
DOI:<https://doi.org/10.53555/eijhss.v4i1.75>

**A STUDY OF THE FEMINIST STYLE AND TECHNIQUE INSHASHI
DESHPANDE'S WORK**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Women's writing in English began to appear soon after the poems, stories and novels all came together, although sporadic and hesitant. The larger changes in intellectual, socio-cultural reconstruction, and multi-dimensional of Women's image, role and status that were part of the widespread social movements of the entire 19th century gave Women's writing clear focus and purpose. Indian English literature has been making great strides during the last few decades thereby attracting the international attention. In fact, the post-independence period in the history of Indian English writing is generally equated with the modern period. It must be said in the light of all considerations that the post-independence Indo-English prose and poetry has characteristics which make it distinctive and different from the writing of the earlier period. The post-1947 era, that is the period after India gained independence, is marked by the country's search for her own identity as a new-born nation in the modern world. This search for identity is also reflected as one of the remarkable features of literature produced by contemporary Indian writers. Indian women poets writing in English from Toru Dutt to Kamala Das reveal the mind boggling variety of themes as well as style that poetry is capable of offering. It needs to be remembered that poetry written by women need not be viewed only as feminist poetry. For the first time in Indian English poetry, the women poets of post-Independence and postmodern period portrayed in a subversive idiom their desires, lust, sexuality and gestational experiences. They enriched Indian English poetry with a wealth of new themes and experience. They developed a new innovative iconoclastic discourse to portray their repressed desires. Thus, a new form of feminist poetry emerged and grew to give the Indian English poetry new strength, new diversity and new potent a new signs of maturity. Her life is a revolving dream of languid and sequestered ease. She feels concerned for the desperate condition of widows, but, at the same time, in her maudlin voice, she seems to be endorsing the practice of Sati. She published various lyrics, talked about the relationship of a man and woman. She protested against discrimination of man:

"You held a wine cup in your fingertips,

Lightly you raised it to indifferent lips,

Lightly you drank and flunk away the bowl...

Alas! It was my soul....."¹

Although Indian English poetry written by women marked its presence in the nineteenth century with arrival of Toru Dutt, further reinforced by Sarojini Naidu in the next century this poetry, despite its strength and importance, lacked a sense of immediacy and intimacy of personal experience. These poets were more concerned with establishing their credential as Indian poet writing in English than with the exploration of their inner urge. So, they wrote largely of Indian myth, legend and landscape, their personal self and suffering were relegated to the background. But after the mid-sixties of the twentieth century's perspective change was noticed with the emergence of an assertive self, in the poetry of Kamla Das, and this trend went on gathering strength with Mamta Kalia Lakshmi Kannan, Meena Alexander, Vimla Rao, and Eunice de Souza. This new breed of women poets is poles apart from lilted romanticism of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu the poetic world of the new generation is more real and vibrant, even if it is ugly on the face of it. There is a remarkable shift in the poems of contemporary Indian women poets from eulogizing and spiritualizing love to a more mundane acceptance of sexuality and the physical needs of women. These poets have discovered their own voices and developed their sensibilities. Their poetry expresses the desire of woman to get away from the ties that have restricted her since times immemorial. Some women poets, in particular, have made worthwhile attempts at mapping out new terrains as human beings and also as creative writers (Pathak 15). The women poets of the present century have surely and confidently come out of the romantic entanglements, of the claptrap of the past tradition and succeeded in formulating a new tradition and a 'new mode of articulation' that is at once original, natural and spontaneous. The poetry of Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Mamta Kalia, Monika Varma of the older generation and Sumita Jain, Lakshmi Kannan, Meena Alexander, Vimla Rao, and Eunice de Souza of the present represents the genuineness and geometricality of the essential feminine sensibility. From her answer Deshpande could well be one of her own developed protagonist wives who learns how to break her silence and find her voice and identity. Shashi Deshpande is a very well-known and popular contemporary novelist in India. In earlier fiction, especially those written by male novelists, women were presented more as symbols and less as people positively or negatively, they were portrayed in a one dimensional manner as virgin heroine or all sacrificing mother, the Pativrata or the redundant widow. Though in the middle of the nineteenth century, post-independence fiction by women achieves a separate identity. Among these novelists, Shashi Deshpande is a woman novelist dealing with the world of women. She belongs to urban middle class, English educated society. Her milieu is the world she is familiar with. She depicts women with both their negative and positive attributes.

