

Shashi Deshpande's *Ships That Pass*: A Critique**Sangeeta**

Research scholar

DSMNR University, Lucknow

Shashi Deshpande projects mysteriosophy in human relationship which take off the emotions at high esteem. It seems that writing as an art is inherent in her blood by her father's genes. She articulates the mysterious human psyche which has been never touched before by anyone. It is her unconscious profession which flourishes to new heights in Indian English writing. She does not prefer to call herself as feminist writer; her choice goes with writing and representing feminine aspect as well as other aspects. Now the question is that when man and woman, both are writing and reading all topics, then how a woman becomes a feminist automatically and male writer is considered as omniscient in all issues. She loves to write on all aspects of mysterious human nature but prefers feminist issues.

Shashi Deshpande loves to expound the mystery in human behavior from artificial and oblivious aspects. She represents motley dimensions of work which leads to mysterious element in her work. She creates a web of mysterious elements in the *Ships That Pass* where Radhika represents a young generation. While crossing the road she takes the decision to get married but is not ready to follow the marital rituals. Next, Tara grieves over Geetu's death being a mother but in another moment she represents that she and Shaan do not deserve the parentage of Abhi. Third mystery is related with ram Mohan who is introduced as a doctor of Tara. In the next segment, Shaan is portrayed as sincere husband who is concerned about his wife's health and call Radhika to look after her, but later on discovers that Shaan has engaged him in extra marital affair. Shashi Deshpande weaves the mystery which mingle-mangle all relationship in the novel.

Key words: Family Relationship, Murder, Mystery, Marriage

Shashi Deshpande's *Ships That Pass*: A Critique**Sangeeta**

Research scholar

DSMNR University, Lucknow

Shashi Deshpande projects mysterious characteristics in the human relationship which take off the emotions at high esteem. She articulates the mysterious human psyche which has been ever touched before by anyone. It is her unconscious profession which flourishes to new heights in Indian English Writing. It is an important task before the Indian English writer is to write in the English language in a manner that conveys the fragrance of the real socio – culture of India. It is important to sprouts out the essence of theme without distorting the language. It seems that writing as an art is inherent in her blood by her father's genes. She does not consider English as foreign or colonizer language, but the medium of creativity in her prospect. Her thoughts wonder between the language and writing which explores by everyone. Her writing's depth decides the depth of her intensity in the work instead of language. She doesn't prefer to call herself as feminist writer; her choice goes with writing and representing feminine aspects as well as other aspects. Now the question is that when man and woman, both are writing and reading all topics, then how a woman becomes a feminist automatically and male writer is considered as omniscient in all issues. She loves to write on all aspects of mysterious human nature but in all prefers feminist issues.

Shashi Deshpande loves to expound the mystery from the middle class ethos in human behaviour. She contributes to Indian English writing which place her in canon. It raises the hope of reader at her work *Ships That Pass* which story was first published in Eve's Weekly in 1980. It depicts about people and their mysterious selves instead of detect the characters. She unsatisfied to shape the real essence of story in serializations for magazine. It lost the real essence of the story therefore she decides to rewrite the

story, *Ships That Pass*. It bases on complete story of love and mystery. Though time has changed, it does not change the mystery of human mind. It remains the great mystery of all time. She admires crime and mysterious story when she was young. She fascinates with the story *Murder Most Foul* which inspire her to write something mysterious.

Shashi Deshpande elaborates the mysticism of human relationship in *Ships That Pass*. She represents motley dimensions of her work which leads to mysterious elements in her work. She creates a web of mysterious characteristics in the *Ships That Pass*. In the beginning of the novella, she presents Radhika's character as a young generation girl who assumes as a working woman by her family member. Radhika's family persuades her for preparing competitive examinations like IAS after completing the college. They justify it by correlating her working status to her marital life. It seems that they think working woman considered as enjoying prestigious status in the society, but Radhika's conundrum reflects something else. She thought of marriage instead of career option whereas her friends have planned for a definite career. Shashi Deshpande writes,

