

Eco-Feminism in the Short Stories of Shashi Deshpande

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Abstract

One of the noteworthy types of writings is short story. The short story has made a long journey to reach in the cutting edge world. The Indian short story in English can be said to have started in the 1920s and there was a solid move from a liberal humanism towards a woman's rights that was established not in any given hypotheses but rather in unequivocal ideological premises. The present paper is an endeavor to depict the picture of women's status in the socio-cultural, financial, political and mental settings as portrayed in the short stories of Shashi Deshpande. Scholars like Tagore, Sarat Chandra, and Chalam and later numerous women journalists started depicting the women as people with their own preferences and individual sentiments. Shashi Deshpande, the Sahitya Academy Award-winning Indian woman writer in English began her vocation as a short story writer with her first short story in 1970, at this point she wrote nine short story collections, twelve books and four books for youngsters. In her works, women characters show inward quality, boldness, certainty, solidarity, and assurance. The short stories of Shashi Deshpande outline the socio-cultural topics and organizations, for example, home, family, a society of Indian white-collar classes. Her works dwell upon conventional, urban circumstances, as well as originate from a firm conviction that our lives are, all things considered, represented by sex. The paper likewise means to comprehend and assess how the women characters in the short stories of Shashi Deshpande are dealt with and impacted by the socio-cultural matrix.

Key Words: Feminism, humanism, solidarity. Woman's rights, identity, freedom

Short story is an extensively read form of literature, there may be variety of various themes, it conveys moral lesson and the reader feels crisp and satisfied in the wake of perusing the story. In short story, the writer puts together various incidents and as a result the story comes to exist. H. G. Wells defines:

A short story is, or should be, a simple thing; it aims at producing one single vivid effect; it has to seize the attention at the outset, and never relaxing, gather it together more and more until the climax is reached. The limit of the human capacity to attend closely therefore set a limit to it: it must explode and finish before interruption occurs and fatigue sets in. (quoted in Hammond's, *H G Wells and the Short Story* 3)

The peculiarity between the old and the modern short story reflected in the new phrasing for the short story that emerged in the different parts of India. This cutting edge of the short story was unmistakably unique in relation to the old. There was a cognizant endeavor towards the structure, specific incidence, an element of enthusiasm, power and there is an appreciable attempt to bring together the string of instance and feelings paving the way to that minute. As opposed to putting lords and rulers or other noble figures at the focal point of activity, the cutting edge modern short story made the regular man its hero and his ordinary encounters its subject. The modern short story turned out to be immovably grounded as a general rule it discussed the everyday encounters of common men and through these encounters it

attempted to reveal the relationship that exists amongst individuals and society.

Apart from *The Legacy and Other Stories* (1978), *Dark and Other Stories* (1986), *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1986), *The Nightingale and Other Stories* (1986), *Stone Women and Other Stories* (2000) are also remarkable among the short stories of Deshpande. Deshpande's feminism is deeply rooted in local background with the perspective of humanism and optimism. Her notion of feminism is taken otherwise as breaking of tradition and display of grumpiness where as she believes that feminism is a process of self realization and building respect for the self. Like Anita Desai and Nayantara Sehgal, Deshpande is in not just portraying the pitiful life of Indian women however also attempting to comprehend and proposes measures for improvement. She depicts educated and uneducated women of modern age who are aware of cultural and social weaknesses to which they are subjected in this male-dominated society. They rebel for the search for freedom and identity.

The concerned author like Shashi Deshpande stresses over the status of women in Indian structure. Shashi Deshpande's short stories give a point of view on women in their intricate and genuine connections. They are about mothers and daughters, grandmas and spouses, working women outside the home, arranging a harmony between convention and advancement, women breaking down or simply communicating their uncertainties, fears and wants. She depicts the picture of various classes of women crushed in between convention and innovation in her short stories. She is the main Indian creator to have made striking endeavors at giving a voice to the dissatisfactions of women regardless of her intense foreswearing of being a women's activist. G.S. Amur remarks in his introduction to *The Legacy*:

Woman's struggle in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and most important of all, as human being is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writer and this appears in all her stories (9-10).

Her stories by and large raise the issues of women's personality, their rights, their status and position in the society. 'The Liberated Woman' is about a young woman who falls in love with a man of a different caste, and marries him in spite of parental opposition. She is intelligent and hardworking, and becomes a successful doctor, but her marriage breaks up because of her professional achievement. It's a story which shows the tragedy of learned and educated woman who has good education and earning but she cannot take her decision by herself independently in spite of being financially independent. She cannot stand on her feet without the husband's consent. The story also deals with troubles of a lady doctor who could not face the brutality of husband. We also find the problems of women, their struggle and their fight for the survival and identity. In typical Deshpande's style, all of the characters are believable; the best defined perhaps is Mai, always dignified but detached matriarch. Deshpande, in her stories, clearly, emphasizes this tolerant nature of violence in women's lives whether they live inside the home or work and survive the outside world. She does not disseminate her doctrines but represents a reasonable and

truthful picture of women in modern India. The spirit of post modern Indian English literature muffled with the strains of past and present and the yearning to usher in a more satisfying futuristic era has been aptly drawn in the works of Shashi Deshpande. As Walters opines:

Modern women are torn between the past and the possible, but difficult and yet unexplored, future (*Feminism : A Very Short Introduction*).

