

**WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION THROUGH SELF-EVALUATION: A STUDY OF MAJOR WOMEN CHARACTERS IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVELS.**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
OF  
THE REPORT OF MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO  
UGC: WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE  
GANESHKHIND  
PUNE – 411007 (MAHARASHTRA)**

**BY  
DILIP KUMAR JENA (PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR)  
LECTURER IN ENGLISH  
MANOHARBHAI PATEL COLLEGE OF ARTS & COMMERCE  
DEORI – 441901, DIST – GONDIA (MAHARASHTRA)**

**SUMMARY**  
**OF**  
**THE REPORT OF THE MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT**

During a long journey of nearly hundred and fifty years, Indian writing in English has churned out considerable works in every genre of literature. Poetry was initially the choice of most of the writers. But through a gradual change, novel emerged as the most convenient vehicle of expression for all the major Indian creative writers. They found it as a suitable medium for establishing a close rapport with the readers.

The remarkable trait of today's Indian English Literature is the rise of a galaxy of women writers who have been anchoring many facets of women's creativity. They have not only brought the important aspects of our individual and social life into the limelight, but also developed a trend with a purport and proposition. Moreover, they have acquired national as well as international acclaim and distinction through various reputed awards and honours.

It has been a tradition of Indian English writing to exhibit many-sided images of Indian woman. She is, occasionally, elated and elevated to the position of all powerful—*Shakti*, and at others, dragged and despaired as the underdog. But Indian women writers disclaim these traditional images nowadays.

**CHAPTER 1. - Introduction**

Shashi Deshpande, one of India's leading novelists, was born in 1938 in the small town Dharward. She is the daughter of late Adya Rangachar, better known as Sriranga, renowned Kannada playwright as well as Sanskrit scholar. Being groomed in a literary and intellectual atmosphere, she got all necessary protein to be a well-educated and widely read person and finally an extensive novelist of high repute. She does not identify herself with any group or type of writers at home or abroad. She has not gone through any kind of training and not applied any theory in her writings.

Besides her eight novels and collections of short stories, Shashi Deshpande has to her credit several children's books, articles and stories in magazines and anthologies, a book of essays titled *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays* (2003), and has written the screenplay

for Hindi feature film *Drishti*. Chronologically speaking, her novels are *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Binding Vine* (1993), *A Matter of Time* (1996) and *Small Remedies* (2000).

Shashi Deshpande is not happy with the present condition of women. She is constantly hurt and haunted by how women of our society are used and exploited both overtly and covertly. She pines to try her level best to utilize her potential for their betterment. Shashi Deshpande is a novelist of substance. Each of her novels is a disinterested pursuit to disinfest society's disjointed attitude towards women, and a reproductive reproach upon man's urge to be a superior being.

## **CHAPTER 2. - A Brief Survey of Socio-Economic Condition of Women in India**

Before attempting an assessment of Shashi Deshpande's novels (which show her keen concern for women), it will not be out of place to glance at the findings on the condition of women in India. Various sources are incorporated in this chapter. All of them depict the plight of Indian women.

Undeniably, women constitute half of the population. But they are either denied their due or deprived of it. A nation's development implies the improvement of women's condition. Their dues must be conferred on them. The increased numbers of industries do not connote all-round development and should not make an allowance for country's complacency. Not only a sound economic but also a substantial social as well as political atmosphere in general and women's status in particular is the basic necessity for the development of a nation. So women's status needs to be assessed scrupulously in this context.

A concerted national effort to devise and develop a woman-friendly atmosphere is consistently needed to bridle the over-flowing cruelties on them and to take measures as well as precautions for the proper accommodations of their medical amenities and economic independence. The picture presented is glumy. Many Indian women novelists in English have voiced their feelings against the inhuman treatment meted out to women. A keen observer of life and its complexities, Shashi Deshpande has brought out the struggle of women to wriggle out of their imposed ignominy.

### **CHAPTER 3. - Self-Evaluation**

Shashi Deshpande's novels have women protagonists. Each novel starts with a problem of the protagonist where she is presented as a grown-up and married woman, entrapped in a dilemma where she is bound to go through a course of evaluation of her past.

The women protagonists are the modern Indian women having some new hopes and aspirations. They are trying to assert and ascertain their rights as human beings and have determined to fight for gaining equal treatment with men. The most important achievement of these modern women is their awakening into a new realization of their place and position in family and society. They are conscious of their capabilities and limitations. Before marriage, they are brought up in traditional families having mediocre financial status. So they are forced to face many obstacles to pursue education and career. After marriage, they are grabbed in the crossroad of tradition and modernity—that of a working woman and a housewife.

### **CHAPTER 4. - Resolution for Emancipation**

With a keen insight into subtleties of human behavior, Shashi Deshpande dives deep into the psychological complexities of the individual mind. She treats her women characters as individuals and gives a clear picture of their search for meaning and purpose of life. It is the basic instinct of a human being to outshine and outdo the other. Everyone has the ego or 'I' and he seeks to realize the self in his lifetime.

The major women characters in Shashi Deshpande's novels are educated, modern and working women. They crave to establish themselves as individuals having their own identity. They dislike being considered as appendages to men. On the contrary, various forces of society, directly or indirectly, inhibit them to stamp their individuality. The women come out from the restricted traditional bonds and bounds but it proves to be a leap in the dark.

A crisis of identity crops up when the women develop relationship with others. Bereft of support and confidence, they find themselves fettered in the chains of alienation as the situation lacks congeniality and compatibility. They face the hard realities of life which make them aware of the fact that they have dearth of identity in their own capacity. "Shashi Deshpande's women wish to be the architects of their own fate. Here is the authentic, poignant tale of the middle class educated women and their exploitation in a conventional male-dominated society."<sup>4</sup> As a result,

they are engrossed in a thinking-process—evidently a course of self-assessment. Consequently, it steers them towards a state of realization that life can gather force and substance only when it is cuddled up with relationships being properly accorded with adjustments and compromises, not by eluding realities.

#### **CHAPTER 5.- Conclusion**

The most significant themes of Indian English novelists at the time of independence were freedom struggle, Gandhian ideology, East-West confrontation, the communal problem and some other subaltern themes such as the plight of the untouchables, the landless poor, the downtrodden and underprivileged, the economically exploited and the oppressed. The novels are devoid of substantial women characters. By and large, women are glorified as epitomes of loving and sacrificed mother, caring and dedicated wife, and obedient daughter. Their submissiveness is commended but their defiance is not at all accepted and any deviation from the social rules or patriarchal expectations is condemned.

Though possessed of a sense of being unjustly treated, harassed and exploited, Shashi Deshpande's women finally work out adjustments in their lives, being well aware of the fact that India is a different land and European Feminism will not hold its sway forever. So, while trying to seek and evolve patterns for themselves, they finally work out their own redefinition of life and open themselves to adjustability.

Signature

Principal Investigator,  
(Dilip Kumar Jena)  
Lecturer (English)

Signature

Principal,  
Manoharbai Patel College of Arts & Commerce  
Deori – 441901, Dist – Gondia (Maharashtra)