

**A THEMATIC STUDY ON THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WOMEN IN SHASHI  
DESHPANDE'S NOVELS**

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**Abstract**

This paper deals with the study of psychological aspect of women in Shashi Deshpande's selected novels, Small Remedies and That Long Silence. Shashi Deshpande occupies a prominent position in Indian English Literature through her innovative thought and spiritfull words. She concentrates mainly on the women characters and their struggle throughout their life journey. She gives much attention to their talent of decision making during trouble. Deshpande's women characters literally expresses the psychology of women belongs to various generation. Both psychology and literature focus mainly on the social behaviour of human being. Psychology is the scientific study of human behaviour. It deals with how behaviour changes with development when behaviour is instinctive or learned how persons differ and how people get into trouble. It explores the study of emotion and the study of personality is two related fields that delve into the profound question of why we are different and why we feel, how we feel. This study brings out the psychology of three different women belongs different generation.

**Keywords:** Psychology, women, literature, suffering, assertion, quest.

Shashi Deshpande, a reputed woman writer in Indian English Writing, was born in Dharwad, a small town in the state of Karnataka in 1938. She is a Sahitya Akademi Award-winning novelist who writes in English. Deshpande's novels embrace with certain perennial themes such as quest for self identity, man-woman relationship, and the image and experience of educated and rural family woman. Her style of writing is unique and used to express her feministic views through her writing in a prolific literary style.

Among various types of psychology, Cognitive psychology is the one which concerns with the way we perceive and we express how we store our perceptions and later recall them and the way we think. The study of decision making is a topic that has a great practical importance. Shashi Deshpande's women characters express these perspectives throughout the novel. Her perception on psychology of women is shown through her following words,

“There are three things in my early life that have shaped me as a writer. These are that my father was a writer, that I was educated exclusively in English and I was born a female.” (1996: 107)

Shashi Deshpande's *Small Remedies* is a self-conscious novel which has internalized a sophisticated awareness of current literary theory. It presents many of the contemporary issues that a woman has to face in her day to day life. It also presents a problem, analyses it and posits a kind of solution. So that, the focus is on the psychological process of becoming a mature person. It is the most confident assertion of her strength as a novelist with her deliberate denial of sentimentality and her total control over the material. The desperate search for meaning, the effort to find a sense of one's identity and one's relationship to the world outside, culminates in realization that loss is never total and it is essential to realize it because, in any event, life has to be made possible. One of the distinctive features of her novels is its subtle manipulation of female psychology.

Shashi Deshpande has portrayed women's issues realistically both psychologically and physically in her novels. She broke the literary and social norms of the past. She studied deep into psyche of her characters and projected various images of women and their status in society. She has written about women in a varied cultural perspective. In her novels *Small Remedies* and *That Long Silence*, women characters have attitude of rejection and negation of life with a compromising attitude leading to deep sense of fulfilment.

Deshpande's success lies in her representation of real life experience. She realistically depicts the inner conflict of Madhu, the protagonist of the novel. Madhu is searching for her identity after the death of her only son Aditya. The whole novel revolves around the women characters like Savitribai, Leela, Munki where Madhu is the central character, through whom the author spotlight the psychology of the women characters belong to different era.

It is the story of Madhu, a lonely daughter, a sensitive and capable woman, a very vulnerable wife and mother. The novel presents Madhu's struggle with her shattered family life, as she goes through her husband's sudden change into suspicious nagging husband, who wanted to know about her relationship with a man, before she marry him. During this instance Madhu's son Aditya is killed in a bomb blast, throwing both Madhu and her husband Som into a pathetic situation. It is the story of Madhu, who faced with the terrible vacuum caused by the death of her only son Aditya, sets out on a long and lonely journey. To come out of her grief, she is confronted with the lives of two other women, both brave in their own ways. One is Savitribai

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Indorekar, a star singer, who dedicated her life to music and another one is Leela, Madhu's aunt, with whom she has spent her youth and adulthood.

In order to refuge Madhu retrieve from her sorrow, her husband Som induces her to take up the task of writing a biography of a reputed vocalist, Savitribai. Savitribai, who had lived for sometime as a neighbour to Madhu and Munni, Savitribai's teenage daughter different from other girls. Madhu was a motherless child brought up by her father and a servant, but the love and affection she received from them gave her a secured childhood. Her father was dead when she was fifteen and it shattered the adolescent girl. Her grief coupled with the knowledge of another woman in her father's life alienated Madhu. In her grief she was guided by an uncontrollable impulse that makes her lead to sexual encounter with a friend of her father. This incident gives a terrible shock in her life.

