



EVOLUTION OF NEW WOMAN: A STUDY OF SELECTED NOVELS OF MANJU KAPUR AND SHASHI DESHPANDE

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ABSTRACT

Image of modern voice of female has been explored by many Indian Women writers. Among them Shashi Deshpande & Manju Kapur, contemporary woman writers of India, project their protagonists as trapped between tradition and modernity situation which makes them undergo great mental trauma as they move in a zigzag journey of self-awareness and their quest for identity. A close study of the selected novels, reveal as to how well writers have been able to voice their concerns and how well they have been able to project and portray the shifting paradigms of the characters feminine sensibility. The present paper is a sincere and humble effort to explore the evolution of new woman in India after the partition. The birth of "new woman" in India is a reality, as the concept and position of womanhood has changed in the modern context. Though this new change in thought has its variables, the results are relative depending upon the individual. Through present paper, the researcher has attempted to investigate a new façade of Indian culture that gave birth to a new woman presented in the select novels of Manju Kapur and Shashi Deshpande. The new image of women presented by novelists is ambitious, lustful, power hungry and bold.

Key Words—Evolution, new woman, psychological, Manju Kapur, Shashi Deshpande.

INTRODUCTION

Writer Henry James popularized the term "New Woman" a figure who was represented in the heroines of his novels, such as Isabel Archer in Portrait of a Lady, and Daisy Miller in the novella Daisy Miller. The term New Woman always referred to women who exercised control over their own lives be it personal, social, or economic. Although the New Woman



was becoming a more active participant in life as a member of society and the workforce, she was most often depicted exerting her autonomy in the domestic and private spheres in literature, theatre, and other artistic representations.

In India, the situation was entirely different from the West. Indian woman was subjugated since ages. She was under the authority of man. Medieval India was not women's age and it was supposed to be the 'dark age' for them. The Hindu moral code known as "The Laws of Manu" denies woman an existence apart from that of her husband. In Indian patriarchal society, a husband was considered God. She had been taught since her childhood that she has to obey her husband and family. Her parents offered her no chance to think about her identity. Due to this reason their freedom was lost.

They were not allowed to move freely and this led to the further deterioration of their status. In the post-colonial era, the portrayal of women in Indian novel in English underwent a radical change. The conventional ideal woman who meekly tolerated traditional, domestic and sexual oppression and whose mouth was muzzled, voice arrested and movements fettered by patriarchal norms and control, was replaced by the "new woman" who started resisting traditions, orthodox concepts and values. Western feminism sought to change human consciousness about male dominance.

The birth of "new woman" in India is a reality as the concept and position of womanhood has changed in the modern context. Though this new change in thought has its variables, the results are relative depending upon the individual. This new woman is an assimilation of western influences as well as her native culture. She is a hybrid who despite of all kinds of upheavals, is able to strike a balance among diverse spheres of her life.

The post-colonial modern novelists depict a "new woman" in their fiction, the woman who is the product of modern mercantile society, one who revolts against the traditional social set up. There is a consistent growth in her behavior and attitude. Thus, the journey of such woman becomes a case study of feminism. The researcher here has explored the new women presented in the select novels of Manju Kapur and Shashi Deshpande.

Concept of New Woman in the Selected Novels of Manju Kapur:

Manju Kapur is an Indian novelist who was born in 1948 in Amritsar. She graduated from the Miranda House University College for women and went on to take an MA at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and an M.Phil. at Delhi University. Manju Kapur is a professor of English where she is a teacher of English literature at her alma mater Miranda House College, Delhi. She has three daughters. A Feministic tradition is strongly apparent in her novels. She has written five novels: *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman*



(2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2009) and *Custody* (2011). Manju Kapur's fiction stresses on the woman's need for self-realization. The image of the 'New Woman' and her quest for identity, her determination to realize personality and to achieve self-definition through life, growth and experience, is portrayed convincingly and very forcefully by her.

Manju Kapur takes into account the complexity of life, different histories, cultures and different structures of values in her plots. Her women under the patriarchal pressure and control are subjected to physical torture and social ostracism. They are more discriminated and are biased in lieu of their sex. But her heroines do not want to be rubber dolls in society rather they continuously strive to assert their identity. The key issues investigated by Kapur in her novels are education, marriage, and polygamy. *A Married Woman* and *Home* deal with new women protagonists. They give us revolutionary themes, the plot centers on a woman's obsession with love and lesbianism.

