

Social Commitment and Responsibility in Shashi Deshpande Novels

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Abstract

Shashi Deshpande's effort has had a major influence on the social awareness. Her work gives us a comprehensive preview of human practices allowing us to connect on basic levels of desires and emotion. Shashi Deshpande's novels play an extremely important role in influential society and character development. In the present Research article, the author is trying to explore the framework of social commitment and responsibility, to trace the status of women in the Indian society down the ages in order to know extent social justice was rendered to the women folk from time to time. In the contemporary Indian literary scenario, Shashi Deshpande as a writer in English reflected the truth of Indian reality. Initiating from Shashi Deshpande the panache of fine Indian writers is long and much augmented. Deshpande reveals the understanding of woman psyche particularly educated, middle class urban women aspiring for self-confidence and self-determination. She shows her concerns about women who are helpless on account of orthodox and established norms, beliefs, customs and conventions deeply rooted in Indian patriarchy. Her novels as a true reflection of feminism which offers a fresh perspective for critical analysis linking literature with real life situation. Both men and women are socialized into accepting the male's superiority. She bears numerous responsibilities in the world of literature. Shashi Deshpande's feminism is certainly not suspicious or despairing.

Keywords: Social commitment, social responsibility, status of women, Shashi Deshpande novels, Indian society.

Shashi Deshpande's writings explore a social world of many complex relationships. Many men and women love together and journey across life in their different age group, classes and gendered roles. The women are particularly caught in the process of rework and restore their own roles, position and relationship within their given social world. She presents the modern Indian womanhood in her writings. As a woman writer, her difficulty was either to give voice to women's concern and be identity as women writer. Shashi Deshpande's writing are a reflection of society, to society has a huge effect on her work. Since her work is born from society, so her

work has had an effect on itself that was simply reflecting in her works. Most of the women writers employ a mode of social realism. History rarely gives space to women and get it is woman who keeps history alive by carrying on the burden of the past and samsara's.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* portrayed the irony of a woman writer who is also a young house wife being a writer she is supposed to present her views and ideas before the society but still she remain silent explore into her past, struggling with her present and trying to establish a empathy with her future.

Feminism ,the meaning of marriage theme of isolation ,the quest for identity, self- realization etc. are the major themes shared in her works and reflect the nature of themes with her titles also. Shashi Deshpande's writings are a reflection of society, so society has a huge effect on her work. Since her work is born from society so her work has had an effect on itself that was simply reflecting in her works. *That Long Silence* a Sahitya Academy Award winning novel is not only an autobiography of subjugation, but also a disclosure of the self.

Shashi Deshpande's novels present a social world consist with the modern, creating unplanned gaps and disordering within the family fold. Women have been tutored right from the day they had the glimpses of this world ,to follow unquestioningly and relentlessly the ideal of the patriarchal set – up of the family. Throughout the novels Deshpande tries to portray this difficulty of women. The Hindu woman has been asked to put up all sorts of quelling and repression in the name of family honour and for the good name of the children. Women's sexuality ,her experience of pain ,pleasure or love, desire, sorrow were matters that were commonly avoided. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors* the marriage is on the rocks because Manu feels uncomfortable and insecure with the rising status of his doctor wife and is dictatorial about playing a second- fiddle role in their marriage. IN “*That Long Silence* ,Jaya has been told that her husband is like a sheltering tree. She has to keep the tree alive and thrash, even if she has to water it with deception and lies. Jaya ironically views herself and Mohan as “ a pair of bullocks yoked together, moving together merely because it was more comfortable. The life of Sarita who is always ignored and disregard in favour of her brother. IN *The Binding Vine*, Urmi has a long distance marriage since her husband kishore is in navy. She desire for some physical satisfaction during his long absence but she never oversteps the dividing line chalked out in marriage and remains honest.

Shashi Deshpande's work has had a major impact on the social consciousness. Her work gives us a detailed preview of human experiences allowing us to connect on basic levels of desire and emotion. Shashi Deshpande ,born and brought up in India authentically presents the real lives of women of the soil. The patriarchal belief in claiming the male child as a previous one is enforced in the novel .The accidental death of her brother by drowning makes her develop a sense of guilt throughout her life. Her mother puts the blame on her as though she is responsible for her brother's death .Saur's choice of education and life partner Manu shows her revolt against her mother. The novel focuses on the sore faced by a modern woman who has a traditional raising .She shows herself as an independent and a modern woman in her outward appearances, but in

her psyche as she is afraid and does not know how to solve her domestic problems. Her stay in her parent's house creates a battle in her mind with the memories of her mother and her relationship with her, the conviction of her brother's death, her affection towards her husband and children and her responsibility as a doctor in the society. At last she realized that she cannot run away from her responsibilities both at domestic and societal levels and so decides to rejoin with her husband to restore her relationship with him. Shashi Deshpande presents Saru in such a manner trying to show the mirror to society, that people give more importance to have a male child in the society and even an educated man feels a weakness complex when his wife succeeds than her