“I stalked away from my friends in a foul temper. And then, while I was crossing the road, at a point behind the Bombay University building- a spot for me to remember, like the Buddha's Peepal tree in Bodh Gaya- there came enlightenment. Revelation.” (Deshpande, 9)

Shashi Deshpande exhibits the mysterious aspect of a youth who takes decision of marriage while crossing the road. She projects the road as Buddha's Peepal tree in Bodh Gaya. A youth like Radhika has decided regarding marriage simply as she plans for shopping, party, movie etc... She symbolises as an educated youth whose friend Rashmi plans for a medical studies, and another friend Supriya precedes her father's profession to become as a lawyer. In the context, Shashi Deshpande displays a contrast exhibition of psychological level of same generation.

Shashi Deshpande develops the mystical aspect in the beginning of the novel. The reader tries to understand the reason of Radhika's decision of marriage who defies her

own decision but in next segment, she refuses to wear sari which expresses such beautiful way.

“So when Aai asked, “You will wear a sari, won’t you, when they come?”, I protested, ‘They’ had suddenly become a potent force in my life, in all our lives, actually. ‘A sari?’ I was prepared to get into the act of a girl being ‘seen’ by her possible in-laws. But a sari? No’, I said firmly.” (Deshpande, 10)

It looks another mysterious concept where Radhika chooses marriage over the career and then, she refuses to wear sari. It puzzles to connection of marriage and protestation of wearing sari. It is strange to imagine an Indian society justify a marriage without sari? It is automatically understood that Indian Bride weened in traditional outfit. Shashi Deshpande sprinkles the element of curiosity and develops the quest for happen in reference of Radhika.

As novella moves forwards, Tara and Shaan relationship flourishes different shade of colour which is beyond to understand by Radhika. It becomes shocking to Radhika for hearing how Shaan could comment that-“I have no influences over her at all.” (Deshpande, 17) Radhika observes them as an ideal couple since childhood. Tara gave up everything for Shaan to just get marrying. Radhika amazes to see shaan reaction for whom her sister blindly jumps into marriage. Shaan calls Radhika to inform about the Tara’s health which seems much more mystical as it seems. Radhika decides to visit Tara’s house and clarify her curiosity. As soon as Radhika arrived to Tara’s house, she tries to find the truth. Tara tried hard to hide and proclaim everything normal, but small-small things mingle more the complexity of the mystery. Shaan appears to be sincere and caring husband, but he does not arrange any medical treatment for Tara. As novella move forwards, Shaan linked up with Rohini for extra martial affair.

Shashi Deshpande expounds an unusal mysterious chemistry between Tara and Shaan. It confuses regarding actual relationship of the couple how a caring husband could engage in extra marital affair. Why he calls Radhika if he plans to cheat Tara. The

mystery left unsolved over the characteristics of Shaan and move forwards to Tara's characteristics.

Shashi Deshpande elaborates the bewilderment of Geeta's death which shakes the soul of Tara. In this episode, Tara shown psychological disturbance and need for medical treatment. In later segment, it discloses in the conversation with Radhika that she over comes from the grief of Geeta's death.

“Akka spoke to me of Geetu for the first time... Shaan has an absurd idea that I'm still grieving over her’, She said. ‘Of course I am, how can anyone forget one's own child? I will never stop grieving’... But I have accepted the fact that she's gone, that it's all over. The day I came back from the hospital ... I knew she had gone. In fact, to see her suffer was worse, the hope that she would recover, that there would be some kind of a miracle and she would be all right- that was the worst thing. It was a kind of torture. I was thankful when the end came.”(Deshpande, 88-89)

Shashi Deshpande represents Tara occasionally portraits as composed personality it illustrates during the conversation with Radhika over Geetu's death. Her personality reflects very talented and active woman in the beginning of novella. Shaan shows a caring husband and mature enough to handle Geetu's death which could not make an issue between them. It seems a kind of finality in her voice and acceptance of fact. She accepts the fact despite of she fells sick for Geetu. Thus, it raises another mystery which quest for her sickness. It mingles the prejudice of reader's mind regarding her acceptance of Geetu's death and her sickness over Geetu's death.

