



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN SHASHI DESHPANDE AND MANJU KAPUR'S NOVELS

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Abstract

One of the most influential authors in Indian English literature, Shashi Deshpande is renowned for her gripping examination of women's inner lives. Her writings explore the intricacies of gender, identity, and how women in a traditional society navigate marriage, patriarchy, and individual goals. With an emphasis on Deshpande's themes of feminism, identity, and the changing responsibilities of women in post-independence India, this essay examines how her female characters deal with these difficulties. : The purpose of this article is to draw attention to the issue of a woman's powerlessness. Society constantly wants women to be meek, docile, and timid, regardless of whether they are mothers, daughters, sisters, or wives. Through their novels, Manju Kapur and Deshpande attempt to draw attention to the shift that our society is undergoing, but it will take millions of kilometers before this shift becomes apparent. Delineating inner life and nuanced interpersonal relationships has been a key focus of current Indian women's writing. Individualism, the pursuit of uniqueness, demonstrations, and notions of rebelliousness have frequently remained foreign concepts to women in Indian culture and tradition. Women were not allowed to speak out for their rights, oppose injustice, or challenge prevailing beliefs, traditions, rituals, and superstitions.

Introduction

In their English-language Indian novels, Shashi Deshpande and Manju Kapur's "New Woman" is a particular type of woman who, in contrast to her Western counterpart, critically examines feminist philosophy, which she believes to be male-identified. This 'New Woman' is different from the 'New Woman' of Victorian society in that she opposes marriage but not society, and she supports nuclear families over joint ones. She is socially emancipated, educated, economically independent, intellectually tough, and exhibits paradoxical behavior. Manju Kapur and Shashi Deshpande are the bright spots in the galaxy of Indian English women writers. Their fundamental philosophy is to free women from the patriarchal system, and they have worked hard to develop female characters that are appropriate for the current state of Indian society, where the role and place of women have been repeatedly questioned. In general, Indian English literature depicts two kinds of female roles: traditional and non-traditional. Women suffer in roles of both kinds. While women in unorthodox roles suffer because they reject orthodox society and embrace western-influenced modernity, those in conventional roles suffer because they accept patriarchal culture and socially created ideology.

Shashi Deshpande

1. Indian novelist and writer: Shashi Deshpande is a prominent Indian novelist and writer known for her insightful portrayals of women's lives and experiences.
2. Prolific writer: Deshpande has written numerous novels, short stories, and essays that explore themes such as identity, family, relationships, and social issues.



3. Awards and recognition: Deshpande has received several awards for her work, including the Sahitya Akademi Award.

Manju Kapur

1. Indian novelist and academic: Manju Kapur is an Indian novelist and academic known for her thought-provoking novels that explore themes such as identity, family, relationships, and social issues.

2. International recognition: Kapur's novels have gained international recognition and have been translated into several languages.

3. Exploration of women's experiences: Kapur's novels often focus on the experiences of women in Indian society, exploring themes such as marriage, family, and identity formation.

Both Deshpande and Kapur are celebrated authors known for their nuanced portrayals of women's lives and experiences in Indian society. Their works offer valuable insights into the complexities of women's identities and the social and cultural contexts that shape their lives.

Women's Experiences in Deshpande's Novels

The writings of Shashi Deshpande provide an important and admirable forum for the expression of the stories of women whose lives have traditionally been marginalized and ignored by the norms of popular literature. Her writings show a diligent effort to elevate and elevate the voices of women whose narratives have been noticeably left out or ignored. This dedication to literature is especially evident in her unwavering focus on the complex problems that women experience, where she deftly raises important subjects like domestic abuse, patriarchal systems, and the frequently limiting frameworks of social expectations. In her book "The Dark Holds No Terrors," for example, Deshpande bravely explores the life of Sarita, the main character who is caught up in the horrifying web of domestic violence. The story provides a moving depiction of a problem that is far too often unsaid and hidden by shining a sharp light on the terrible reality of domestic abuse and revealing the suffering and trauma that are typically kept hidden in the private realm. Likewise, in "That Long Silence," the author deftly explores the inner agony of the protagonist, Jaya, as she struggles with the various aspects of a patriarchal culture. Deshpande highlights the widespread and stifling influence of patriarchal norms on women's goals, desires, and sense of self via Jaya's personal journey.

Fundamentally, Shashi Deshpande's writings represent a significant forum for the restitution of stories, surpassing the traditional literary conventions to function as a celebration and critical analysis of the lives of oppressed women. Her stories go beyond simple creative expression and assume a didactic function by illuminating the often-silenced or mute experiences of women. Her writings provide scholars with invaluable resources for in-depth analyses of gender dynamics, patriarchal structures, and the larger social structures that shape women's experiences while also demonstrating the transformative power of literature as a vehicle for



promoting social consciousness and bringing about change. The works of Shashi Deshpande significantly and significantly advance the representation of female characters in Indian literature. Her ability to portray women in all of their diversity while also tackling gender and identity issues makes her work not only significant but also a crucial starting point for discussions about the status and roles of women in modern Indian society.

