's about a human being trying to place herself within relationships, people, and ideas."

In her conversation with Gita Viswanath, Shashi Deshpande opines, "we are shaped by our childhood and our parents".[10] Deshpande bares the subtle processes of oppression and gender differentiation operative within the institution of the family and the male-centered Indian society at large. Deshpande's feminism does not uproot the woman from her background but tries to expose the different ideological elements that shape her. These include social and psychological factors such as, woman's subordinate position in the family and her restricted sexuality. The author seeks to expose the ideology by which a woman is trained to play her subservient role in society. Her novels eclectically imply the postmodern technique of deconstructing patriarchal culture and customs, and reveal these to be man-made constructs.

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