Shashi Deshpande expresses the biases motherhood of Tara at strange level. It can only assume that Geetu's death is responsible for Tara mental state. She shows her gratitude towards the dead child Geetu and neglect to alive child Abhi totally. Radhika observes,

“Akka herself seemed to be drifting vaguely through life, denying everything: Geetu’s death, her sorrow for Geetu, even her love for her son, Abhi. She was very casual with him most of the time, often irritable with him. Yet, I saw her sitting by his bed one night after he had fallen asleep, doing nothing, just sitting there, looking at him with such intensity that it was frightening.” (Deshpande, 32-33)

She has portrayed double standard of motherhood in which one towards Geetu describes the sensitive mother; on another side explores ignorance towards Abhi. Shashi Deshpande explores the characteristic of motherhood in active and inactive pose. It raises the question of mystery how one character would different towards own children. It shows another aspect of Tara when she argues to Shaan that “In fact, she said we don’t deserve Abhi either, that we are not fit to be parents.” (Deshpande 52) it becomes difficult to understand the mysterious characteristics of Tara’s motherhood.

It diverts at different dimension of Indian society which explores new side of women characteristics in reference of Tara. Shashi Deshpande depicts Tara’s character as smart, beautiful, talented youth and her married life goes awesome in view of society. Then, how she leads towards the mental trauma and bias attitude towards own child. Even, Tara draws the mystery draws over Tara’s death. It does not expound towards reader even at the last line whether she was murdered, suicide or natural death. Her death mystery sketch many dimension but do not move forward either side. Shashi Deshpande beautifies to raise the suspense but it shatters in different dimension which leave question mark in the reader’s mind. The whole novella dedicated towards the Tara or Tara’s health and the end come clueless. Shashi Deshpande provides the speculation of Tara’s murder, suicide or natural death.

There are many clues prompt of her murder which directs towards the Shaan. It could be the possibility that Shaan plans murder for Tara. He calls Radhika so that later, he can project himself innocent and caring daring husband by calling Radhika to look

after her sister. He has an extra marital affair with his neighbour Rohini which discovers later by Radhika. It could possible that he plans for marry to Rohini. And, Tara knows all about it and she might object over the matter. It may be reason behind Tara's ill health which assume as reaction of Geetu's death. Shaan may fade-up with the dispute between the couple. He can take step of her murder because Shashi Deshpande does not give him clean chit regarding the accusation of Tara's death. The mystery of Shaan's character does not clear which remained as a question mark. Why does Shaan arrest and how does he release? There is no clue behind the Shaan arrest and release. It well maintains the myth over it.

Tara's death took another dimension which direct to commit suicide. Shashi Deshpande mingles mangle the death mystery of Tara's death. If it concentrates on second assumption of Tara's death, it will become easy to justify. Tara's murder has just an assumption which is the part of mysterious characteristic enhance by Shashi Deshpande. Tara interprets as a mentally disturb patient. Shaan calls Radhika for her. It discovers that Tara had tried to attempt suicide twice. Shaan said to Radhika,

“You know, Radhu, I think she hasn't stopped grieving for Geetu. Sometimes I have a strange feeling that she welcomes her pain, as if it's a just punishment for Geetu's death. It's been nearly two years now, but I have this strange feeling that she's still listening for Geetu's voice, or her footsteps. As if she thinks she's still around. I don't know, it sounds stupid, but that's how I feel.
(Deshpande 31)

It seems Tara forgets to live life. She traps in her subconscious of Geetu's death. It speculates that she takes action of suicide only to console its guilt conscious. She may think that it only left way to overcome from the trauma. It observes that Tara had tried enough to come on normal track but she trapped in mental trauma again in next episode. It could possible reason to take step behind Tara's death.

