

STUDY OF FEMINISM PERSPECTIVE IN POST-COLONIAL WRITINGS: EXPLORING SHASHI DESHPANDE'S FICTION

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ABSTRACT

The postcolonial has been described as an act of rereading and an approach that offers us different perspectives on issues related to colonialism. As a critical concept, it recovers resistance of various kinds and attempts to explain the presence of the silenced voice in any dominant discourse and makes it possible to tease out various readings of a textual narrative. Postcolonial criticism draws attention to issues of cultural difference in literary texts and focuses on issues of gender, class and caste. It illustrates that the strategies of marginalization are used even in other power structures and the dominant even in the postcolonial context make the strategic use of stereotypes in order to control and subjugate the other in terms of gender, class and caste.

Key words: Postcolonial, criticism, power

INTRODUCTION

Born in 1938, in the small town of Dharwad, Shashi Deshpande is the daughter of the late Adya Rangachar Sriranga, the famous Kannada playwright. She was educated in Bombay and Bangalore, and acquired an M.A in English from the Mysore University. Besides the novels and short stories, Deshpande has also published several children's books in English and written in the screenplay for the Hindi feature film *Drishti*. She began writing rather late in life, at her father's insistence. In 1969, inspired by a visit to England, she wrote and published an account of her English experiences. Since then, her short stories have been appearing regularly in popular magazines. Her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* was published in 1980, followed by *If I Die Today* in 1982. *Roots and Shadows* and *Come up and Be Dead* were published in 1983. While *Roots and Shadows* won the Thirumathi Rangammal prize for the best Indian novel of 1982-83, *That Long Silence* published by the Virago feminist Press in 1988 fetched her, the Sahitya Akademi award for 1990. Her last published novel so far, *A Matter of Time* appeared in 1996. Her short stories have been collected and published in four volumes: *The Legacy and Other Stories* (1978), *It was Dark and Other Stories* (1986) and *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1986).

No Work has been done on this aspect of Shashi Deshpande so I propose this study. The word Feminism has come to mean a movement in support of the principle that women should have the same rights as men have. However, it must be understood in its broadest sense as referring to an intense awareness of the identity of women and interest in their problems. Its meaning should not be restricted to the advocacy of women's rights. A woman plays different roles in her life-as a daughter, sister, wife and mother. Even than she has a lower position in society. She also wants equal rights in legal, economic and social affairs. The principles of feminism were articulated long ago.

Western culture has always been progressive. In the late 1960s, feminism emerged in Europe and America. It was a movement started to revive the political and social issues, associated with

women's actual participation in western culture. Since 18th century there has been a continuous agitation for women's rights in social, economic and cultural freedom and gender equality. Mary Wollstone Craft is one of the earliest agitationers, who fought for women's liberty. She, in her well known book, *Women in the 17th Century*, shows how women have been marginalized in society. Onwards, imitating Wollstone Craft and Margaret Fuller, J.S. Mill wrote a pamphlet entitled, *The Subjection of Will*.

It shows the will of the writer to seek for more equality and greater freedom for women. Virginia Woolf contributed a lot for the explosive development of Anglo-American feminist criticism. In the 20th Century, published in 1927, her epoch making work, *A Room Of One's Own* as well as other essays and papers state all about the women's economic, cultural, social and educational status in the Present times. She is the first to use the term Patriarchal Value which must be fought against. She is the first major feminist writer who devoted to patriarchal and gender values and presented women in literature. In fact, in her case the political feminism has turned into a literate feminism.

The candle of emancipation of women was enlightened by the British rules. One feels grateful to their saintly thinking and foresight, for their patronage and encouragement of women's education and rights. Leaders and reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and a host of other luminaries rendered yeoman service for the upliftment of women. They all played their role like angels in the life of women by showing the right way of education for women in India. Even after Independence, the position of women-economic, social and cultural-in almost every part of Indian society remains far from reassuring. A vast majority of women in families, outside the pale of civilized society, are reconciled to a life of humiliation in the form of gender-bias while performing the roles of wife and mother in the custom-bound rigidity that they live in. But what is shockingly true is that even women with liberal modern education, with an irrepressible yearning to break loose from the time honoured crippling and iniquitous social laws condemning women to a role subordinate to that of men, do often lose their mooring and find themselves in perilously embarrassing situations due to a variety of reasons. It is true that to know the culture of a country, literature helps as it reflects the true images because literature is the stone house of information. The role of the writer is to feel the pulse of society to know its sickness and suggest such cures as are in consonance with its culture.

