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## STATUS OF WOMEN THROUGH GENERATIONS: A STUDY OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S A MATTER OF TIME

P.ANGELA

M.Phil English Research Scholar, Madras Christian College, Tambaram, Chennai.



P.ANGELA

### ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande, an eminent novelist is popular for her novels which mainly focus on the sufferings of women and their quest for individuality. The present paper is an attempt to study the portrayal of the status of women through generations in Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time*. The novel under study revolves around the evolution of man-women relationship through four generations who try to confront the truth by plunging into the past. This novel depicts the lives of four women namely Manorama, Kalyani, sumi, and Aru who are victims of animosity adapted by patriarchal society where the measure of women's successful her married life, without which her all other accomplishments are considered worthless warm association area the admeasurements of woman's acknowledged her affiliated life, after which her all added accomplishments are advised worthless.

**Keywords:** Eminent, Individuality, Evolution, Admeasurements.

### INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande, a well-known Indian women novelist in English is at her poignant best in exploring the image of the middle class Indian woman who 'slips in and out of different shells' of her life and very courageously confronts the truth. She is the winner of the Padmashri award in 2009 for her literary achievements in writing few books for children, short stories and more than ten novels. A major aspect of her writings is her presentation of the contemporary Indian society. The novel, *A Matter of Time* revolves around the mystery being unravelled behind the 'horrifying story of loss and agony' of the characters. The novel demonstrates the evolution of man-woman relationship through four generations, Manorama and Vithalrao belong to the first generation, Kalyani and Shripati belong to the second, Sumi and Gopal to the third generation whereas Aru, Charu and Seema belong to the fourth generation. As Shashi Deshpande's novels are always crowded with people, the present

novel under study too has neatly knitted a number of females closely together. The wavering narrative technique of the novel offers readers a comprehensive view of the story with its ins and outs.

It is a projection of three women, Sumi, her mother-Kalyani and Kalyani's cousin sister, Goda, who are destined to undergo the traumatic experience of 'desertion' by males in their lives. Aru, the 18 year- old girl, daughter of Sumi struggles to comprehend the destined roles of wives and daughter in case of Goda. The diverse causes behind their deserted state relegate them to the state of isolation. Kalyani is condemned to the 'margins of (lifelong) silence' with her husband, Shripati. However, in the end she is left with her 'widowhood'. Sumi is compelled to tolerate the painful silence and return to her parent's house with her three daughters after her husband, Gopal walks out on her for the reasons even he fails to 'articulate', whereas Goda is reduced to the passive

being as a reaction to her father's passivity. Aru finally is left as a witness to the perplexing world of husband-wife relationship ended with the death of either of a partner.

Deshpande's main concern being the predicament of women and their failures in the fast changing socio-economic milieu of India, She deals with the conflict between tradition and modernity in relation to women in the middle class society. Women are generally the centre of her fictional world with a focus on their desires, efforts and failures in traditional Indian society. However, she makes it clear that she is not the kind of feminist who considers man as the cause of the troubles of women. Her depiction of women's world is authentic, realistic and credible, and her novels are suggestive of this aspect.

#### **DISCUSSION**

*A Matter of Time* resists patriarchy through accession of the three changeable characters in adverse circumstances. Sumi and her three daughter's acknowledgment to the place endemic by her mother Kalyani afterwards she was bare by her husband Gopal. Sumi accepts Gopal's accommodation calmly not because she lacks the adventure sameness to adverse him but because she knows the uselessness of complaint She says, "I just want to get on with my life... let him go, Aru, just let him go" (*A Matter of Time* 61). This is not an acceptable for her but the feel of Aru's body, firm and unyielding tells Sumi that Aru will not let go. In the novel, Gopal says that Kierkegaard's words are, It is the ability of what they had been that fabricated the ancestors privileged, it is the autograph down of it that accept them the alertness and set them apart. "Life must be lived forwards, but it can only be understood backwards" (98). Shashi Deshpande's novel bootless the alliance of Sumi and Gopal the centre of the novel adverse with added marriages: Kalyani and Shripati, Manorama and Vithalrao, Goda and Satyanarayan, Premi and Anil, Devaki and Vasudev Murthy, Ramesh and Chithra and as well Sudha and PK. This bond is an accessible acknowledgment abundantly to the double angle which she presents thus, exploring the simultaneity of the past and present, thematically and structurally. For her the narrator says that they

don't assume to apprehend that the absolute phenomenon is Kalyani herself, Kalyani who survived intact, in animosity of what Shripati did to her, Kalyani who has survived Manorama's countless act of cruelty.

