



## THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN SASHI DESHPANDI'S THREE NOVELS

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**ABSTRACT**

Sashi Deshpande is a major Indian English woman writer. She gave a much needed voice to the Indian women, who are traditionally oppressed with majority of society's approval. Many of her protagonists are aware of their oppressed existence in a patriarchal society. The realistic delineation of woman as wife, mother and daughter and their search for identity is strongly described in her novels. Violence is perpetuated against women, but these women reenter into the world with awareness of self, as through trauma and pain, they gained insight into the truth of life. All her characters can be classified as "new womanhood" by exploring into psychology of her characters. Deshpande builds new lives seeking self identity within the context of their own culture.

**KEYWORDS :** Trauma, Explore, Suffering, Oppression, Self – Identity.

Sashi Deshpande approaches her women characters through the problems of suppression, oppression and victimization in the Indian society. This paper tries to analyse Three novels of Sashi Deshpande in the theoretical framework of Foucaultian power. Michel Foucault introduces concept of power by reversing the traditional concept of it. Traditional idea of power is negative and suppressive. Foucaultian power is positive. In the History of Sexuality volume one Foucault states that "where there is a power, there is resistance" (95). Foucault's ideas on power, identity and knowledge have greatly enhanced our understanding of abuse of power. In applying his theory, we can observe the ways in which Deshpande's female characters are oppressed through sustained power. Women are the victims of patriarchal system. The women in Sashi Deshpande's novel gradually assert their strengths and transform themselves as the personification of power to fight for their rights.

Sashi Deshpande's award – winning novel That Long Silence, describes the story of Jaya who becomes a victim existing social setup. She has no choice of her own. Everything is decided by her husband Mohan. Deshpande has used the metaphor, "two bullocks yoked together" (11) to convey the idea of Indian marriage. The wife is left with no individuality of her own. Jaya says "just emptiness and silence" (144).

Mohan is greedy and to fulfill his ambition, he sanctioned substandard which put him in financial problem. In order to escape humiliation, they shifted from Church Gate to Dadar flat of his wife. He blamed his wife for all his misfortunes and justifies his dishonest ways by saying that he did all this for her sake. What she expected in life is deprived of in her marriage. She felt that her life is pointless. So the warm and friendly nature of Kamath appeals to her. He warned her to give up the idea that "women are the victims" (148) and empower the woman in her earnestly. She asserts

herself boldly and becomes independent. At the end of the novel, she says that "it's possible that we may not change even over a long period of time. But we can always" (193). With that hope comes self – assertion.

The Binding Vine is about urmi, an educated middle class wife who is suffering over the loss of her one – year old daughter Anu. Through her suffering Urmi, becomes aware of the sorrows of others. It is because of her personal loss, she is able to perceive other's suffering. Her narrative contains Three tales – one about herself and the other two about Shankuntala, a rape – victims mother and Urmi's mother – in – law Meera, a victim of marital rape.

In her depressed state she happens to meet Shakuntala, mother of a rape victim, Kalpana she meets her in the hospital where her sister Vanna works. Kalpana is lying unconscious and her mother thinks she has met with a car accident. She tells Vanna "It's not true, you people are trying to blackmail my daughter's name" (58). This is a typical Indian mothers mindset. Through her Deshpande laid bare Shakuntala's agony, anger, feebleness and fear.

Sashi Deshpande want to be known as writer of fiction not as someone who writes about issues and problems of women. Deshpande can be termed as a moderate Indian feminist writer who does not go to extremes. She knows that "Wails of anguish or thunder of curses or growls of anger does not by themselves turn into great literature". In Deshpande's fiction, all men are not villains. For example, the husband of Urmi is good to her and she is fully satisfied with him. For Urmi, her struggles are not personal, their concern her own "Strijati". She seeks the redemption of her own caste.

A Matter of Time concerns with the human predicament of three women representing three generations of the same family. Eventhough the protagonist of the novel is a man, the novel is primarily about women's pain, suffering and fortitude in marriage. The family of Gopal and Sumi with three daughters Aru,Charu, and Seema is the main characters in the novel. It begins with Gopal telling Sumi that he is leaving the house for good. Sumi is unable to react verbally. The next morning

she tells it to her daughters. Gopal's desertion comes as a shock to the readers as well theirs is not an arranged but a love marriage. No rational reason is given for Gopal's departure and the readers remain in the dark as his motive behind his mindless act. Sumi gradually transforms herself into a new and independent woman. She helps her children to get on with their lives. Describing the whole scene of Gopal's casual desertion, Keerthi Ramachandran says "He waits for Sumi's reaction, but within moments both realize that there is nothing more to be said and he lives as quietly as he had entered".

Sumi has the full support of her parents, sisters, cousins and others. This has helped her to a great degree to withstand the shock, pain, humiliation and trauma of desertion. Women in this novel are ruled by patterns destiny. Destiny is the word of choice of one of the central characters, Kalyani, the grandmother. The tragedy of Kalyani's life is her husband initially desertes her and then returns to live in an isolated room, he stops talking to kalyani.Thirty five years later, history repeats itself. Kalyani is devastated by another man's desertion. This time that of her son-in-law Gopal. The reason we can guess of these men's deserting may be to find an answer to life's emptiness.

In these three novels, Sashi Deshpandey explores the lives of middle class Indian women who feel oppressed by their male dominated society. She not only presents a feminist insight into patriarchal values, but also prescribes a balance between tradition and modernity. Sashi Deshpande's novels show us her deep insight into the plight of Indian women, who feel suffocated and controlled in a male dominated society. The solution is assertion of women's independent individual identity.

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