

## **Authentic Female Characters in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande**

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**Abstract:** *Shashi Deshpande, at heart, is a realist. She has created authentic female characters—flesh-and-blood characters with recognizable credentials. She presents a plausible story of authentic characters and not shadowy abstractions. She believes in presenting life as it is and not as it should be. There are a number of Indian novels that deal with woman's problems. But the treatment is often peripheral and the novels end up glorifying the stereotypical virtues of the Indian woman, like patience, devotion and abject acceptance of whatever is meted out to her. The heroines of Shashi Deshpande are totally different in the sense that they explode the myth of man's superiority and the myth of woman being the paragon of all virtues. Every novel starts with people. Female character occupies a pivotal position in her novels. She creates live characters out of day-to-day life and very carefully avoided creating wooden characters to fulfill her dream. The novelist excels in the portrayal of women characters. But she is against the character of superwoman or idealizing them.*

**Keywords:** *Recognizable, Authentic, Peripheral, Glorifying, Stereotypical.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Shashi Deshpande as an Indian English novelist stands apart, for she writes about certain specific concern in her own manner. Her fiction with rare insights and finesse, bonds the author's relation with her work. Shashi Deshpande's major concern is to depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated Indian woman caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self expression, individuality and independence for the women on the other. Her fiction explores the search of the women to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role as a daughter, wife and mother. She has examined a variety of common domestic crisis, which trigger off the search. Deshpande's concern and sympathy are primarily for the women. While revealing the woman's struggle to secure self-respect and self-identity for herself, the author subtly bares the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by women in our society.

### **2. HEROINES OF SHASHI DESHPANDE**

Shashi Deshpande's major concern is to depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated Indian woman caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self expression, individuality and independence for the women on the other. Her fiction explores the search of the women to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role as a daughter, wife and mother. Shashi Deshpande's novels progresses in the same manner as her female protagonists in her novels. As the novel unfolds, all her female protagonists- Indu (**Roots and Shadows**), Saru (**The Dark Holds No Terror**), Jaya (**That Long Silence**), Urmila (**The Binding Vine**), Sumi (**A Matter of Time**), are shown to be in a state of confusion at the beginning. Slowly, as the novel unfolds, they go through a process of self-introspection, self-analysis and self-realization. At the end, they emerge as more confident, more in control of themselves, and significantly more hopeful towards a bright and positive future.

### 3. CAREER ORIENTED FEMALE CHARACTERS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

Shashi Deshpande portrays modern, educated and career-oriented middle-class women, roughly between the age group of 30 to 35. She has treated the typical Indian themes very sensitively and has pictured the contemporary middle-class women with rare competence. Their search for freedom and self-identity within marriage is a recurring theme. Her women are aware of the cultural and social shortcomings to which they are subjected in this male-dominated society. They rebel against their men in search of freedom and identity, but ultimately find themselves up against well-entrenched social inertia. They seek change, but within the cultural norm, seek not to reinterpret them, but merely make them alive with dignity and self-respect. The voice of this newly emerged class of woman is heard in the writings of Shashi Deshpande. A voice of protest against the marginalized condition of women as a class is also audible in her works.

### 4. FEMISIM IN SHASHI DESHPANDE

Shashi Deshpande is a feminist writer strongly propagating her own brand of feminism with a broad humanistic outlook. Deshpande's creative talent and ideology have established her as a great writer genuinely concerned with women's issues and anxieties. Her characters display great strength and courage in evolving their own role

models as per the requirement of their social milieu. She has been successful in creating strong women characters who refuse to get crushed under the weight of their personal tragedies, and face life with great courage and strength. Her novels are essentially reflective of the unenviable situation of the beleaguered contemporary Indian women, which she has depicted with great artistic finesse and astounding originality. Her commendably realistic depiction of the contemporary Indian women's situation and the pragmatic solution she puts forward, accord her novels an imperishable importance for their affirmative eloquent message for women and the whole humanity as well.

She has examined a variety of common domestic crisis, which trigger off the search. Deshpande's concern and sympathy are primarily for the women. While revealing the woman's struggle to secure self-respect and self-identity for herself, the author subtly bares the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by women in our society. A new generation of women emerged, embracing the changed values according to which women have a voice of their own, a voice that had been suppressed for centuries. These women, who have the capacity to make a free choice and need not therefore depend on the choice of the male, are portrayed in the novels of the new generation women novelists.

### 5. AUTHENTIC FEMALE CHARACTERS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

Shashi Deshpande, at heart, is a realist. She has created authentic female characters—flesh-and-blood characters with recognizable credentials. She presents a plausible story of authentic characters and not shadowy abstractions. She believes in presenting life as it is and not as it should be. There are a number of Indian novels that deal with woman's problems. But the treatment is often peripheral and the novels end up glorifying the stereotypical virtues of the Indian woman, like patience, devotion and abject acceptance of whatever is meted out to her. The heroines of Shashi Deshpande are totally different in the sense that they explode the myth of man's superiority and the myth of woman being the paragon of all virtues. Every novel starts with people. Female character occupies a pivotal position in her novels. She creates live characters out of day-to-day life and very carefully avoided creating wooden characters to fulfill her dream. The novelist excels in the portrayal of women characters. But she is against the character of superwoman or idealizing them. To an interviewer also she told, "*My characters take their own ways. I've heard people saying we should have strong women characters. But my writing has to do with women as they are.*" (11) Deshpande's women characters have the strength of their own, and in spite of the challenges and hostilities, remain uncrushed. Every heroine of her novel rejects rituals that are the vestiges of the past. In their rejection they discard the meaningless rituals like circumambulating the tulsi plant. Both Indu (**Roots and Shadows**) and Saru (**The Dark Holds No Terror**) refuse to undertake such rituals which are meant to increase the life span of their husbands. The rejection is as an indication of their autonomy and their capacity to see their lives independently. She advocates that the woman is not merely a conglomerate of such functions. She has to be judged at par with her male counterpart on the basis of her potential.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The brief interpretation of the novels of Shashi Deshpande reveals the fact that she upgrades the position of women. She strongly believes in the reciprocal relation between men and women. She feels that both men and women should live together to make their lives beautiful and also make the nation great.

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## **AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY**



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