Gopal unburdens himself from all family responsibilities thus, thrusting upon Sumi the hideousness of the situation and rendering a shocking experience:

One evening, while Sumi is watching a film on T.V. about circus, without the dirt, the smells, the fear and despair of the real thing, but sanitized bacteria free" Gopal tells her he wants to talk to her and without any preamble says what he has to. He waits for Sumi's reaction, but within moments both realize that there's nothing more to be said he leaves as quickly as he had entered (Keerthi 21)

Sumi, the submissive soul accepts Gopal's pronouncement stoically. For the poor, exasperated soul it's really inexplicable why Gopal drove him to take that step is revealed in her thinking, If I meet Gopal I will ask him some question... What is it, Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in this age of acquisition and possession walk out on his family and all that he owns? Because it was you who said that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How then can you, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back on everything in your life? Will you be able to give me answer to this? (*A Matter of Time* 27)

On Gopal's abandonment, Sumi returns with her offspring to the house of her biological parents and efforts to hunt for another place for lodging, but eventually abandons up the idea, finds a job, thereby gaining a new ray of hope for sustenance. Thus, both the breadwinners of the household are responsible in shattering the life of their family members. And the women are the actual victims and targets of the male dominance.

Other relatives think about bearing social stigma but Sumi endures her own kind of suffering, "It takes time to get used to sharing your life with

another person, now I have got used to being alone” (23). Here, afresh in case of Sumi and Gopal gender roles are overturned. Cultures apprehend men to be assertive and competitive, to strive for actual success, and to account whatever is big, strong, and fast. It expects women to serve and affliction for the non-material cultural beliefs, Gopal’s appearance emerges as ‘passive, brittle and docile,’ the ancestry usually accompanying with females. After break from Sumi he leads an activity of about passivity, regressing himself from the familial relations and attached to an individual allowance beside Shankar’s press. He is an actual accommodating as he never tries to advance his ascendancy while conversing with any of changeable characters and not even with his baby Aru. He as well rejects the actual apple for the abstract craving.

It is Sumi who displays attribute culturally affiliated with male, i.e. attributes of masculinity-intelligence and ambition. Sumi, the protagonist displays optimistic eyes of life. She handles the crises of her activity with indifference. She goes about her accepted plan as usual. She presents avant-garde bearing woman, acquainted and rational. Her accepting of Gopal’s accommodation and her abnegation to acknowledge to it shows not an acquiescent accepting of man’s supremacy but a contestation, an appraisal of tradition. Deshpande corroborates this point if in an interview she asserts, traditionally, acreage buying is accustomed to male associates of ancestors and it passes on from one macho beneficiary to addition in the continued ancestor’s chain. Women are consistently admired beggared of acreage ownership.

*A Matter of Time* is divided into three parts- The House, The Family, and The River. The novel starts and ends with a description of ‘The House’ which is called as ‘Vishvas’. Here, ‘Vishvas’ does not angle for some credo rather for the name of antecedent of kalyani’s ancestor Vithalrao. The columnist writes that the abode was, “built by a man not just for himself, but for his sons and his son’s sons” (3). There is an admiring for a son and attitude of transference of ancestors acreage alone to macho bearing and never to changeable descendants. This is the acumen why Manorama was not blessed with the bearing of Kalyani and in her accomplishment to

accumulate the ancestors acreage aural ancestors she affected her brother – Shripati to ally her babe – Kalyani. But as if the ancestors is beneath some curse, Kalyani’s alone son was absent on BT station, and the ancestors is afresh larboard with changeable successors.

