

# SHASHI DESHPANDE'S INDIAN FEMININE PROTAGONISTS

**Dr Ranjit Kumar Elamadurthi**

Professor in English Avanthi Institute of Engineering and Technology Cherukupally Village,

Vizianagaram Dist

[dranjitelamadurthi@gmail.com](mailto:dranjitelamadurthi@gmail.com)

Ph: +919059585008

## **Abstract**

Shashi Deshpande's novels usually deal with female protagonists striving to search or find their own selves. Deshpande's heroines do it through writing and ultimately take a resolution in their lives. The unexpressed and often ignored issues of women from their unknown regions are clearly portrayed in her novels.

**Keyword:** Unexpressed, Portrayed, Region. Feminine, Protagonists

## **INTRODUCTION**

Shashi Deshpande is an Indian woman novelist having great concern for her own women community in the society. It is her perfect understanding of the women psyche and deep insight of Indian society brought her international recognition. Her novels deal with the problems of a middle class woman's career besides her marital constraints. The undiscussed tribulations of women from their unfamiliar regions of minds are clearly portrayed in her novels. The present paper focuses on the need for women to get rid of the chains imposed on them in the name of tradition. In spite of being modern and educated, still Deshpande's heroines are the victims of prejudices emanated from society.

Most women were tend to be happy with their secondary status named 'Savi-Savitri' and it often restricted them to express their dissatisfaction and opinions. It was the male dominated society that permitted the role of a woman in doing housework, rearing children etc. Unlike anyone, Pande's female protagonists are not mere representatives of traditional 'Sita' images.

Instead, they are the images of 'newwomen' like a flooding river to the curves and corners. Throughout the work, the heroines strive to seek refuge from domestic, professional and sexual traps to find themselves.

In spite of love, marriage or sex, refuge turns out to be another trap wherein they further lose their freedom and identity. It was not only after marriage, but even in the parental homes, heroines find it difficult to manage their relationships in the traditional middle class. They often experience uneasiness or hatred towards their mothers, whom they view as dominating and oppressive individuals. It is in the name of education or marriage, the heroines often try to stay away from their homes seeking relaxation from the agony experienced by their mothers. The fathers of the heroines on the other hand, become the source of support or even inspiration for these women. The heroines like Saru and Jaya see marriage as an escape route made in order to liberate them from the uneasiness they experience in their parents' home. The act of marriage with outside community, as it happens in the case of Indu itself is an example for their rebellion against the odds of chauvinistic society.

However marriage proves to be inevitable though men accept their women not as wives but more or less working women to satisfy their needs besides taking care of children. The protagonists of these selected novels opted for study are left with a sense of fulfillment both mentally and physically just due to lack of understanding from the part of the husbands. In case of heroines with children is a different case if they suffer as the history repeats like their mothers. The uncaring husband and the demanding children become obstacles to achieving individuality and peace of mind to a middle class woman.

Hence, the women suffer from the feeling of being trapped not only at their parental home but also after marriage. A woman is undertreated both at the parents' end and husband. Their professions or social commitments sometimes come in conflict with the expectations of the husbands and create tensions within the family. Finding it difficult to cope with the tensions arising out of their professional roles and domestic expectations, the Deshpande women initially seek relief through abandonment of their professional roles. Instead, they quit their professions and try to seek peace by limiting themselves to their familial roles as homemakers.

Indu, the protagonist from *Roots and Shadows* undergoes great mental trauma as a child and even after being married to Jayant due to his double standards. Ostensibly educated and liberal, he is intolerant about any deviation on her part from the traditional role of wife. The Dark holds no Terrors is a suitable example of men who are intolerant about playing a second – fiddle role in marriage, and how their manhood gets hurt when their wives gain a superior status in society. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya's trouble in marriage stems from her husband's intolerance towards any deviation from her role of a subservient life. In *The Binding Vine*, Shashi Deshpande raises the issues of hitherto untouched issue of marital rape. A matter of time is yet another novel where the husband walks out on his family comprising the wife and three daughters. Sumi, the protagonist, is so shocked that she lapses into complete silence but, apparently tries hard to keep things stable for her daughters.

Her desertion is a cause for great humiliation and mental trauma for her as it's not only a matter of disgrace and humiliation, but a bitter realization of being unwanted. People suffer from the feeling of belongingness as they are neither wanted by parents nor husband. Their hunger for words of consolation and sympathy kills the souls. The present paper dwells on the theme of female identity which is somewhere lost when a woman gets married in Indian scenario, the epitome of it being Jaya, the protagonist of the novel *That Long Silence*. She marries Mohan and after seventeen years of her married life fails to recognize her own self as she has been transformed; a metamorphosis which was so spontaneous that she sacrificed her own wills and likes for the sake of her family citadel. She did everything sacrificing just because family being her first priority. The paper traces how eventually she is able to search for her female identity

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