Madhu is troubled when she knows that her father left her in the care of an aunt. Her stay in aunt Leela's house proves to be a strange experience. Madhu struggled a lot to make her relate with the new members of Leela's family. Days passed and Madhu realizes the true love and affection shown by Leela and her husband Joe. In spite of their true love and affection Madhu shift to hostel. Soon after her graduation she wanted to lead independent life.

Madhu's independent life leads her to fell in love with Som, who is a friend of Leela's son Tony. Her friendship with Som blossoms into love and her marriage with Som makes Madhu to become a part of real family for the first time. That was the time she really overcome the grief after she lost her father. At the time of her father's death she thought that there was no one for her in the world, but her married life paves a new path that fulfils her thrust and longing for true love and affection. Days passed by and as a reward for her happy married life Madhu gave birth to a male child and named the child, Aditya. Birth of Aditya gives her new identity as a mother and found herself rooted in the worldly life. According to her,

“A child's birth is a rebirth for woman; it's like becoming part of the world once again.” (Small Remedies-88)

Now Madhu feel the zeal in her life and her world is full of happiness and satisfaction and she started to lead her life with intrigue. Motherhood gives her a new sense of worth and her whole self, her views, her desires all changed according to it. She later recalls that period of her life as,

“Motherhood takes over my life; it makes me over into a entirely different person, The in-control-of-herself Madhu is lost, gone forever. It's my baby's dependence that changes; my place in the universe is marked out now.”(Small Remedies:183)

This word shows the psychology of mother whose sorrows are vanished as soon as they see the face of their child. They are dedicated their life to their child and started to lead a new life for the welfare of their children. Though they come across enormous troubles they relish their depression when they look at the smile of the children. She overcomes her bereavement only after her son's birth. It brings a tremendous change in her.

Madhu pursues her life with enthusiasm and this happiness didn't continue for a long time. Som started suspecting her and tormenting her every movement. It affects her terribly and brought her back to the distressed world. Som's suspicious thoughts make them quarrel between each other. This is the stage of woman in this patriarchal world who has to struggle with her husband to lead a peaceful life.

Shashi Deshpande's another novel That Long Silence is one of her well known novels which won the Sahitya Academic award. Jaya is the protagonist of the novel who had sustained a lot in her married life with her husband Mohan and endeavoured to acquire self realization through her writing. That long silence represents Jaya's fear, guilt and Silence. Through this novel Shashi Deshpande narrates us the story of a husband and a wife from the wife's perspective.

Jaya has moulded her life according to the desire of her husband Mohan and search for her own self and identity. She expresses her view through the following lines:

“It hadn't been Mohan's fault at all. And it had been just a coincidence, though it had helped, that just then Mohan had propelled me into that other kind of writing. 'I encouraged you', he had said to me. He was right. But, I went on with my chest-beating out of penitence, Mohan had not forced me to do that kind of writing. I'd gone into it myself with my eyes wide open.”(That Long Silence)

Jaya undergoes a psychological war between herself and her husband Mohan. She had played two different roles in two different name. Suhasini and Jaya. She is named as Suhasini during the time of her wedding and it is considered to be a rite in few Brahmin communities. It is a ritual of renaming a bride is seen here as a representation of the individuality. The spirit and courage of Jaya is reduced to a household wife and mother, after she was named as Suhashini. Later her intellectuality as a writer hindered and she become a traditional bounded family woman.

Traditionally, women are expected to bind themselves with culture to obey the words of male society in various forms, such as, father, brother in their pre married life. After their marriage women are forced to follow the footsteps of their husband blindly, whether he travels in the right path or not. Though women are economically independent they never allowed to live in their own style. There are certain restrictions imposed on woman in expressing their thoughts and feelings in the male dominated society. In the same way the society wants women to be silent in certain situation and it is said to be the strength for women.

In these novels the novelist brings out powerfully the psychological problem of women and discusses it artistically without crossing the obstacle of art. The novel also transcends feminine constraints and raises issues which the human beings in general encounter in their life. The novelist aims to show that one should take refuge in the self. It means that woman should assert and ascertain herself, so that she can overcome the suppressing forces.

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