Here, "new woman" is bold and modern in perspectives. She is job oriented, rebellious, educated and thoughtful. Kapur's heroines are mostly educated, aspiring individuals caged within the confines of a conservative society. Their education leads them to independent thinking for which their family and society become intolerant of them. They struggle between tradition and modernity.

Concept of New Woman in the Selected Novels of Shashi Deshpande:

Shashi Deshpande, born in 1938 in Dharwad, Karnataka, India, is an award-winning Indian novelist. Shashi Deshpande has written four children's books, a number of short stories, and ten novels, besides several perceptive essays, now available in a volume entitled *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*. Her books include: *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1983) *That Long Silence* (1989), *Small Remedies*, (2000), *A Matter of Time* (2001), *The Binding Vine* (2002), *Moving On* (2004) and *In the Country of Deceit* (2008).

Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* is very much similar to her earlier novels, as it sketches her middle-class female protagonist predicament in a male-dominated world, where she has very little scope to give voice to her concerns. The protagonist Urmi plays a role of anchor, it is she who is used by the novelist very clearly to expose the suffering of women from different sections of our society. *The Binding Vine* deals with the multifaceted of its central character Urmi. Urmi is an intelligent, educated middle class wife, who is employed as a lecturer in a college. She is not dependent upon men for survival and asserts both her economic as well as psychological independence.



She is the voice of resistance in the novel that registers a protest against the patriarchal attitude to the issue of rape. She is not dependent upon men for survival and asserts both her economic as well as psychological independence. She is the voice of resistance in the novel that registers a protest against the patriarchal attitude to the issue of rape. Urmi's vision towards life is quite different from other women of our society. She is one who affirms her independence and freedom in each and every judgment of her life. Urmi united in marriage with the man whom she preferred, but is desperate in her married life because of her ego and to some extent Kishore her husband is accountable for it.

Urmi, however, appears to be the most rebellious of Deshpande's female protagonists. Being acutely aware of the injustices and inequalities prevailing in the society against women, she makes an effort to set things right. She strongly fights on behalf of the rape victim Kalpana and resolves to translate and publish her long-dead mother-in-law Mira's Kannada poems. She also admonishes Vaana, who is a meek and submissive wife, and encourages her to be more assertive. The novel celebrates women's coming together with other women as friends and companions and sharers of life rather than as rivals for approval by men.

Shashi Deshpande for the first time enters into the metaphysical world of philosophy. Basically, the novel tells about the voice of three women from three generations of the same family and tells how they cope with the tragedies in their lives. In the novel, *A Matter of Time* Deshpande has revealed to our gaze the fears, frustrations and compulsions of three women from three generations of the same family. Manorama, Sumi or Kadyani. In the novel of Shashi Deshpande men are considered as logical, rational and objective, and women are perceived as emotional, inconsistent, intuitive, subjective and leaking self-confident. But the modern women has raised her voice against the atrocity and injustice done to her by the system. And it is their pronouncement in an over tone that has created the difference also in textually. 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.

CONCLUSION:

Novels of Shashi Deshpade also have female protagonist who try to find out their own selves and they ultimately reach a resolution in their lives the paper describes the modern voice of women. An in-depth study of Shashi Deshpande's Novels, present a realistic portrayal of contemporary middle class women. With a focus on women's issues, her novels give a comprehensive perspective on modern Indian women. Deshpande's Novels reveals that she is a highly sensitive writer who is fully aware of the male-female imbalances in the society. Her Novels are concerned with a woman's quest for self.



Every human being is equal at birth and should have the right to survive on his/her own terms. Whether or not the changing times and the world scenario are acceptable to us, women are definitely talking front ranking positions in every sphere of life. A woman should be aware, self-controlled, and strong willed, self-reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense. Though independent to some extent, Shashi Deshpande's women characters are firmly bound by the shackles of tradition and seek fulfillment only within the orbit of family and tradition. Manju Kapur's novels reveal the life of women, their struggle for basic rights, quest for identity and survival.

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