

## TRANSITION OF INDIAN WOMAN IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVELS

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### ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande is a prominent Indian novelist dealing with women's position in the family and society. It is the uniqueness of Shashi Deshpande to represent the majority of Indian women who are at the cross roads between tradition and modernity. Shashi Deshpande depicts the gallery of many Indian women, of flesh and blood. The women characters are grouped under the two contrary banners - 'traditional' and 'modern'. Shashi Deshpande has provided the impact of the patriarchal tradition on the modern Indian woman. She also explicates the social reality through the words of her protagonists. The new Indian woman has been analysing her position in the family and society. She reasserts her state in the institution of family. The novels of Shashi Deshpande has the protagonists as the new woman who are analysing their present position with the traditional rules and they search for their 'whole identity' from the heap of different images. Shashi Deshpande has discussed the transition of new woman in her novels such as *That Long Silence*, *Roots and Shadows*, *The Binding Vine*, *A Matter of Time*, and *Moving on*. The analysis of the new women in Shashi Deshpande has deliberated the intellectual, emotional and psychological growth. Besides their socio economical positions in the society, they are eager to maintain the relationships in the family. They are always victorious not vanquished in their problems. the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande seek a harmony within traditional social setup.

**KEYWORDS:** Transition, Patriarchal Rules, Modernity, Family, Human Relationships, Reconciliation

### INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande is a prominent Indian novelist dealing with women's position in the family and society. India as a land of tradition has the significant impact on the psyche of every Indian woman. The present day education as well as Western ideas creates a new channel in the minds of Indian woman now a days. The novels of Shashi Deshpande have portrayed the clear picture of the disturbed feminine psyche because of the conflict between modernity and the age-old tradition. It is the uniqueness of Shashi Deshpande to represent the majority of Indian women who are the modern in appearance but traditional in attitude. These modern women are not totally modern as they cannot shake off the tradition that is insisted by the society. Her novels display the sincere picture of the unseen gaps in the human relationships because of this transition.

Shashi Deshpande depicts the gallery of many Indian women, of flesh and blood. The women characters are grouped under the two contrary banners - 'traditional' and 'modern'. Every protagonist of Shashi Deshpande is an educated, middle class Indian woman, who is in the cross roads to take up modernity and tradition. The novelist focuses on the subservient position of women in the family. It is to be noted that the patriarchal rules of the society are well explicit through the characters. The novels give importance to the human relationship in the family and the protagonists are in the position to maintain the relationships in a better way. Every novel of Shashi Deshpande presents an array of women characters in the family. The old tradition has been handed over to the new generation through the mother or mother figure

in the family. Though the new woman is not ready to accept the tradition, the patriarchal rules are indirectly insisted by the father or husband. Shashi Deshpande has provided the impact of the patriarchal tradition on the modern Indian woman. She also explicates the social reality through the words of her protagonists.

The tradition presents the image of an ideal woman with the qualities such as self-sacrifice, patience, total submission and silent suffering. The new woman is rational and is rebel against the 'ideal' image of woman. She is not ready to follow the tradition blindly. From ages, the Indian woman is viewed without any identity of her own, and she must be valued as someone's mother, daughter or wife in the family. The new woman has the career as a separate image of herself. The traditional image and her image in the family along with her image in her career make the woman a heap of images. The new Indian woman has to define her whole 'identity' combining the bits of images. When the new woman is thus pulled between tradition and modernity, the transition takes place after the self-assertion. The new Indian woman has the ability to think over her position in the family and society. She reasserts her state in the institution of family. The novels of Shashi Deshpande have the protagonists as the new woman who are analysing their present position with the traditional rules and their search for their 'whole identity' from the heap of different images.

The novelist deals with the socio-economical milieu of Indian society through her settings. The post-colonial Indian society is presented with the crosscurrents of the traditional ideals along with the newly imported ones. The women of Shashi Deshpande represent the plight of women in the changed society, the socio-cultural changes are to be noted in the transitional feminine character who try to balance both tradition and modernity in their images.

The new woman characters try to realise their whole image when they start analysing their past and the present status in the family. The family itself is considered as a trap to control women within their limits. The career on the contrary has been treated as an outlet to reach new horizons. The family and the other relationships get them back into the trap. In the society the position of a career woman is valued only based on her position in the family not on that of her career. A woman is valuable in the Indian society when she is a part of a family as mother, wife or daughter. This is important than their position as doctor, lawyer or teacher, etc. The traditional views make the women to wear the 'identity' assigned to them. They have to analyse the real 'identity' within themselves. The break in the routine work gives the opportunity to think over the present and the past. The novels of Shashi Deshpande have presented her protagonists away from their daily routine and they are given a break from their present. The new environments make the protagonists to be free and to assert themselves.