The real agony of Deshpande is the struggle in which the modern, educated and hence more literate women are caught up. Torn by the pulls and pressures which convention and male centric society force on her physical, social, mental fabric, the sentiment of self expression, uniqueness and freedom turns into, all the more, solid. Deshpande reveals that marital domesticity provides one of the significant platforms on which the rooted collective meaning of the socio-cultural life of individuals is executed in the form of the demarcation of roles in man-woman relationship. Deshpande discusses the trouble of assuming the diverse social roles charged on a woman by society; it leaves the impression that she is something progressive and something other than what's expected from the entirety of these roles. Her female characters show a consistent advance from self-distance to self-revelation i.e. from dimness to light. They understand the acknowledgment of the present and face life strongly. They take upon gender distinctions in existence with open eyes and feel empowered with a receptive outlook.

The women denied of adoration, acceptance, and fellowship are the focal points of her work. She indicates how conventional Indian culture is one-sided against women. The stories are generally women focused, women in their diverse roles of daughter, mother and wife, who end up encased in a custom bound male-dominated society and who definitely experience the ill effects of dejection and a feeling of guilt and disappointment. Shashi Deshpande brings out intensely the mental issues of a working woman. Shashi Deshpande says that women ought to emphasize herself with the goal that she can survive all the suppressive powers. Deshpande's women are completely aware of the self destruction for the husband and family and this may lead them to an anguishing want not to be overlooked, not to vanish into nothing after death. The part of mother can likewise be overflowing with clashes and issues that are not very the same as those of any western woman. Deshpande depicts mothers who, because of a solid sentiment of self-downgrading, view themselves as interloper in their own particular family and outsiders to their own daughters who need to look up to the reality of their daughters' sufferings. She likes to act like a camera, recording feelings and circumstances with authenticity and affectability.

Deshpande's women characters are not undoubtedly autonomous, striking and gallant who endeavor to return to the conventional model, however, all the while, they may need to go through a tormenting period of an existentialist problem, self-estrangement, defy outrages and dissatisfactions. "The Awakening", another short story by Deshpande, tells about a young lady, Alka, who needs to forfeit her

investigations keeping in mind the end goal to raise her dad, mother and various siblings and sisters. She is absolutely displeased by the way that her dad had been throughout his life, who however, had not done anything beneficial. So disenthralled does she feel towards his dad that she says- "I can't pardon him for being what he is; I'll never excuse him" (*The Miracle and Short Stories*) Even the expressions of acclaim articulated by her dad towards her, strikes her as a bolt making a profound gap in her heart as she straightforwardly answers –

“You know I have to give up studies... You know you have ruined my life”

She says that she is 17 and feels herself to be “a million unfulfilled dreams old” (Deshpande, *The Miracle and Other Stories*).

'Why a Robin' begins with a girl requesting assistance from her mother for a school project. Her task was to expand on 'Robin'. At the point when the mother was not able to help her daughter with the report, her daughter fled to her father getting upset of her mother's unawareness. The mother has a feeling of anxiety as she feels concerned of her daughter's knowledge. She feels void between her and her husband. In view of her absence of social association, she feels nothing inside her heart. She is terrified of rejection. She is frightened to ask for her what she needs. Toward the end of the story the daughter opened up her inclination to the mother, and this speaks of another scaffold between the mother and girl.

'A Matter of Time' is the tale of a woman deserted by a man. The woman is Sumi, who has three daughters; her husband is a professor named Gopal; and her desertion forces her to return to the family's home in Bangalore. The issues Sumi faces are not specifically Indian problems; they are universal ones - not just the difficulties in her marriage, but the conflicts within her family as well.

'Can you Hear Silence' represents a woman's silence as she does not express her suffering and agonies. Her silence implies deeply hidden sorrow. Silence implied in the story is the feeling of every educated Indian woman, whereas uneducated women are happy with their husbands as they never think that they are imprisoned. The characters are well drawn and dialogues are scintillating. The story “Mirror” is psychological and not realistic. The central figure in the story is Sachidevi, the wife of Indra.

The story 'The First Lady' depicts the story of a woman, who is agreed with her husband's decision to adopt a celibate lifestyle on condition. Being a wife of a political leader, she desires to be in her withdrawn status, as she is fed up with wearing masks. The story opens with woman protagonist's rejection to the compliment given by her servant. Instead, in a self-consoling mode she signifies her own physical appearance. Further she denies the beauty of mind and says, '... what can you expect when you're nearly seventy?' In spite of her disappointment with the 'austere atmosphere of her husband's home', she appears to be a satisfied receptive of public award of 'gracious and dignified first lady' which is rather mechanical. She views their life 'too exalted,

too uplifted for too long a time.' Hence, she finds everything around 'futile and meaningless'. She denies life that 'has lost its meaning because it relates to nothing but one's own petty concerns.' Her judgment of the present life invites her husband's aggression. Consequently, quite meticulously, she trains herself to attend to more 'irksome' public functions.

Talented and scholarly, Deshpande's art has developed with encounters throughout her life and readings. She has utilized a fine strategy and style to make her books fascinating and reasonable. She delineates the anguish of the cutting edge instructed Indian woman, caught up amongst male centric society and custom from one viewpoint, and self-articulation and independence on the other. Without a doubt, Shashi Deshpande's topical concern is with a woman's battle, with regards to contemporary Indian culture, her push is to discover and safeguard her way of life as a spouse, mother, and above all as a person. The essential focal point of consideration in the short stories of Shashi Deshpande is the woman – her travails and privations, pressures and aggravations, agonies and anguishes. Her stories depict the social and good confinements which Indian women need to battle through everyday life. And the vast majority of her women as well as the stories have been described from this perspective.

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