2. Brief History of Shashi Deshpande

Despite having only a few important novels to her credit, Shashi Deshpande has emerged as one of the mainstream women writers in India today. Her main focus is detailed, sensitive and realistic representations of the Indian middle-class woman in the domestic sphere. Her concern for women and their oppression is reflected strongly in all her writing. She deals with the empowerment of women. Shashi Deshpande was born in 1938. She was the daughter of a famous dramatist and writer, Shriranga. She received an English education at a protestant mission school in Karnataka. As a schoolgirl, she read the great British classical novels in English and particularly liked the works of Jane Austen. She studied Economics in Bombay and graduated in law from Bangalore. She later received an MA in English Literature. Shashi Deshpande's father's liberal and sometimes radical ideas are played an important role in shaping her outlook. Though she came from a Brahmin family, her father never allowed his children to state their caste.

He also did not bring up his daughters with prejudice and bias towards their gender. Thus, her father played a significant role in the moulding of Shashi Deshpande's values and principles. However, he did not influence her writing style at any point

3. Critical Views about Shashi Deshpande's Writing

Shashi Deshpande has to her credit eight novels. They are as follows: (1) *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), (2) *Roots and Shadows* (1983), (3) *That Long Silence* (1988), (4) *The Binding Vine* (1993), (5) *A Matter of Time* (1996), (6) *Small Remedies* (2000), (7) *Moving on* (2004) and (8) *In the Country of a Deceit* (2008). She is well known in literary circles of depicting the quotidian life of the average Indian. What has earned her respect is her uncompromising stance as an Indian writer who writes in English, but steadfastly resists the malaise that seems to have afflicted the current crop of Indian writers. She refuses to embellish and package her writing to portray India as an exotic land, full of magic and mysticism a formula that has succeeded in gaining international readership for other authors. She is admired for choosing to tell stories about ordinary people playing out the scripts of their lives, quite unseeing perhaps, of the grand scheme into which their mundane actions fit. Shashi Deshpande's fiction sails into the heart of the great middle class darkness where women and men are almost forced to contend with situations with which they have little or no wherewithal to deal with. Caught in the great divide between tradition and modernity, uncertain which direction to take, unsure of the social sanctions that are to guide and propel them, the predicament of Shashi Deshpande's characters has a national resonance. Her repeated depiction of the way in which a society in transition redefines gender roles, remaps the structure of the urban Indian family, demystifies the nation of the joint family as always nurturing, as mothers always loving and giving, as daughters always dutiful and willing to comply. Shakuntala Bharvani aptly comments, The woman of today, therefore, speaking in the language of psychology, has a near schizophrenic personality; one side steadily "accepts" while the other craves to speak, to think and express the life of the mind."²

