

INTERVIEW



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
ISSN:2321-3108

WRITING ABOUT PEOPLE (An Interview with Shashi Deshpande)

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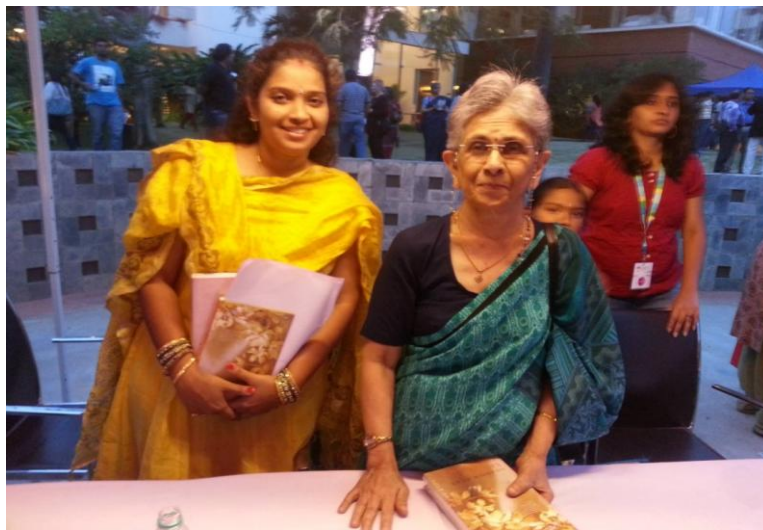


Figure: author (Left)with Shashi Deshpande (Right)

This is one to one interview of the scholar with the great author Shashi Deshpande who is recipient of Sahitya Academy Award and Padmashree Awards. She bagged many awards for her credit. This interview speaks about her novels and women characters. In this she clearly describes how different she is as a writer and as a feminist in person. She says that these are two separate compartments in her life. She does not want to be titled as woman writer.

Key Words: Tradition, Indian Women, Relationship, Marriage, Feminist

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Sirisha: You present problems of women but never give any solutions. Why don't you suggest solutions to problems? What kind of change you expect from the reader if the reader happens to be a male?

Shashi Deshpande: Writers job is not to provide a solution and he is not a kind of service for the social problem. I think about what I see in and around me. The solution has to come from the reader himself. It is not the writer's job to offer solutions to the problems but may be novels help you to understand your situations seeing something in the novel which

is slightly similar to your own. You get an understanding of your own situation. You always have to take your own steps.

Sirisha: Do you want to highlight the Indian tradition of marriage through your novels by presenting protagonist never breaking their marriages?

Shashi Deshpande : Absolutely nothing as I said nothing like that. As a writer I do not sort of giving any message. I am not saying get married or break marriage. This particular character had such a particular point in her life how she goes to certain

situations in her life. These are the conclusions she reaches in her mind. Most of my novels ultimately ending in their heads. They see things differently, they become different people. So that is the change to me. The change comes in your thinking. You mean the novel *Small Remedies* is grief over a child's death. It's not the marriage that I am writing about. It is about human relationships. *The Binding Vine* is not about a problem of marriage and more about a social problem which is there. *The Country of Deceit* is not about a marriage.

Sirisha: Why the novel *The Country of Deceit* is different from other novels as I feel a sort of delicacy in the relationship which you have to set it right according to the social moral code, but the parting is very painful because she is frankly in love with the person?

Shashi Deshpande: That's human. You know what you are doing is right, but it does not take away the pain. That's very normal in human. That is one kind and different kind of ending a relationship. She has to move out of the relationship which she indulged. It's not marriage at all. It's not only marriage that I am writing about. It's about human relationships. To me marriage is a beginning and ending of life.

Sirisha: Is *The Binding Vine* an extension of *Intrusion* as both female characters raped by their husbands?

Shashi Deshpande: No, not at all. No connection. *Liberated Woman* was beginning of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. But, *The Binding Vine* is nothing to do with the *Intrusion*.

Sirisha: Is there any particular reason for your use of mythological characters in your novels?