husband. Manohar, her husband, was the head of the family before she got recognition as a doctor. She was known as the wife of Manohar but after people esteemed Manohar as the doctor's husband. Manohar thinks Saru's success as his failure. Shashi Deshpande has addressed various social issues of contemporary India and gender issues invariably find a prestige in her writing. Her characters confirm her social awareness. Her women characters are anti-patriarchal protagonists. Shashi Deshpande's novels present a social world of much complex relationship. In her novels many men and women living together, journey across life in their different age groups, classes and gendered roles. She not only presents her imagination, but also her expectations of change in society. Her desire is to generate and create a social consciousness. She awakens realization of place, time and conditions about ourselves and about others. She wakes us up to the elaborate and self-contradiction of human life. Earlier Deshpande was scornful of the supposed committed writing in literature. She understood that all good writing is socially committed writing. There was a time when I was scornful of what is called committed writing. I was considered such writing flawed because it being message oriented diminishes its artistic worth. But now I know that all good writing is socially committed writing, it comes out of a concern for the human predicament. I believe, as Camus says, that the greatness of an artist is measured by the balance the writer maintains between the values of creation and the values of humanity (The Literary Criterion).

Prema Nandkumar has observed about Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence* is "Not a forbidding stream of consciousness probe in the Virginia Woolf tradition. It is very much a conventional tale full of social realism evoked by links of memory. Not misty recollection but clear-eyed story telling". (Ibid, P136).

For the protagonist an objective analysis of what went wrong with her marriage and the reasons for failing as a writer, is a kind of Catharsis. The technique is described by the narrator Jaya herself who in the novel says: "All this I've written --- It's like one of those multi-coloured patchwork quilts the kakis made for any new baby in the family. So many bits and pieces- crazy aggregation of sizes, shapes and colours put together". (188)

In Deshpande's Novels, conflict or disappointments in marital relationships force heart-searching in the protagonists. They do not ignore the importance of marriage as a social institution and seek solutions to their marital problems with marriage. They seek a balanced, practical approach to

their problems. They do not blame the others or their husbands for their troubles but blame also themselves. Their passion to seek solutions to their problems leads to their temporary dropout from their families, followed by an objective assessment of the whole problem. They try to seek identity and self-realization upholding social meetings and establishment. They are women who are alone with awareness of their rights and duties, they have certain passions and expect an self-standing, self-governing existent.

Shashi Deshpande portrays modern, educated and career-oriented middle class women who are sensitive to the changing time and situations. They are alive of the social and artistic disorder to which they are subjected in the male-dominated society. The author presents her women as describing to become economically and ideologically independent. She finds them caught up in a conflict between their family and professional roles, between individual aspirations and social demands.

Jaya of *That Long Silence* being women writers are torn between self-expression and social stain – material and psychological sadness.

In Small Remedies is a path breaking novel which belongs to the later phase of her career in writing. This novel holds a mirror before the women of society. Madhu, Savitribai and Leela are the three ambitious and courageous women who prove their strength by sacrificing everything for their goal. Women do not victim of their so-called feminine weakness. They aspire to masculine power and respect. This novels present the changing role of women who do not believe in the inferior status of women in the family as well in the society. Shashi Deshpande appears to believe that by not protesting and offering resistance, the women have to blame themselves for their own victimization. She suggests that they have to break the chains or bonds that have kept them from a state of captivity for several centuries. They have to free themselves from the socially constructed stereotypical images.

The Dark Holds No Terrors, *That Long Silence* and *Small Remedies*. In also these novels, Shashi Deshpande objectifies new female subjective experiences with a gynocentric vision. She reflects on the problems and concerns of the middle class Indian women. Her writings rooted in the culture in which she lives, remain careful to the common everyday events and experiences, and they give artistic expression to something that is simple and dull. Her feminism is peculiarly Indian in the sense that it is born out of the difficulty of Indian women placed between contradictory identities: tradition and modernity, family and profession, culture and nature. Her art is great personal not political. In her other novels, she ponders over how male supremacy depends female egos and leads women to a state of mental slavery.

In her novels, she depicts the lives of Indian middle class women who are born and brought up in a social atmosphere of extreme conditioning on the basis of gender. Her novels are based on realistic life of human life in everyday today life happening on our surrounding.

Shashi Deshpande attempt's to relieve the male by carrying in some strong loving and responsible figures. The theme in Shashi Deshpande's novels is human relationship especially the ones that exist between father and daughter, husband and wife, between mother and daughter. In all relationships, the women occupy the central stage and significantly, the narration shifts through her feminine consciousness. Shashi Deshpande as a writer in English reflected the truth of Indian reality. She supports numerous responsibilities in the world of literature. Compared with other Indian novelist, Shashi Deshpande is specifically committed to the restructuring of female subjectivity. Her thinking is different from that of all other feminist. Her women protagonist are caught in the conflict between responsibility to oneself and conformity to the traditional role of wife. The fearlessness, the nobility, the responsibility and the independent spirit expose by her proves that she reached a stage of self-independent and self-discovery. Shashi Deshpande seems to look hopefully at the younger generation to regenerate equality between the sexes and achieve conformity.

Shashi Deshpande she is quite down to earth in her feminist approach to the woman's problem. She is aware of the seriousness of the Indian woman's predicament and the generation old struggles behind it, she also believes that a positive change in women's social status cannot materialize without bringing about a change in the woman's mind set first. The woman's increasing involvement rather than detachment in her predicament as expressed in her novels reveals the positive, humanistic side of Deshpande's feminism. Shashi Deshpande rightly considers her role as an Indian feminist as one of a 'humanist feminist'. (Ibid :A143).

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