



---

## Shashi Deshpande: Feminism in her Narratives

<sup>1</sup>Reecha sinha, <sup>2</sup>Dr Syed razahaider

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of English, YBN University, Ranchi, Jharkhand

<sup>2</sup>Assistant professor, School of Arts & Humanities, YBN University, Ranchi, Jharkhand

### **Abstract:**

Shashi Deshpande holds a significant position among the current female novelists interested in women's issues and their search for identity and uniqueness. Shashi Deshpande brilliantly portrays a troubled but bold feminine psyche in the new ethos. Hers is an honest, moving account of middle-class, educated women exploited in a traditionally patriarchal society. The fact that her protagonists are determined to explore the globe is encouraging. Shashi Deshpande gives the Indian interpretation of the modern woman who seeks the entirety of her identity rather than pieces of it, deliberately avoiding the Western feminists' concept of emancipation. So, in a manner, Shashi Deshpande is a more imaginative feminist who is also more politically and culturally informed. Shashi Deshpande gives marriage a prominent role in her book *The Binding Vine*. The oldest institution in human society is marriage. Social discipline and a sense of security are dependent on it. However, this organisation has recently come under criticism. She defends it while simultaneously exposing its flaws. To help women change their perceptions of themselves and learn what is important to them, Shashi Deshpande reinterprets the myths and truths about women in Indian society in a meaningful and original way. Her writing, a form of archaeological investigation from which discoveries are made, is the result of a strong engagement with the culture in which she lives. She opposes preconceptions and challenges the beliefs that have influenced how people perceive women in each storey.

**KeyWords:**Feminism,Inferior,Subordinate,Patriarchy,Marriage.



---

### **Introduction:**

Women writers who expressed their experiences through their writing are regarded to have contributed significantly to Indian literature published in English. They discussed the experiences of women, the home, and suffering. Thanks to their talent for storytelling and effectively portraying the connections between modern and old ways of life, they greatly succeeded in experimenting with various things at times, making them all stand out in every manner. Their fiction can convey a distinct point of view on the world. Although many notable individuals have worked for years to elevate literature to its current state, women's writing is now regarded as a major and significant modernist medium. It is well known that authors like Kamala Markandeya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, and Shashi Deshpande write excellent fiction. Her contribution to Indian English literature is the main theme of Shashi Deshpande's fiction. Shashi Deshpande successfully created her identity and left her mark on the household, detective, and children's fiction by emphasising young readers' excitement, mystery, and playfulness. Her home novels primarily focus on middle-class women's struggles and issues in a patriarchal culture. Her detective stories, however, deal with Additionally, Shashi Deshpande is a well-known Indian woman novelist who does a fantastic job of capturing the psychological issues and mental traumas experienced by the female protagonists. She is aware of modern reality since her novels depict the struggles of educated women, identity crises, emotional conflict and misery, and marital discontent and despair. Shashi Deshpande has established herself as a major literary force in the literary world. In her writings, she presents a realistic portrait of modern middle-class women, and most of the overt themes in her novels are comparable to those of contemporary European and American women's fiction, particularly in how she describes the different stages of a woman's life. Women authors by name, as one contemporary Indian scholar, Hatini Nafisca, put it, "are writers by name."

Feminism, in its broadest sense, refers to the 1960s-era new woman's movement. This movement focused on women's experiences and their place in the sexual hierarchy, and it tacitly as well as overtly challenged the idea that women were "inferior" or "defective" (according to Aristotle), "passive," and "subordinate" to males. Feminists questioned the



---

presumptive ness of compartmentalising a woman’s essence as a homemaker, a mother, and a stationary presence in stark contrast to the stereotypes of masculinity, male strength, wanderlust, and aggression. They also questioned the assumptions that women are secondary to men as the primary actors in society. The feminists pinpoint patriarchy as the cause of this “sexist” attitude. The patriarchy is “probably the most widespread ideology of our civilisation and supplies its most fundamental understanding of power,” claims Kate Millett in her seminal research (*Sexual Politics* 25). According to Millett’s methodology, feminists have politicised traditional critical techniques, and it is based on this development that feminist criticism has emerged as a distinct field of literary study. Feminism does not seek to offer alternate definitions of woman/man, masculinity/femininity, and male/female since it rejects any essentialisation as a patriarchal strategy for maintaining an oppressive order. In other words, modern feminism is pro-woman without attempting to replace patriarchy with matriarchy. It is anti-patriarchy but not anti-man. Its goal as a critical strategy is to expose how patriarchy appropriates texts that are supposed to be “neutral” and “objective” to maintain its voice in the face of potential opposition. Women writers whose works have been mostly ignored by literary canons worldwide have been uncovered by feminist critics.

