

## Feminist Perspective in Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence

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**ABSTRACT:** Deshpande writes about the condition of women and their failures in the rapid life changing socio economic background of India. Her portrayal of women's world is genuine, pragmatic and realistic as she presents the middle class women in her novels and writes about silent, sobbing women, mothers, grand-mothers, aunts, sisters, grand-aunts, daughters and a whole lot of women. Usually considering the dawn of culture, has been a struggle to unconstrained women from male oppression. The time before the movement of speaking or writing, work by the women authors has been undervalued because of some patriarchal assumption. Which woman affects the in justices and meted to the special category. Then literature experiences are notified that the woman chances and their preference guide which ever supportive. Basic women raise always economic social and cultural are fulfillment of in history. The novel are well research try to and long silence among maintain the writer paint of them. The true spirit of feminism is into look at women and men as human beings. There should not be a gender bias or prejudice in familial and social and cultural life. Establishing justice and gender equity is the key aspects of feminist movement. The mechanical and artificial love is significant where gender discrimination exists in family environment. Jaya could break her silence after the support of Kamat but decides to keep silence and surrender. Violence is not the solution to the problems, to bring a change one has to wait and to be optimistic. Feminist movement advocates the equal rights and equal opportunities for women.

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Feminist, Male Oppression.*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The introduction to the origin of women writing The term 'feminism' has its origin from the Latin word 'femina' meaning 'woman'. It refers to the advocacy of women's rights, status and power at par with men on the grounds of 'equality of sexes'. In other words, it relates to the belief that women should have the same social, economic and political rights as men. The term became popular from the early twentieth century struggles for securing women's suffrage or voting rights (the suffragette movement) in the western countries, and the later well-organized socio-political movement for women's emancipation from patriarchal oppression [14]. The political scope of feminism has been broadened by the impact of Marxist ideology that has made feminists challenge sexism along with capitalism for both encouraged the patriarchal setup [5]. Shashi Deshpande's women characters keeping in mind the various types and phases of the women characters expressed in her six novels are studied here and it tries to link these novels with the various phases of feminism. For this purpose it is necessary to have some discussion of feminism and feminist literature. Writers like Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf pledged for the equality of opportunity for the woman based upon the equality of value. But it was left for Simone De Beauvoir to come out with a bold manifesto for a frontal attack on the patriarchal hegemony in our society. In her famous treatise, *The Second Sex*, she has, like a raging rebel, hit hard at the androcentric customs and conventions, art and culture, philosophy and religion which have always assigned women the secondary or rather slavish position to men.

As a contemporary author, Deshpande presents the realistic picture of the male-dominated middle class society of India. Her protagonists are caught between the tradition and modernity but they try to strike a balance between the two. Deshpande is very realistic in the sense that suggests marriages are not based on love but convenience. This paper is an attempt to analyze the novel *Roots and Shadows* from the feminist perspective. It discovers the pain and suffocation of the protagonist Indu in the male-dominated society. She tries to escape from this to find her real 'self', but every time she is deceived. After a long time and much introspection her journey ends with the realization that she has been chasing shadows, leaving her roots behind. Indu lives in a joint family with her Kaka's (Uncle) and Atya's. She is brought to this house when she was only fifteen days old child [18]. In this house 'Akka' her father's Atya is a dominant person. She rules over the house [4]. Akka came to this house as a childless widow with her property and old uncle. obedient, submissive, meek and unquestioning. Indu is an educated modern Indian woman who has her own way of living. She is torn between tradition and patriarchy and rebels against the conventions and gets married to Jayant whom she loves at the age of eighteen. From this point of marriage, her life is filled with deceptions and disillusion [2]. Indu leaves her house to be free, independent and complete.

### II. Literature Review

K.M. Pandey, (2001) [6] The present paper reflecting on the three major novels of Shashi Deshpande, attempts to prove the point that Indian feminism as reflected

in the Indian fiction is a unique phenomenon that has to be valued on its own scale and should not be weighed against the scales of the western feminist literature.

ShobhaDwivedi, (2003) [11] In “Roots And Shadows”, a novel by ShashiDeshpande explores the inner self of Indu, who symbolizes the new women, who are educated and married to Jayant but her feminine instinct for articulation is suppressed. Being smothered in an oppressive male-dominated and tradition - bound society. She attempts to explore her “individuality”. Indu, a rebel, often wished to be free and unrestrained. Thus she is presented as model against women belonging to the older generation. The author has beautifully voiced out how a woman overcomes the domination by men, she can ‘voice up’ the frustration and disappointment and challenging the grave concepts of male - chauvinistic society.

S. PrasannaSree, (2003) [9] the male writers have tremendously reduced woman as inferior and weak. The male domination in woman’s life is a natural phenomena in a patriarchal society and the consequent relegation of woman to a secondary position seemed to have prompted Indian woman writers to take up the cause of women as their western counterparts. They stressed their need for women to break free from the shackles of their traditional position.

ShantaKrishnaswamy, (2004) [4] ShashiDeshpande’s protagonists might be considered as sexual profligates as they go off the track of tradition. But their extra-marital refuge fails them because their sexual freedom does not pilot them out of their predicaments. Instead of helping them to confront the problem, they only postpone the problem. When their sexual escapades bounce back, they divulge their problems to their friends or relatives. For example, Saru confesses to her father about her marital crisis to save herself from it. Her father advises her not to run away but to face the problem.

Siddharta Sharma, (2005) [8], It appears to me that Shashi D’s appeal lies in the feminist themes. Her plots mold into emphatic pictures of feminist points of view. Many of us are blinded by this optics to such an extent that we fail to see any other merit in her. For example, I was thinking of her novel *That Long Silence*.