4. Self-Identity in Shashi Deshpande's Works

Among the contemporary writers in English, Shashi Deshpande is perhaps the most self-conscious artist. She tries to construct a unique world out of day-to-day existence of a female in her novels. Her persistent search is for an authentic existence by bearing the sole responsibility for her decisions rather than by appealing to the authority of custom or even her own past patterns of thought. The general problem in the novels is of self-consciousness of the characters and the recurring theme is self-awareness and self-identity. There is intense questioning and the protagonists are torn between their search for their authentic existence and the limitations of the human situation that prevent them from such realizations. Shashi Deshpande's characters cannot be classified into rigid groups, because an extensive range of women belonging to different classes, castes and educational levels is found in her novels. She concentrates on the middle-class woman as her protagonist. Her **protagonists** come to **awakening** through a crisis. According to her, woman should not lament her victimage but accept her own share in perpetuating patriarchy, understand self and work hard to realize her suppressed potential. Whatever the situation, a woman will have to be bold, face the situation and realize her existence in the society. For her protagonists, writing is an important means of liberation. Sometimes, we find that whatever is happening in the lives of Deshpande's female protagonists, we find that the same is happening with us in our lives. What I like so much in Deshpande's protagonists is that whatever the situation they are facing, but they will do the struggle, never surrender to the circumstances but instead strive to achieve victory in their journey. Therefore I have selected Shashi Deshpande with her fiction in my journey of research. To Search for one's true self has always been a major theme in Deshpande's Novels. Her protagonists face problems and troubles in this journey towards self identity.

5. Feminism in Shashi Deshpande's Work

Shashi Deshpande's Novels and Short Stories depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated Indian woman caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand and self-expression, individuality and independence for the woman on the other. Her fiction explores the search of the woman to fulfill herself as a human being, Independent of her traditional role as daughter, wife and mother. She has examined a variety of common domestic crisis which trigger off the search. Deshpande's concern and sympathy are primarily for the woman. While revealing the woman's struggle to secure self-respect and self-Identity for herself, the author subtly bares the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by women in our society. This stance of Deshpande's makes her a feminist write

6. Critical Views of Shashi Deshpande's Works

In Shashi Deshpande's 'The Dark Holds No Terrors' Saru, the medical professional is quite happy in her married life with Manohar and two children; but one day she discovers that her marriage has been destroyed. Shelter realizes that her superior social and economic status has wounded Manohar's ego, making him sexually aggressive without his being aware of it. The novel shows how woman's achievement instead of being respected, brings to her into trouble. Shashi Deshpande's fiction seriously attempts to capture the schizophrenia and fragmentation that mark paradigmatic shifts of a country, a people and a society moving from the reasonably known to the frighteningly unknown. Shashi Deshpande is the first Indian English writer since Mulk Raj Anand who has focused on members of the underclass. In 'That Long Silence' and in 'The Binding Vine' Shashi Deshpande has created memorable portraits of lower class women and girl children. These novels are essentially narratives about the middle class women's search for

identity. She courageously “names” these women and depicts their struggle for survival and self-respect. Shakutai, her daughter Kalpana and sister Sulu in ‘The Binding Vine’ represent the doubly colonized other of our society. This woman is often the sole breadwinner. She is oppressed not only by her men but also by her circumstances. Shashi Deshpande’s ‘Small Remedies’ (2000) purportedly appears to be a biography of Bai. Madhu is a writer and she is at the same time writing her own life. In a self-reflexive manner she tries to find some meaning of her own life. She describes herself as a house wife, besotted with her love for her son Aditya and complacent in the happiness of her home. But when tragedy strikes her life she shows her inner courage in coping with it. Central to Shashi Deshpande’s book is the approach to events, to truths, to lies changing, altering their shape and meaning, according to the way we look at them

7. Sentimental and Romantic Poetry

They have little in common with the earlier generation of Indian women writing sentimental and romantic poetry in English in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The poetry of these new poets is born out of their intense experience as women. They have articulated as overtly and boldly as male poets. Their poetry has now taken for its theme various Indian subjects from legend, folklore, to contemporary Indian situations. Greater realities, analytical approach and greater awareness now marked their poetry. The canvas became wide and interests more varied. Thus the real flowering of their genius came in the post-independence era. There is a remarkable shift in the poems of contemporary Indian women poets from eulogizing and spiritualizing love to a more mundane acceptance of sexuality and the physical needs of women. These poets have discovered their own voices and developed their sensibilities. Their poetry expresses the desire of woman to get away from the ties that have restricted her since times immemorial

