



SHASHI DESHPANDE THE CREATIVE ARTIST

Dr. S. Hannah Evangeline

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Arumugam Pillai Seethai Ammal
College, Thiruppathur, Sivagangai, Tamilnadu

Cite This Article: Dr. S. Hannah Evangeline, "Shashi Deshpande the Creative Artist", International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities, Volume 3, Issue 1, Page Number 237-240, 2018.

Abstract:

The literary artist in Shashi Deshpande and also the craft and art of her creation. It discerningly examines the stylistic niceties of her versatile art. It devotes itself to a discussion of her use of various devices not decorative, but functional in enriching the meaning and the message the novelist wants to convey. In the hands of Shashi Deshpande, it is not a mere descriptive account, but a speaking picture. In *Small Remedies*, the description of the very first night and morning which Madhu spends in this new house in Bhavanipur is so rich with details that it comes across like a miniature painting. She makes use of short sentences consisting of less than five words and long sentences covering one fourth of a page. The images are subordinated to the theme. Shashi Deshpande uses rhetorical devices to bring out the intensity of emotions. Deshpande's concern has been the expression of the Indian middle - class ethos. And her simple unassuming English reflects it. The English language she uses is of the kind used by an average middle - class, convent - educated individual. She writes about the middle - class people and the language used is also middle - class English, sometimes incorrect by the British standards.

Key Words: Middle - Class Ethos, Female Psyche, Gender Equality, Man -Woman Relationship, Religious Beliefs & Interior Monologue

Shashi Deshpande's skill as an artist lies in her command over the technique of fictional creation which is perfectly matched with her deep insight into female psyche. What matters is what Shashi Deshpande says and not what medium she uses. The language one employs is not important. What is important is the thought contained in the words. What is equally important is how the thought is conveyed. Narrative Technique poses a problem to women writers as stated by Jasbir Jain in his article *Gender, Style and Narrative Technique*. How women's writing differs from the writing of men is too difficult to answer, as Jasbir Jain says,

One cannot say that they write about external facts and women about internal life; one cannot also say that men write about thickly inhabited worlds and the women about solitary figures - but women do write about the responses of women, of the shadows which they alone can see, the anguish they alone can feel. It is a difference of perspective... (36).

The ideas Shashi Deshpande wants to drive home are articulated through the employment of narrative technique, the deployment of metaphor, the use of symbols, the exploitation of myths and the adoption of interior monologue or a stream of consciousness technique and the employment of rhetorical devices. Shashi Deshpande always creates the mood or an atmosphere for the currents of thoughts which she spins into her novels.

Shashi Deshpande's father's liberal and radical views played a key role in the shaping of her sensibility as a creative artist. Under the sheltering wings of her father, she inherited intellectual bent of mind and unconventional attitude. Under the influence and inspiration of her father she began her writing career. Since her child - hood she had unbridled passion for a wider choice of words. She was a voracious reader, and her vast reading made her sensitive to respond to different human experiences. This fusion of readings and reflections contributed to her creative impulse. Her objective in writing is to tear the veil of gender- bias existing in man - woman relationship. Her creative art aims at the concept of gender equality.

While discussing the technique of writing, Shashi Deshpande lays down three basic things as needs for a creative writer: What does a writer need? Very basically, three things: Ideas, urge to express and ability to use language with comfort and understanding (Deshpande: *Margin*: 6). She also lays stress on the flight of imagination and the outburst of emotion. To quote Shashi Deshpande: "It is through my imagination that I enter another world. And my desire to enter that world begins with a very strong emotion. A strong emotion and an ignited imagination - these are the two things that open the door into other world (*Margin*: 8).

The literary artist in Shashi Deshpande and also the craft and art of her creation. It discerningly examines the stylistic niceties of her versatile art. It devotes itself to a discussion of her use of various devices not decorative, but functional in enriching the meaning and the message the novelist wants to convey. To concretize the feelings of her female protagonists, to express the curve of their thoughts, to portray their mood of agitation and to register their craving for individuality and search for identity, Shashi Deshpande uses metaphors, interior monologue and point of view technique. Whatever be the technique she uses in the fictional corpus it is clearly connected to the state of her mind communicated through her fictional creations.

Shashi Deshpande exercises care and causation in the use of words. These words, handled sensitively, contribute to her creativity as an artist can well be realized by virtue of meaning, image, symbol, suggestiveness,

connotation and denotation. There is a strong sense of the painter in her. A description of a circus show in *A Matter of Time* graphically brings before the readers the various programmes in the circus. In the hands of Shashi Deshpande, it is not a mere descriptive account, but a speaking picture. In *Small Remedies*, the description of the very first night and morning which Madhu spends in this new house in Bhavanipur is so rich with details that it comes across like a miniature painting. One feels more like a spectator than like a reader. With an extraordinary creativity, the writer penetrates the dark recesses of language and emerges with the disturbing, the strangely vivid, the perfectly appropriate phrase or image. Shashi Deshpande uses emotion charged words to bring out the protagonist's state of mind caught in the quagmire of shock and confusion, for example, the passage on page number beginning with at first "we are talking together and ending with I run to him".

Shashi Deshpande uses language that is "simple", "realistic," and "transparent," (Interview with Viswanatha 10). She does not indulge in showy, bombastic or rhetorical English. It is very simple and direct. Deshpande's concern has been the expression of the Indian middle - class ethos. And her simple unassuming English reflects it. The English language she uses is of the kind used by an average middle - class, convent - educated individual. She writes about the middle - class people and the language used is also middle - class English, sometimes incorrect by the British standards.