### **Feminism and Femininity**

Feminism is, indeed, a serious attempt to analyze, comprehend and clarify how and why femininity is or the feminine sensibility is different from masculinity or the masculine experience. Feminism brings into perspective the points of difference that characterize the ‘feminine identity’ or ‘feminine psyche’ or ‘femininity’ of woman. It can be studied by taking into account the psychosomatic, social and cultural construction of femininity vis-a-vis masculinity the male writers have mostly seen women as inferior and weak. Gendering and some sort of misogyny are evident in the texts written by

men [4, 8]. They see men as ‘superior sex’ or the ‘stronger sex’ while women are seen as is the ‘inferior sex’ or the ‘weaker sex’. Men are considered as logical, rational and objective, and, women are perceived as emotional, inconsistent, intuitive, subjective and lacking self-confidence. But the modern woman has raised her voice against the atrocity and injustice done to her by the system. And it is their pronouncement in an overt tone that has created the difference also in totality. It was mainly after the Women’s Liberation Movement of the late 1960s that the contemporary feminist ideology evolved and the female voice was heard with special concern. The focus of the literary studies was shifted to women’s writing with a view to rereading, provisioning and reinterpreting it in the light of longexisting gender bias and sexual politics in history, culture, society, family, language and literature [5, 9].

### **Post-Feminism**

The first wave feminism has been the political movement for women’s rights. The second wave feminism relates to the historical context of patriarchy and oppression and attacks the male domination in aggressive, militant tone. The third wave feminism challenges the gender discrimination and attempts to find a rationale for the identities of masculinity and femininity [4, 8]. The fourth wave feminism is termed postmodern feminism and may be called ‘post-feminism’, which lays emphasis on individual woman’s inner freedom and awakening. It tries to resolve the issues and problems raised by feminism and attempts to understand the relationship of interdependence between man and woman. The term ‘postfeminism’ has become an umbrella term to cover a variety of concepts. Besides the egalitarian perspectives, it covers the concepts of the ‘brave new world’, ‘the girl power’, cyberspace’, ‘androgyny’, ‘pluralism’, and to a certain extent the doctrine of ‘multiculturalism’. The ‘brave new world’ and the ‘girl power’ refer to the world of young women who are bold, assertive, self-assured and competitive, and do not require the crutches of feminism to secure space for themselves. The ‘bad girls’, who can counter men by their feminine wiles and their assertive-aggressive sexuality, are also included in post-feminism. The major thrust is now on the Homo sapiens. The discrimination based on race, class, sex, gender, color, community or ethnicity is seriously challenged.

It inculcates the concepts of mutual understanding and respect, irrespective of the differences. Particularly speaking about gender differences. Allan and Barbara Pease’s book *Why Men Don’t Listen and Women Can’t Read Maps* with a subtitle *How we’re different and what to do about it*, is the latest research-based survey of man-woman relationship and the problems of gender identities, and is, no doubt, a significant work towards that end. ‘Post-feminism would certainly find out definite constructive, consensual resolves

for the various issues raised by feminism. It is hoped the ensuing century (and the millennium) is free from all those conflicts that have been too much stretched out only because of conceited egos and several other complexes among the genders.

### ShashiDeshpande's Position

ShashiDeshpande's novels are concerned with a woman's quest for self; an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist's place in it. ShashiDeshpande uses irony in the majority of her stories and novels to satirize the morals and manners of our society although she is not an ironist. She employs situational, attitudinal and verbal irony to telling effect. Her language is simple, direct and terse; close to the speaking voice. Sometimes, instead of full and long sentences, she uses words elliptically and minimally and this makes for force. Six of her major novels, *Roots and Shadows* to *Small Remedies* in the chronological order are chosen for this thesis. The focus in these novels is on heroines or the major women characters. Her heroines are sensitive to the changing times and situations, they revolt against the traditions in their search for freedom. Indu, the protagonist in *Roots and Shadows*, her first novel, emerges successfully as a woman of determination and does not yield to the dictates of the patriarchal society [4, 7]. She exemplifies a woman in the transitional period that is torn between age-old traditions and individual views. It records how she defies the worn-out traditions, pushes aside all her fears about her imagined inadequacies and asserts herself as an individual [14].

### III. CONCLUSIONS

ShashiDeshpande's feminism is certainly not cynical or nihilistic. She analyses the universal significance of the woman's problem, thereby transcending the feminist perspective. She believes that feminism is "... very much an individual working out her problem." She is quite down to earth in her feminist approach to the woman's problem. For though she is aware of the seriousness of the Indian Woman's dilemma and the generation old struggles behind it, she also believes that a positive change in women's social status cannot materialize without bringing about a change in woman's mindset first. The woman's increasing involvement rather than detachment in her predicament as expressed in her novels reveals the positive, humanistic side of Deshpande's feminism. Hence, ShashiDeshpande rightly considers her role as an Indian feminist as one of a 'humanist feminists'. Thus, ShashiDeshpande has given a true picture of the society and not a biased one. Although she often denies being a feminist in her writings, yet she admits that in personal life, she is one: "I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a feminist.

In my life, I mean. But not consciously as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has come to me very

slowly, very gradually and mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first and only then discovered my feminism" Likewise, in *The Binding Vine* raises her voice against the rape of her elder daughter by her sister Sulu's husband. In *A Matter of Time*, is left by her husband He left without saying anything to anyone. And everyone blamed for the fault which she has not committed. Then there is another brave heroine in *Small Remedies* who has lost her only son and who tries to get over the shock by writing biography of a famous singer. She tries to find out how managed to live without her child. And finally she gets her piece of mind back when she learns to live the life with courage like Savitribai.

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