Shashi Deshpande: Not particular reason. They are so much in our part of life. Even today they still form very important part of our life, because many of the moral codes have come from the myths especially for women. We will be so kind imprisoned in that mythical kind of woman. So I think they still matters in our life in India. I would not deliberately take it. Most of the things which writers do, not for a particular reason it comes to you like that. Before you write these things get ready in your mind and this becomes the part of it. There is no way to avoid it not pushing it deliberately. It just so happened and that becomes the part of writing.

Sirisha: All your novels are women centered. But, you say that you are not feminist. What are you then? What is Feminism from your point of view?

Shashi Deshpande: Yes. My novels are women centered and I am not a feminist. You find contradiction there. In my personal life I am a feminist. As a writer I do not have to write about feminism and I can write about many things. I am a writer is separate and I am a feminist is separate. They are two different compartments in my life. My feminism will enter in novels but not openly. It will form with part of my thinking. Therefore when you read my novel certain things you will see which you would not see in many other novels. Because you will see vision of a world in which I look at women in a different way and you get glimpses of vision of mine. But, it does not mean that I will give any message or I am going to push anything. I do not believe that novel is meant to give any message to reader. But, it will make you think. It brings new ideas in your head. It makes you doubt which you have already believed in. it makes you ask question and may be you try to find the answers. As a writer I write what captures and what my creativity gets hold of. So, I am a feminist and no question about that. I write about women it also true. But, it is not a question which I think should be asked of any woman. Could they ask about that they write about men. I write about men also. I write about children. So, big world we all are living in together. They are all in the book. Not only women. I swear that does my book have no men at all. I think this question has been asked of me somehow there is perception that she writes only about women. Women are main characters most of the times but, it does not mean that I don't write about men. I write about people, women are also people.

Sirisha: Is there any influence of your father on your writing career?

Shashi Deshpande: Not really. My father wrote in Kannada I am completely different. He wrote plays. He was very independent thinker. He never accepted anything told to him by the people. He believed in his own thinking and in his own logic. He was very logical man and he does not believe in superstition. To that some extent my thinking has been shaped by him. My writing has not been

influenced by him. I don't think his things come in my writing. I have seen his plays staged. I could not read Kannada much later I learnt to translate.

Sirisha: What will you suggest to coming writers?

Shashi Deshpande: If they serious about writing they should write. Writing is different from becoming a writer. See the glamour of being a writer. When you want to write you will write. When you are committed to write you will write whether you get rewards or not. Writing is more a profession like music and dance. It's a colly. No exam is there to enter. It is just in you. You want something to say. Whatever writing you do nothing can help you as much as reading and writing. You learn language through reading and you learn craft of writing through writing. You keep on writing to improve yourself. These are the best things. Reading, go on writing and be a critic to yourself.

Sirisha: Every chapter In *A Matter Of Time* begins with a sloka from Upanishads. Why is there such a beginning? What do you mean by that?

Shashi Deshpande: There is that Upanishatic thing. And there is a chapter. For me these things are important because when they come in my mind I know that what is going to be about this chapter. It is an indication what is going to come. For me as a writer it is important, as the reader also it is important. First one is Miethreya, Yagnavalkya and Gargeya. The last one is about Nachiketha, about death. I was lead to them. They came. I do read translations. They have purpose and they have a place. That's why they are there.

Sirisha: What kind of inspiration you get from Upanishads?

Shashi Deshpande: I don't know. They mean a lot to me when I read them. It's not that I have very good knowledge about them. I have studied Sanskrit butI am not very. They mean lot to me especially Upanishads. So much of wisdom is there. My thinking of the time, I use it in my novel because it fixes there. It has a place there.

Sirisha: Do you think Kshama from the novel come up and be dead is a complete character, has she justified her role? If you think it is incomplete can you give a finishing to that character in your future novel?

Shashi Deshpande: I do not think it is incomplete. May be she is lacking of some qualities. So, many human beings are lacking in some qualities. Devayani, Kshama both there. Devayani is so gutless. Each one of us. I do not think Kshama is incomplete

Sirisha: THANK YOU