Towards the end Shripati’s will, apropos to Kalyani as Vithalrao and Manorama’s baby and not as his wife, abet her with a faculty of empowerment. It is her identity, her individuality that she finds ultimately, with his abolishment of accepted transference of ancestors property. She does not feel the bite of accepting been beggared of her conjugal status. “On the contrary, it is as if the words have given her something more than the house, restored something she had lost; they seem, in fact, to have strengthened her” (245).

The seventeen year old Aru, the eldest of the three daughters, desires to combat and makes her pater about the injustice of depriving them of a coherent family structure. She staunchly argues with her father and even goads her mother into belligerence, finally consults a lawyer. No doubt, none of these steps brings her any kinds of fruitful results or success. On the other hand, Charu, the middle of the three daughters engrosses herself in her education keeping in mind the sole aim of seeking admission in a renowned medical college. Becoming self-centred she succeeds to a certain extent in shielding herself from the painful darts which hunt Aru.

Next at the forefront, we have the suffering mother, Kalyani who is also sailing in the same boat, feels miserable for her daughter and thinks how history has repeated itself. She has writhed in her whole life and the same is endured by her daughter. She laments, “My father died worrying about me, my mother couldn’t die in peace, She held on to life through she was suffering –she suffered terribly because of me, she did not want to leave and go” (47). Not able to endure the parting of her daughter, she visits Gopal and efforts to extract little clarification at her end- What Sumi did which drive Gopal to undertake that decision? Has anyone poisoned his mind against Sumi? Has she done something wrong? Can’t he forgive her? Is it money? ‘If it is, she tells him, you know that Sumi and you

will have everything of mine...' This desperation of Kalyani in searching for reasons is pathetic and shows that even after the bitter experience she has had with her husband, she is beyond understanding about the functioning of human mind and it's working.

I was frightened, Aru, frightened of the emptiness within me, I was frightened of what I could do to us, to all of you, with That emptiness inside me... (51).

Gopal apprehends the emptiness lurks behind human relationships. He is clear within that Sumi has a strong idea that there is no concrete reason behind his desertion and "the reason lies inside him, the reason is him" (24).

For Sumi, Gopal's walking out of her life was just both from the blue, an unpleasant surprise. 'When you left, I knew I would not question you, I would just let you go'. Sumi has been an adjusting lot. She confidently worked on a new life with the complete assistance of her kids. As Shashi Deshpande observes, "Sumi's acceptance is not passive. She blocks out the unpleasantness. She has a good opinion of herself; she is more concerned with getting on her life she does not want pity; she would do anything for pride. She distances even her husband" (Vimla Rama Rao 131).

She sophisticatedly makes her husband enjoys liberty from conjugal bonding and bewilderingly realizes her innermost forte. She senses that a woman may get some respite by divorce but she has to scuffle for social, economic and psychological reinstatement. She refutes to take any kind of monetary comfort from her biological parents and kiths and kins. She starts functioning as a teacher on temporary basis. She illustrates her staunch willpower and individuality and her craving to move from despondency to hopefulness. Sumi refurbishes her creativity, after Gopal's absconding. She put pen to paper a play "The Gardener's Son" for the school function which out to be a gala success and she revitalizes, "it feels so good and now suddenly I want to do many things" (*A Matter of Time* 231).

She is anxious about her teenage daughter and attempts to provide them with complete affection, love and care. Even in the harsh

circumstances of life, she boosts up her daughters with her tutelage and optimistic vision of life. Thus the emphases in Shashi Deshpande's novels are woman- her travails, inhibition, rigidities, apprehension and agony.

#### CONCLUSION

Deshpande has tried to thrash out viable solutions to women's complications in the fast changing social scenario for their relaxed existence. There is a strident metamorphosis between a man's world and a woman's world. The patriarchal society doesn't portray men to be henpecked husbands but they are endowed with utter sovereignty and domination. Men have been the born enjoyers and they enjoy complete power and authority upon the females with whom they come in contact. Since times immemorial, females have been just a commodity or a piece of furniture. Females are the sole puppets in the hands of men. Even in the present scenario, the rights to freedom and equality are not adhered in letter and spirit. But Deshpande endeavours to establish woman as an individual who breaks loose from the traditional constraints and refines her identity in tune with the changed social ambience of the modern times.

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