

A CONCEPTION OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract: Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter Of Time* is a novel with the stamina to boost women to come out from their traditional conventional roles of a dutiful wife or mother to the position of an empowered women. The depiction of women characters in this particular novel advocates the need of education for girl children to become undependable either on father or mother. The three generation of women characters in this novel show the development in the status of women from one stage to another in a peaceful way. In a country like India which is bounded by tradition and culture and at the same time as a male chauvinistic nation, Shashi Deshpande comes out with her product in which much priority is given to the progress of women by penning them as educated. The second and third generation women in this novel completely avoid the presence of men who remain as a stumbling-block in their way to destination. Through this paper an attempt has been made by the researcher to show how women starts their way to progress by possessing a profession of their own.

Keywords: Education, Empowerment, Profession, Women

Introduction: All creative writers try to express their experiences or feelings in a unique way in related to a particular theme on which they focus but only a few writers are able to capture the inner feelings of individuals around and depict them as characters in their works. Women writers especially in Indian Writing in English are focussing continuously in themes related to feminism in order to bring up the oppressed women to a respectful status. They are responsible for the creation of new women who struggle against the male dominated society because the attitude of women against men in recent times has changed. That's why the writings of Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande and Githa Hariharan deal with the theme of man-woman relationship, gender discrimination and other themes related to feminism as well. Among these women writers, Sahitya Akademy and Padma Shri awardee, Shashi Deshpande occupies a leading place who continuously focuses on the psyche of Indian middle class women. Her contribution to the literary field is so massive that her works does not stop by just telling the plight of women characters, they instead show how the women personalities find out the remedy for the problems before them. She makes a straight journey into the minds of Indian middle class women who are torn between the surroundings and individuals to understand the peculiarities of them and portray them in their works.. All the women characters in her novels, in one way or other use their profession which they gain through education to overcome their hurdles. As P.G.Joshi observes "For all her protagonists, writing/creation is an important means of liberation." (185) The novel here taken up study is *A Matter of Time* to show how Shashi Deshpande brings the women out to the broader world who struggle to liberate themselves from the tradition bound families to seek a self-identity through education and employment. This particular

novel deals with the disharmony and distress of an educated woman Sumi in a tradition bound Indian society and the hopeful way she chooses to liberate herself and her daughters from the patriarchal society which exploits them in the name of tradition and culture. In this novel Sumi's husband Gopal abandons Sumi and his three teenaged girls for no reason. His walking out of the family shows that he is not ready to bear the responsibility of carrying the burdens of the family as a father and husband. Sumi unlike other woman, takes a bold decision of accepting her desertion imposed by her husband as a challenge. Sumi's self-respect refuses her to request him to return to her. So she starts her life by taking instant actions like learning to drive scooter, looking for a house in order not to become a burden to her parents and finds a job with the help of her innate talent of creative writing and stands on her own legs. She is now ready to fulfil her desires and her daughter's without forcing Gopal to be with them. Though Gopal brings disgrace and shatters the peace of family into pieces, Sumi and the girls remain the sufferers. But throughout the novel Sumi remains bold, courageous and confident by accepting no one's sympathy and fights for her rights alone with her daughters by liberating herself as an independent and new woman. She understands that their path of life has diverged and they have to travel in their own way. She with a positive attitude keeps her question "How then can you, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back on everything in your life? Will you be able to give me answer to this?" (MT 27) unasked which pierces her mind after a few days of Gopal's disappearance. Sumi unlike her mother, is aware of the mishappenings happening to her and welcomes it as an opportunity to find a meaningful existence of her own in the sphere of life. By the confident words of Sumi "Be happy for me Aru. This is the first thing in my life; I think that I got myself" (MT 104) after

joining as a teacher, is understandable that she asserts her identity by becoming an economically independent woman, planning for the future. She feels like a parasite to be in her father's house so she looks for a permanent job in order to remain completely independent than sponging on parents by being a temporary teacher. She feels that she is able to retrieve the hidden talents of her, only after the departure of her husband Gopal. When her play "The Gardener's Son" comes out as a successful one, her self-confidence seems to increase and she wants to write more like this. Devaki, another character in this novel who had been a dark person in a family which possess only fair complexioned members and an "odd Hindi speaking girl." (MT 104) She remade herself despite all her shortcomings. She got her own independent role in the society by becoming a woman entrepreneur. Similarly Yamunabai who was a dreamer, founder of Yamunabai Pawar High School for Girls, who had a vision, "a vision in which girls and women would not have to live with nothing more in their lives than the slavery of endless drudgery and childbearing." (MT 187)

Aru, Sumi's daughter is shown as a rebellious character who fights against the traditional conventional roles inflicted upon women as a dutiful wife or mother. In all the stages she stands hand in hand with her mother. She claims her father legally with the help of a lawyer and also questions him, "Why did you get married at all, why did you have children?" (MT 47) The serious words of Aru "I'm never going to get married." (MT 76) clearly delivers her strong view on patriarchy which makes women as victims in the hands of men. Aru in all hard

situations stands hand in hand with her mother and proves that she is capable of pursuing her dream without other's assistance. Unlike other protagonists of Shashi Deshpande "Sumi straightaway decides to face the facts squarely." (Sree 108) but she doesn't ask for a divorce because she knows that divorce will not bring any freedom and she has to continuously face the economical, emotional and psychological conflicts associated with divorce in Indian society. She boosts her children by refusing the inferior treatment given to women in the society, because she wants her daughters to enjoy all the happiness and joy in their life. The pitiable situation arises when she met with an accident and dies unfortunately. Her death is not an end but the powerful start of her daughters' life. She stands as a role model for her daughters to establish Aru and Charu, their identity as a lawyer and doctor proves that women like Saru, Devaki, Yamunabai are able to bear the seed of confidence in the minds of younger generation of women and are capable to make a positive change in the traditional social structure through "positive attitude towards life, work, economic independence, and self-identity" as observed by Mukesh Yadav and Shalini Yadav in the article From Despair to Hope: Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time*.⁽¹⁾

All the women characters in this novel show the development in the status of women from one stage to another in a peaceful way. Shashi Deshpande through this work makes the readers visualize how the women characters in this particular novel gain their own identity without relying on others by giving importance to education and employment

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