Feminists argue that literature all along has been turned to the point of view of the male element. Women is often 'marginalized' and 'repressed' in literary work. An idealized image of woman is presented in literature concealing the bitter reality of her position in patriarchal society. The emergence of women novelist has considerably influenced Indian life and society. The depiction of women reflects a shift in the sensibility of the writers as well as the reader.

Shashi Deshpande has emerged as an outstanding novelist on the literary scene. As one who has taken up the women's cause most ardently, She represents India and contemporary Indian literature, especially in the English speaking world, with great distinction. Acclaimed by the reading public, decorated by the Sahitya Akjademi and other literary organizations, she is regarded as a forceful writer, with an excellent command over English language and her constant dialogue. She has an instinctive love for reading and writing. She is the daughter of eminent Kannada dramatist and Sanskrit scholar, Sriranga. Born in Dharwad, a small city of Karnataka in 1938, she moved to Mumbai later, where she completed her graduation. Then she moved to Bangalore where she obtained a degree in Law. Subsequently, she took a course in journalism and for a brief period worked for a magazine. She was married to a doctor and now lives in Bangalore.

In Indian writing, Shashi Deshpande is a famous woman novelist. Her career began in 1970. Her initial career displays her as a short story teller. Several volumes of her stories have been published. She wrote four books for the children also. She loved the volumes of Somerset Maugham but it was just a 'passion prose'. She enjoyed reading Dickens and Tolstoy. Bronte sisters, Jane Austen, Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing were favourites with her. She approaches contemporary Indian novelist with an open mind. Her being, as a feminist critic, is quite obvious in almost every work. She concerns herself with the plight of the modern Indian woman trying to understand herself and to preserve her identity as a wife, mother and above all as a human being.

This proposed study is based on the evaluation of Shashi Deshpande's novels with a view to exploring content and context of feminism in post - colonial writings. Her novels are rich with distinctive modernist characteristics. She has described the dilemma of modern educated and working women who boldly refused to lead a dependent life.

Shashi Deshpande has provided much needed focus on the fact that even after a span of half-a century of independence, Indian women are still entangled in turmoil associated with their gender. Shashi Deshpande's writing holds universal appeal that clearly emanates from her rootedness in everyday Indian life and especially in the culture to which we belong and which we breathe developed under the colonial conditions or imperial power-keeping this point in mind Shashi Deshpande weaves her plot around her themes very carefully and consciously her novels have all women protagonists and reveal her sincerity and ability in voicing the concerns of the urban educated middle class women in terms of gender discrimination.

Feminism is a struggle against the female oppression in a male dominated society and Shashi Deshpande's writings present a forceful voice to call women to rise against the injustice done to them through ages. Among most of the Indian women novelists, Deshpande is one who has brought about various aspects of interpersonal relationship most forcefully. She also brings out powerfully the psychological aspects women's living in post-colonial world and presents them artistically without crossing the barriers of art.

The writings of Post – colonial time deal with pressing matter of language, race, gender, and history. It is the purpose of this study to show how the Post-colonial writings raise the gender issues and introduce the readers new and exciting language, text and narrative. The term, implies a shift of perspective on the parts of both the writers and readers. During this era, the Indian women dominated the political scene and defined their roles as powerful entities.

Shashi Deshpande holds great worth as an Indian English Woman novelist. She is the only Indian women novelist to have made bold attempts at giving a voice to the disappointments and frustrations of women despite her vehement denial of being a feminist.

Shashi Deshpande believes that problems of women can be solved not only feminist by adhering to any particular feminist theory between men and women without being hostile to the male dominated order but by concentrating on and nurturing positive relationship.

In *The Dark Holds No Terror*, The novelist has brought her women protagonists as successful characters who have to enter new relationships with their husbands.

Shashi Deshpande in her next novel, *That Long Silence* presents a sensitive portrayal of Indian womanhood treading the labyrinthine paths of human mind with a rare gift for sharp psychological insights into subtleties of the female supported with rich evocation unassuming and pretentious style.

The novel is a welcome step towards restoring normalcy and happiness in the family.

Through the streams of consciousness technique, the novelist, makes it quite clear that even in the upper middle class the inherent value of intelligent and capable women is affected by social and marital status, the society treats her as an object or as a possession never as an individual.

In the novel, *The Binding Vine* the novelist has brought out a normal analysis of several tragedies in the life of different women. The novel is a multiple misunderstanding among women characters particularly between mothers and daughters causing miseries and unhappiness to several intimately related women in their families.