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A lack of interest and pleasure in life coupled with a feeling that things are not worth the effort because they give no pleasure is visible in the works of contemporary women poets. This contemporary poetry reveals the frustrations and tensions which women face because of the discrepancy between the way they want to behave and the way they are made to behave. The entrenched patriarchal structure still continues to control and restrict the lives of women in one way or the other. It still considers that women are someone’s daughters, wives or mothers, minus their own personality. A woman’s attempt to self-discovery leads to interrogate that she has not been only born as a woman but she becomes one as she is hardly a product of socio-cultural environment in the making of which she has any part. Her true identity is smothered by the ubiquitous, all pervasive, too dominant and too oppressive patriarchal culture which pushes and assigns her a place away from centre to periphery to a margin of existence. To define and salvage herself, to find out who she is and what she has lost to break the fetters of servility, it becomes imperative that she opens up, she ventilates to unleash her innermost pangs of guilt, misery, fears, doubts and anxieties to reinstate her experience as woman, so that she can acquire autonomy over her being and discover her true self. This realization triggers off a journey into the recesses of her being and like a phoenix she strives to rise to be reborn. It is this struggle of self-realization that becomes the text of most women writers. The poetry of these poets expresses a woman’s longing for independence and freedom, quest for an individual identity, hunger for establishing a meaningful relationship with a man, with the outside world. Indian women for ages have been in the whirlpool of pain and suffering. William Bentick, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidyasagar and others have contributed immensely for the upliftment and restoration of their rights. The orthodox Indian society is yet to ‘free’ the Indian woman fully from its tentacles. However there has been a change in contemporary times. Woman today is not a mere mirror that magnifies the image of her man. She is allotted neither a political or rhetorical voice. Kamala Das writes

**“I don’t know politics but I know the names
Of those in power,
And can repeat them like
Days of week, or names of months
Beginning with Nehru”.⁴**

With regards to the new trends and techniques in women’s poetry there is a remarkable movement connecting the domestic with the public spheres of work. In their works we find the independent self-asserting itself. This assertion is reflected in the imagery, rhythm, even in the punctuation of their works. These women have made ‘their language’ their strangest weapon. They have introduced in it a new array of thematic contents. New voices are there to relate their experiences in their art from a broad spectrum of styles.

8. Confessional Mode in English Poetry

Indian English poetry in 1970s and 80s is characterized by frustration and failure, hopes and despair, immediacy and anger, search and struggle for identity, human relationship and growing sense of dissatisfaction. It is a kind of strong reaction against romanticism and idealism of its predecessors. It not only tries to establish individuality and re-conceptualize values but also tries to redefine culture. Poetry consists of verbal and contextual features, choice of words (diction), syntactic and semantic features. Kamala Das orients the organization of these features according to her views on the situation depicted in poetry. Here lies her mode of confession. Confessional poetry is mostly subjective poetry but it touches upon the general humanities. The confessional poets were dubbed as neurotics by the society, as they did not follow any tradition nor respected any conventions. They wanted to be unique and not a part of the conventional social set up. This conflict with the society leads them to introspection. In the course, comes