### **Feminism in Shashi Deshpande’s Narratives**

“Shashi Deshpande has established herself as one of India’s top female authors, winning praise for her intricate, perceptive, and accurate depiction of Indian middle-class women in the home” (P 196).

She was inspired to write by Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf and enjoyed reading Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens. Her writings typically focus on Indian women’s turbulence, agitation, and use of silence as communication. Since her fiction is centred on women and feminine consciousness has become the central theme of her works, she is endowed with the ability to perceive everyday situations with intelligence and insight because she is deeply entrenched in the culture in which she lives. It won’t be long before this feminine joins the ranks of “feminists,” though not Marxist or Lesbian feminists, because her feminism is peculiarly Indian in that it is tied to



---

the plight of women caught between two poles: Tradition and Modernity, between family and career, culture and nature, and she combines “Humanism” and “Feminism” in her fictional world. One of the most influential social, cultural, and political movements in modern North America is feminism, which has challenged male orthodoxies regarding women’s abilities and roles and emerged as a topic of great importance in current thought. In the 1970s and 1980s, the second wave of feminism became visible. The 1980s saw the emergence of feminism, a school of thought centred on the fight for women’s equality. The feminist objective of equality with males has experienced major development in recent years. The historical and political fight for equal rights has emphasised the importance of women just as they are. Women have equal importance as people in their own right. Feminism, according to Linda Garden, “is an investigation of human subordination to figure out how to change it” (sign 8). Feminist criticism, which fought against the exclusion of women, originated as a part of the women’s liberation movement. The movement gave feminist criticism its momentum.

One of the most significant Indian novelists who write in English is Shashi Deshpande. She was born with a rare literary bent of mind. She also grew as she gained life and reading experience, carving out a place for herself among current Indian English novelists for her fictional concerns and artistic endeavours. Her novels are readable because of her language’s clarity and spontaneity. Her major contribution is in depicting the struggles, problems, and trials faced by Indian women from the middle class, particularly those who are educated and have chosen careers. Using copious amounts of oriental mysticism, Shashi Deshpande does not reveal any tendency or covert intention to sell India overseas. The individual’s psychological environment is a significant empirical canvas for her to work on. Through the many female characters, Shashi Deshpande delicately illustrates how society views women’s suffering, lack of voice, and subordination. But she also demonstrates how societal perception has changed. For instance, Urmi has more options than her predecessors, Mira, Akka, or Inni. Writer Shashi Deshpande does not identify as a feminist. She nevertheless has a genuine concern for women and calls attention to social mores that are harmful to women’s advancement. She identifies as a feminist in this way. She claims in an interview that “I consider myself to be a feminist because



---

I believe that there should be a world where all humans have a place. We are two parts of the same species, and there is neither superior nor inferior” (The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande 254). She affirms that everyone has “inherent potential” and finds it upsetting when society discriminates against women. She supports Sati and believes it is a loss when a girl is born and a gain when a male is. All of these issues are related to the issue of women, some of which are addressed in this book. Unlike Dr. Bhaskar and Kalpana’s father, men aren’t present in *The Binding Vine* (1993). The father of Kalpana appears and disappears like a shadow, and Dr. Bhaskar only has a small part to play. Despite these realities, men are depicted in compelling ways. This book’s three major female protagonists experience indirect harm due to their male partners. Other women are directly harmed, including Sulu, Akka, Inni, Shakutai, and Akka. As a result, Shashi Deshpande imagines a world where men are in charge, and women are silent. If they speak up, they suffer as Kalpana did. Amrut, Urmi’s brother, is, nonetheless, portrayed favourably.

Urmi serves as the spokesperson for the suffering women and stands in for the new woman. She provides them with voices. She fights for Kalpana when her family tells her to stay away, challenges Dr. Bhaskar and the police officer, and, most importantly, persuades Shakutai to allow the case to be documented. Shakutai is worried that the community will criticise them because she is more familiar with her society than Urmi. In one respect, she is correct. The stigma will harm Sandhya’s prospects. Deshpande expertly demonstrates how social ideals function. The woman is usually to fault in situations like this. No one brings up Prabhakar. Even his whereabouts are a mystery to us.