Her latest novel, *Moving on* is a detour. It is a journey from within to without and from without to within. It is seen and understood that SELF is never free. Thus, the question of selfhood and autonomy becomes problematic issue in the novel. Manjari in her many acts of violation has sought freedom, and autonomy. The struggle for autonomy is still vital for women, as an ideal to be achieved.

Feminism in India has been closely related to Post-colonialism, nationalism and westernization. Therefore, feminism in Indian English Writing is primarily a product of western education and enlightenment.

Feminism and post modernism clearly do share many concerns as they each develop from women's movement in 1960s and onwards. In *Come Up and Be Dead*, Shashi Deshpande shows how the very fabric of Interpersonal relationships is set at naught by those who suffer from the degeneration of human values and who allow themselves to be a puppet in the hands of social evil.

Extensive research has been done on the writings of Shashi Deshpande's fictions. However, more research is required to reestablish the novelist as a feminist writer and to bring about the post-colonialism, modernism and western education.

The research material has been taken from her novels as Primary source and critical opinions on them as secondary sources.

Deshpande's novels are concerned with a woman's quest for self; and an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonists place in it.

The most challenging task before the Indian English novelists has been the writings of their works in the Indian language. Like the other Indian English writers, Shashi Deshpande also writes in this medium to give voice to women's voice.

Shashi Deshpande through her writings, brings out the fact that Indian women have finally recognized their strength and are gradually rejecting the constricting conventional norms. She advocated total independence for women which should pervade their thoughts, expressions and actions.

Deshpande's novels deal with various social, marital and professional problems faced by women and their intense desire to overcome them. Madhu, the female protagonists of *Small Remedies* is no exception to it. The novelist projects that women should realize that there are small remedies in terms of love, affection and memories.

In *Binding Vine*, the novelist has projected the problems of working women. She points out that working women are overburdened by both the responsibilities of job and family. The novelist has also discussed the ugly fact of sexual harassment of working women by their male colleagues.

Deshpande has exposed the psychology of girl child. She is the only contemporary Indian English writer who has expressed deep concern about the sexual exploitation of women not only in the society, but also within the family frame.

Deshpande uses an alternating first person and third person voice to present what she calls a double perspective, the past and the present in the continuous interplay and overlap. The novelist in *A Matter of Time* feels, life must be lived forwards, but it can only be understood backwards. She advises women to develop self-awareness.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Though good numbers of studies have been done on the novels of Shashi Deshpande yet a lot remains to be explored so far as the search for identity of Feminism In Post-Colonial Writings in her novels and study of the element of feminism.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To study experiences faced by the feminism in post-colonial writing in the novels of Shashi Deshpande.
- To study the experience of Exploring Shashi Deshpande's Fictions on the future generations have to be summed up and introspected and documented completely.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

With a cultural research methodology, my aim is to demonstrate search for identity of feminism in post-colonial writing in Shashi Deshpandes novels. I have taken recourse to the following methods:

- Eliciting the Literary material on the fiction of Shashi Deshpandes from the study of books and treatises of erudite scholars available for the study of the researcher.
- The study of various newspapers in English in India and abroad
- By inviting valued opinions of critics and scholars at present living in India and abroad to authenticate my research.

CONCLUSION

In Deshpande's novel grief gives way to shock, to anger but ultimately Deshpande asserts that it is love and sympathetic understanding that enables us to grapple with life's problems. In the context of Shashi Deshpande however, post colonialism cannot be used in a reductionist manner only typifying "subaltern", "hybridity", "nation and narration". A post colonial reading of Shashi Deshpande's novels makes us realize that heterogeneity is implicitly basic to post colonialism. This paper places Shashi Deshpande and thus a Third World Woman's texts in a non-conformist groove, thus reading her differently. She defies monolithic conventions even of post-coloniality as she does the Euro-American criteria about women. Her subjects at times remain ambivalent, not coherent although sharing other registral affinities- they are both victims and agents, agents of change who bring about a change in the stereo typed image of womanhood. Even in similarity her characters are different from the Euro-centric norms. They do not feel shy to uphold their difference. Deshpande not only deals with the topic of women as marginalized figures, but also implicitly examines the concept of authenticity and audience in fiction written by women. Thus Deshpande, in her novels, has created for us an "imaginative female historiography" (Palkar 23), which attempts to fill in the gaps found in Third World/Indian/Postcolonial women's social and cultural history.

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