a breaking point when they could not compromise with themselves. They lose themselves helplessly in the battle and start searching for the lost self. This conflict has given birth to a number of beautiful poems. The sensitive poet cannot take failure for granted. At this juncture, life becomes unbearable and the call of death becomes irresistible. They are more than convinced that death can offer them more solace than life. The sensitive contemporary woman poet, today, is affected not only by the complete metamorphosis of transformation of her existence but by the very concept of her century's long suppressed feminine personality. As a result she has traversed the long journey eventually to find a distinctive voice of selfhood. Apart from the expression of a uniquely and powerfully realized feminine sensibility and quest for self and identity what distinguishes these women writers from the contemporary male poet is their realistic attitude to life, sex and lust, and their frank autobiographical, vivid, candid and bold expression of such issues. The poetic self in such "New Poetry" concerns itself with capturing the moments of intense experience of the private life with all its uniqueness and immediacy. The Indian women poets demonstrate their love for the intensely personal confessional mode. With certain amount of attraction for the feminist views, they are all actively writing poetry. There are several distinct poets who work out their projects differently. Identity crisis and a quest for identity are basic to the human world. Identity has many aspects and dimensions. When self is hampered in its fulfillment in various possible roles, it generates an identity crisis which is a state of emotional and intellectual chaos and confusion crisis brings alienation. But her identity is expected to merge with and grow from her various roles as a wife, beloved, mother, daughter and so on. The subject matter in contemporary Indian women's poetry has largely shifted from the external world to the psychology of the self. It is the poetry of anxieties and tensions, with greater emphasis on psychological conflict, hate, maladjustment, wounds, rejection and depression. Nervous breakdown, nostalgic longings, excessive depression and suicidal tendencies Failure in love as a theme is more powerful in the poems of confessional poets and these are some of the characteristics of the confessional poetry. However, in forging new identities, new metaphors and symbols, new bonds and new meanings, these poets experience a conflict between their personal values and larger social practices. The weight of an entire cultural tradition that has relegated and marginalized them is too great to be either borne or cast off. The traditional make-up of conventional women is a factor which persistently forbids them from breaking away completely from the role of traditional wife. Thus, their attitude becomes double edged: rebellious and tender. In order to understand the main stream i.e. confessional theme, first we have to go through some important aspects related to the poetry of these poets i.e. Man-Woman relationship, the quest of love and crisis of women's identity. The proper understanding of these three topics leads to the depth of the confessional theme. So it becomes important for any researcher that he or she should study all these three concepts, which, undoubtedly form essential features of the confessional theme. The aim of the present study is to explore this tendency as reflected in the selected works of some contemporary Indian women poets, such as Kamala Das, Mamta Kalia, and Gauri Deshpande. And the hungry self of post-independence Indian women poets in their search for trust, companionship, security, love and dignity, confronts a variety of anomalies, contradictions and paradoxes. For present research, the confessional theme is proposed to be analyzed in the selected poems of Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande and Mamta Kalia, for this some basic assumptions which will direct this study

9. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to bring out the elements of writing of Shashi Deshpande (1938) in her fiction. In modern times women are economically independent but still willing for self-identity. Shashi Deshpande is a famous writer of India. To search for one's own true self as a female is the central theme she deals with in her fiction. She depicts the female pain, suffering and sensibility in her novels. She describes the journey of the female protagonists towards self-expression and self-realization in her novels. Shashi Deshpande is one of the shining stars in the galaxy of Indian English literature. Shashi Deshpande belongs to post independence era of Indian writing in English, acquiring confidence and indulging in twisting and turning English words and syntax to suit her purpose. She is no longer on the defensive but write what she feel, experience, think and ponder in English. Her fiction shows inward journey grappling with the intangible realities to transcribe it. I want to depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated Indian woman caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand and self-expression, individuality and independence for the woman on the other. I want to explore the search of the woman to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role daughter, wife and a mother. This study will examine a variety of common domestic crisis that trigger off the search. In the present period, where tradition and modernity exists at the same time, the modern woman has to face the struggle because of this. Even in Our patriarchal society, we feel that women are not treated as human beings. They don't possess their own identity and existence. My purpose of doing research is that how women can pass successfully through this journey towards Self Identity. By exploring the woman's search for self in her novels we will see that the modern woman is, illumined as she is by education and intelligence rather than by patriarchal tradition or other social niceties. In acknowledging herself as already an anachronism, by standing upon her own lonely resources to meet the discrepancies between dream and objective action, desire and fulfillment, hunted mystery and painful revelation, the woman in their novels performs the noblest duty of her breed and demonstrates its greatest asset intelligence. She knows there is no answer to her tormented vision; yet she strives to be whole, to be same amidst all decay, destruction and death. But, I think that there is a ray of hope for all of us. A woman can alone achieve self-identity, but the condition is that she will have to struggle for that goal in her life. Through her works she depicts search for female self by conveying the message that it is the women themselves who have to exert and come out of the mire of patriarchal oppression, to emerge

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