Shashi Deshpande develops another episode over Tara's death. It seems neither murder nor suicide cause behind her death. She may pass away through natural cause. It already understands that she shows as a suffer candidate who gets relief only by death. There is no wonder of her death. She does not show any connivance in her life. She swings many times between the life and death. Her health is the major cause of her death. It can speculate over murder or suicide, but her death will not benefit to anyone. It raises the possibility of her natural death. Shashi Deshpande creates the web of assumptions over Tara's death. The thread of assumption is in reader's hand wherever they want to drag or lose it.

Shashi Deshpande introduces another curiosity of Radhika who married to Ram Mohan in the last of novella. It does not show any chemistry between them. In fact, Radhika has not shown any normal liking towards the Ram Mohan in the beginning. They share normal relationship as common human being has to each other. Their age difference has not clue anything like to happen last. Radhika has already engaged to Ghanshyam and her emotion involves with Ghanshyam. She does not welcome Ram Mohan even friendly as this conversation shows this.

“Let me complete the introduction. This, as you have guessed, is my sister, Radhika.’

‘Tara's little sister, Radhika.’

‘You used to call him Ram uncle.’

My first wild thought was – I can't possibly call him Ram uncle.

And my second was – I'll get a crick in my neck looking up at him.

I felt like a midget, a circus dwarf. Actually, there was nothing intimidating about him.” (Deshpande 35)

This conversation expounds the Radhika's view towards Ram Mohan. This is an introductory communication in which it reflects nothing intimidating about them. The whole novella moves with normal communication which does not show anything glittering between them. Ram Mohan helps Radhika only to resolve her sister's death

mystery. They meet with selective prospect of investigation and collecting evidence of Tara's death. Shashi Deshpande modifies their normal relationship to marriage. It comes to notice about their emotion in the last two chapters. This relationship does not develop forward, simply next chapter's first line predicts.

“There's very little left to tell. Ram Mohan and I got married very soon after. Dada and Aai were happy for us and everyone decided there was no need to wait, it was a simple registered wedding.”

(Deshpande 128)

After this segment, they show happily married couple. Shashi Deshpande interlinks many dimensions to Radhika marriage mystery. An engaged girl visits her sister house and later busy in investigate Tara's death mystery. Her engagement breaks off without solids reason and she married to Ram Mohan. Whom she used to call him uncle and the age difference vanishes in a second somewhere. The whole marriage episode raises many curiosity and confusion in reader's mind.

Towards the end, Shashi Deshpande depicts the different aspects of allusion of women psyche in a reform way. All the characters are in allusion which portrayed the modern human psyche's alienation and allusion in the society which weaves the web of relationships beautifully. The characters are suppressed by their own thought process rather than society. It creates the dilemma in the character which explores the mystic thought in their life. It can only analyse at last that *Ships That Pass* is the mystery of human mind in context of modern isolated society.

WORK CITED

Agrwal, Beena. *Mosaic of The Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande*, New York : Book Enclave Publishers, 2009. Print.

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed.1999. Banglore : Prism Book Pvt. Ltd. , 2003. Print.

Atrey, Mukta and Viney Kripal. *Shashi Deshpande: A Feminist Study of Her Fiction*. New Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1998. Print.

Deshpande, Shashi. *Ships That Pass*. New Delhi: Raintree, 2012. Print.

---. Interview: *Language No Bar*. The Sunday Times of India. Ahmedabad, 23 April 1995. 10. Print.

---. Interview by Geeta Gangadharan, *Denying The Otherness*, Indian Communicator, Sunday Magazine, 20 Nov. 1994. 11. Print.

Jaggar, Alison M. *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. New Jersey : Rowman and Allanheld Publishers, 1983. Print.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *The Twice- Born Fiction: Theme and Techniques in the Indian Novel in English*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: Arnold- Heinemann, 1971. Print.

Mehta, Sangita, and Rekha Chutani. *Studies in Literature and Literary Theory*. New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers and Distributors, 2011. Print.