The novels of Shashi Deshpande have explored the search of Indian woman to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of her traditional rules. The protagonists are finding new ways to tackle their problems in the family and society. They are dealing with their problems without running from them. They are trying to find the solutions within themselves. The balanced and practical approach is the base of their attitude towards their problems. They also understand that the permanent solution is possible only with the change of attitude in the other sex not in the destruction of the male. Thus the human relationship is to be revived and rejuvenated. Shashi Deshpande has discussed the transition of new woman in her novels such as *That Long Silence*, *Roots and Shadows*, *The Binding Vine*, *A Matter of Time*, and *Moving on*.

*That Long Silence* depicts the life of a traditional woman Jaya, who is the subservient wife of Mohan. She has the dream of her career in creative writing but the decisions are made only by her husband. The financial crisis of her husband in the office makes them to retreat to a simple flat where Jaya finds enough time to analyse her 'identity'. The self-realisation of Jaya comes out when she thinks of the image of 'a pair of bullocks yoked together'. The husband and the

wife have to be like those 'bullocks' but they are tied together mechanically not emotionally. The relationship in a family also becomes mechanical not emotional. Jaya always thinks for her words which are acceptable to Mohan. She has not been ready to disturb her marital life in danger by saying anything against his will. She is ready hear her husband's words to give up her writing. she has cut off the parts of her 'identity' which are not fit for the image of herself as assigned by her husband. she sheds her identity in the identity of her husband. but she realises that this false identity is not real. the self analysis after being deserted by her husband makes her to think over her position in the family. She decides to break her silence after seventeen years and she thereafter speaks of her thought as it is. She makes her mind to take up her creative writing seriously as it is the artistic expression of her real identity. Jaya achieves her whole image not only in family but in her career also. The novels finds the way out for the traditional woman- breaking the silence.

Roots and Shadows presents the rebellious Indu who is against the tradition and the patriarchal rules of the society. Her marriage brings her back to a trap. Jayant her husband is modern in appearance but traditional in behaviour. in order to maintain her family relationships Indu decides to follow the instructions of her husband in every facet of her life. Her career as a journalist has been very dull and she wants to take up writing as her career but her husband is not ready to support her. When Indu becomes the hire of the whole property she revives her confidence and tries to implement her decision without anyone's suggestions. She decides how to spend money for her cousin's marriage. when she says that she is going to write her own book, Jayant comes forward to publish her book. The tradition fades away as the modern ideas are implemented. The economical status of a woman is important in making her personality.

The Binding Vine is a novel dealing with the violence against women because of the male lust. The novel gives the victims, Mira and Kalpana. Of these two, Mira is raped in the name of marriage, Kalpana by a male of her own family. Urmi the protagonist has been a lecturer in the college. She has been suffering a personal loss after the death of her child daughter. She meets the mother of Kalpana, a rape victim. She finds the incident has been changed totally as a car accident by the male-dominated society. She is shocked to find the mother finds fault with Kalpana. She takes the case to the media and helps to find the culprit. Urmi has the opportunity to read poems of her mother-in-law Mira, marital rape victim. The suffering soul of an Indian woman in the institute of family is explicit in the poems of Mira. Urmi comes out with clear idea about the human relationships as the love is the binding vine which helps to move on in our life.

A Matter of Time, depicts the three women of three generation in the family. The different ways they adopted to tackle their problems are discussed in the novel. Sumi the protagonist is deserted by her husband, Gopal. Bearing the humiliation of the society, she tries to cope up with life to bring her dauhgters up. There is another one important character Kalyani who is sent back to her parental house because she has lost her son in the railway station. Her husband Shripati come back to her but spends his life in stony silence. Kalyani's mother has not been able to get a male child and she is always in fear of her husband marrying another woman for a male child. Because of this fear, she got married her daughter to her brother Shripati. Shashi Deshpande gives the picture of women wanting male child in her life to protect their marital life.

Moving on is a novel comprising four generations and the relationships in them. Vasu, Badrinath's wife, is known for her shyness. She becomes rebellious and wants to be free. Her suppressed anger come out through her writing. Manjari, Vasu's daughter was a nice girl but turns into rebellious in the latter part of the novel. Vasu, after the death of her husband, wants to be more careful in taking care of her children but her body deceives her. She finds her peace for her body in the relationships with other people. But at last when she decides to break her relationship with Raja, she finds her children

getting a family in Raja's family. Though surrounded by failures, Vasu, faces life optimistically and has revived her courage to move on and on.

The analysis of the new women in Shashi Deshpande has deliberated the intellectual, emotional and psychological growth. Besides their socio economical positions in the society, they are eager to maintain the relationships in the family. They are always victorious not vanquished in their problems. The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande seek a harmony within traditional social setup. Shashi Deshpande affirms thus:

Men need the support of women and women need the support of men. And need each other very badly because in this worlds we are all living together, I would not say that women should be active and man should be supporting. no, I think they are both in it together only then it will work. so that it is my kind of feminism ...<sup>1</sup>

Shashi Deshpande conveys the message that the new women have the courage to assert themselves. But the harmony with the tradition and family relationships is also essential. They need not suffer without any protest and reconcile with the suffering as fate is not acceptable. At the same time, women have to find the reconciliation with tradition and modernity without losing their identity.

## REFERENCES

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