The main subject is Kalpana. Shakutai accuses her of dressing garishly and drawing attention from men; Sulu believes she should have consented to marry Prabhakar. She is viewed as frivolous by the police officer and everyone else, and some even make suggestions that she might be “professional.” Only Urmi is on her side. The stories of Mira and Kalpana merge in Urmi’s mind. In both cases, a woman’s right to her body is paramount. Mira expresses her feelings through her diaries and poems. Despite not having a voice, she can express her innermost thoughts and feelings in her poetry. Her urge to communicate her feelings is so met.



---

Urmi hopes to publish these verses because her poems have strong feminist themes. She points out that women like Mira had a voice but were never allowed to speak up. “Never had they a chance. It’s not just at all; it’s unfair. Additionally, we cannot continue to cover up what occurred to them indefinitely out of fear of ridicule” (The Binding Vine 174). When describing the Shakutai-Kalpana relationship, Shashi Deshpande takes the topic of mother-daughter relationships to a new level. The girl doesn’t treat her mother with much respect. She disregards her mother’s advice and goes against it, dressing up, going out, and picking the boy she wants to marry. After the sex happens, her mother regrets everything. She laments as well, not having grasped Prabhakar’s intentions. However, there is no way to remedy the injustice at this time. On the shaky foundation of miscommunication, the mother-daughter relationship sinks.

Indian women’s unique and dismal situation, in which their human rights are denied by traditional society, has been revealed by Shashi Deshpande. In traditional society, women are expected to be vassals. Their sense of self and individuality is continually diminished in this way. The feminism of Shashi Deshpande discusses the legal and social independence of women. Women won’t be able to recover from their deprived state unless they are accepted in society as real beings. Indeed, even financially independent women find that conventionalism and advancement have broken apart their lives. Shashi Deshpande, an Indian, has meticulously and incisively uncovered the Indian social structure and the conventional expectations for its women. She has depicted white-collar class, educated, evolved Indian women trying to rediscover their identity and repair family links. Each of her books features female heroines caught up in the varied intricacies of married life and the relationships they seek.

**Conclusion:**

Shashi Deshpande strives to represent feminine reason in her works. Like males, women need freedom in all facets of their methodology and acceptance in life. They engage in extensive political activism supporting women’s rights and equality. They stress the significance of how people perceive women in general. The novels by Shashi Deshpande portray women’s basic interactions and the search for these definitions of self and society by modern Indian women—the plots of Shashi Deshpande’s novels centre on developing a female identity. The Indian





---

woman has been a silent sufferer for a very long time. She has worked in various roles as a wife, mother, sister, and young child, but she has never been able to ensure her independence. In his works, Shashi Deshpande discusses women from the Indian working class. In her writings, she controls the inner world of Indian women. She gives her heroines realistic portrayals. The excerpt above from one of the creator's expositions accurately captures Shashi Deshpande, who is known in literary circles for capturing the everyday life of an average Indian woman. Deshpande is adamant that finding her voice meant more than just finding a female voice; it meant finding her own literary voice. Without the demeanour of intriguing components fermented in her style that is distinguished by the absence of flashiness or literary completion, there is no enchantment of authenticity, no concessions to "Attractiveness," no themes or circumstances that cater to a presumed Western audience, and no adjusting her style to what an objective readership may prefer. She had been writing covertly on human pickles for the preceding thirty years. She has balanced tradition and modernity, emphasising that "real modernism is just an enrichment of tradition, and an extending of its limits" (Chand 99). In other words, Shashi Deshpande is caught between tradition and modernity as he stands at the intersection of two highways.

#### **REFERENCES:**

1. Deshpande Shashi (1993). *The Binding Vine*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
2. Millett Kate (1969). *Sexual Politics*. London: Virgo.
3. Pathak R.S. (ed.) (1998). *The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande*. New Delhi: Prestige.
4. Deshpande, Shashi 'The Dark Holds No Terror' New Delhi: Penguin books 1980
5. Dhawan, R.K. (ed). *Indian Women Novelists* New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1991. Prints.
6. MuktaAtrey, VineyKirpal (1991). *Shashi Deshpande: A Feminist Study of Her Fiction* B. R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi 1991.
7. Suman Bala (2001). *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* (New Delhi: Khosla Publishing House, 2001), p. 127.