Women's Experiences in Kapur's Novels

In the world of patriarchal supremacy, where female marginality and the primacy of stereotyped definitions of women are clearly defined, Virmati, a strong character in the novel *Difficult Daughters*, is shown to be able to find room. Through the pages of this exquisite book, Kapur tells the story of Virmati, a woman who challenges the strictures of her traditional family, dares to fall in love with a married man, educates herself through education, and eventually marries to live as her beloved's co-wife. The story takes place in British India in the 1940s. The books examine the women's relationships with their mother, siblings, friends, and other family members and show both obedient and rebellious women. It also clarifies the mentalities of educated, metropolitan middle-class women who are caught between the past and the present. Virmati fights to establish herself in the midst of her family's turmoil, which is reflected in the political unrest of the era. She finds inspiration in the inspirational figure of Lahore and learns that she can overcome her inhibitions by taking part in the Indian freedom movement and experiencing the modernity that appeals to her. Rather, she decides to battle for her own issues, such as her morals, her family, and her desire to wed the man she loves. Although she is able to lead her life on her own terms, she is never able to find a total reconciliation within herself. As the novel narrates eventually Virmati finds another Virmati in her own daughter, Ida- who refuses to tread on the path defined by her and later becomes a *Difficult Daughter* for Virmati just like herself, where she inherited the quality of being the difficult daughter like her mother Kasturi.

The book *Home* highlights the persistently discriminatory mindset regarding a girl child's upbringing in India. The heroine Nisha's traumatic journey from childhood into adulthood in pursuit of self-identity is chronicled by Kapur. Nisha's search for a home—that is, a place of safety and refuge—is revealed by the study. Although a woman in India may not always feel physically secure in her home, it is not a place of ease and relaxation and does not guarantee her mental security. The book tells the tale of a typical middle-class joint family that has made Delhi their home. The sexual abuse of Nisha by her own cousin, Vicky, also raises issues of children being physically abused by their own family members. Since a female is viewed as a sexually aroused object, it is expected that she will take care of her beauty in order to attract attention and be seen as the ideal marriageable girl. Sona, Nisha's mother, constantly pressures daughter to be tidy and elegantly attired like a princess. She forbids her from playing in parks with other kids since it could darken her complexion. The novelist convincingly highlights the protagonists' sense of alienation and suffocation within the conventional boundaries of marriage and family.

The existence of metropolitan centers, where people have become the victims of modernity, is revealed in Manju Kapur's fifth book, **Custody**. It draws inspiration from economic liberalization and globalization. There was a time of economic and financial boom following the initial wave of foreign investment that swept through India. Investment bankers, government officials, bureaucrats, and small and large industrialists welcomed the flood. Naturally, the main characters are materialistic. The tense existence of Raman, a budding marketing executive, his wife Shagun, and Ishita is the subject of the book. The current study aims to address several important facets of the book **Custody**, such as the conflict between freedom and marriage, polygamy, extramarital affairs, infertility, infidelity, the manipulation of children by their divorced parents, and the legal system's lack of interest in India. The end picture is one of victimization, exploitation, manipulation, and pain. Every character has a distinct mindset that reflects the modified modern virtues. The novel's exquisite portrayal of the different tragedies that a family experiences is made possible by the author's ability to create a wonderful environment.

Conclusion

The authors of Manju Kapur's and Shashi Deshpande's books attempt to delve into the emotional histories of their female leads. Both authors' female protagonists have certain characteristics in common. They are able to examine how they contribute to their oppression, disobedience, and identity search. The intricacies of the man-woman connection and the transformations they experience are explored by both novels. The two novels' viewpoints diverge, though, as Deshpande addresses the existential question itself rather than merely feminist issues. To accept their position and role in the family, Indu and Jaya go through a process of self-reflection and analysis. According to Shibani Banerjee, Deshpande's ladies want to control their own destiny. She has concentrated on educated, middle-class women and has powerfully shown a confused yet courageous feminine psyche in the new ethos. The determination of her protagonists to face the world is encouraging. In a similar vein, the female protagonists in Manju Kapur's works overcome obstacles, struggle, compromise, and break the law to establish their value. Compared to Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapur's female heroines have a more contemporary outlook and method. When it comes to satisfying their demands, they can go too far. In contrast to Shashi Deshpande's characters, they practice lesbianism.

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