Shashi Deshpande freely makes use of sentence fragments. There are parallel sentences used by the writer in these novels. "I will never be able to find him now. We will never be able to make it, we will never be able to get away" (*TLS*, 86). She makes use of short sentences consisting of less than five words and long sentences covering one fourth of a page. The images are subordinated to the theme. Shashi Deshpande uses rhetorical devices to bring out the intensity of emotions. The strategy called Anaphora meaning repetition of initial words at the beginning of every successive clause is made use by Shashi Deshpande.

Shashi Deshpande does not write for foreign readers. She reproduces regional terms, kinship terms, and cultured-bound words referring to customs, caste, religion and food items in addition to the re-duplication of words. As these words are scattered in the pages of the novel *That Long Silence*, the relevant page numbers where they are found are not given. She is basically an Indian and she writes for Indians." My English is as we use it.... If I make any changes, it is because a novel needs it, not because the readers need it" (Interview with Lakshmi Holmstorm, Wasafari 26). In a sense, Shashi Deshpande can be called a polyglot. She is well-versed in five languages. To her father, she owes Kannada because he is from Kannada. To her mother she owes Marathi because her mother is from Maharashtra. Being a Brahmin lady, she knows Sanskrit. She knows Hindi because it is commonly spoken in Bangalore. Shashi Deshpande, in her choice of words and images, adheres to Indian ethos and Indian tradition. She uses short suggestive and simple expressions to strike similar vibrations in the readers to share identical sensibility.

The novel *That Long Silence* abounds in several Indian terms with reference to the religious beliefs and customs of the Indian people *Sacred cow, Tulsi Puja, Raamnaam Satyahai, Purity rituals, Padre, Kartalika, Kumkum, Haldi, Divali, Brahmin, Moksha, Mudras, Ganapathi festival, Yathechchasi, tathakuru, Ghost, Mangala-Gouri puja*. There is a transliteration of the following Indian food items into English as follows, *Battatawada, Chapatties, Dal, Chutney, Bhakries, Puja bhaji, Shira, Ladoos, Bhajias, Samosas*. Etc.

To provide Indian flavour Shashi Deshpande transliterates Indian words. She does not translate the Indian words into English words. She uses the realistic approach to domesticate English. Shashi Deshpande differs from other writers writing in English because she never studied abroad. She claims that her background is firmly rooted in Indian environment. She also adds it is worth quoting the words of Couto Maria paying compliments to Shashi Deshpande's creative use of language: "Deshpande eschews linguistic pyrotechnics and formal experimentation, but has sufficient command of her to give the lie to the belief that the English language is incapable of expressing any Indian world other than a cosmopolitan one. (*In Divided Times, Rev. of That Long Silence, Times Literary Supplement, 144*).

To quote Shashi Deshpande: "I am converting the life which is lived in different languages, a small part of it being in English as well into a Single language" (Anita, 63). Jasbir Jain observes that in an essay, "Where Do We Belong: Regional, National or International?" Shashi Deshpande poses the questions: Where does the Indian writer writing in English belong, where is she located?" These questions have been asked earlier and responded to in many ways, each generation and each writer looking for different answers. It arises because the act of communication in an alien language appears at first sight to be an oddity. Yet Shashi Deshpande is one of those stay-at-homes-(non-diasporas) writers, who have not necessarily hankered after foreign publishers; nonetheless she has been translated into several European languages, has a solid readership at home and a fast growing one abroad. When she poses this question, one needs to look very closely at what she does to language and whether the language has an impact on her narrative structure.

To Shashi Deshpande, the past and the present are not inseparable entities. This interdependence helps to constitute Shashi Deshpande's vision about the predicament of women. Sarita (*The Dark Holds No Terrors*), Indu (*Roots and Shadows*), and Urmi (*The Binding Vine*) all analyse their present plight during their child-hood. Shashi Deshpande uses the first person point of view technique or the third person point of view technique or

both in her novels. The first person narration makes the story appear more realistic and more credible. The first person narration allows the author to probe into the mind of the protagonist, exposing her fears and anxieties. It provides a deep insight into the different aspects of female consciousness that cannot be presented through the traditional narrative method. She captures the intensity of emotions of her characters through the use of the first person narration. The entire novel *Roots and shadows* is written in the first person. The narrator is a participant in the novel. She is a young woman writer who returns to her childhood home and finds herself caught in a quagmire of family intrigues. In the technique of stream of consciousness, the conscience of the character gets stirred in a specific moment of time and a chain of subsequent events.

Shashi Deshpande successfully uses what has been called 'the double perspective'. This concept of using two narrative points of view - one, an I - narrator, and another a third person story teller - is a fascinating manner of unfolding the past and the present without using the conventional flashback method.

The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* presents a realistic portrayal of the psychological problems encountered by Saritha. The novel achieves a rare combination of authenticity and reality because of shifting of the narrative from the first person to the third person in every alternative chapter. Shashi Deshpande alternates skillfully between third person and first person narration. The story of Saru unfolds itself through the flashback technique. Like Jaya she too recollects her own experiences as girl as well as her relationships with her parents and with Manu, her husband. *The Binding Vine* uses flashback technique. The novel opens with the present moving quickly into past through a simple conversation between Urmi and Vanna and then lapses into the past. Urmi moves from Mira's past to the present when she gets involved in the rape incident of Kalpana and in the role of the woman organization and the media.

In *A Matter of Time* Shashi Deshpande moves away largely from the first person narration. The opening chapter in *A matter of Time* THE HOUSE is called "Vishwas". The opening capital letters seem to proclaim rather boldly moving away from a largely first -person to the third - person narration, besides giving the house an identity of its own. And the third - person narration continues with each chapter opening with bold letters.

The narrative structure in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* with its slow unburdening of memories and unravelling of the soul reads like an interior monologue similar to a stream of consciousness technique, besides using the flashback technique. The novelist uses the stream of consciousness technique to explore the inner psyche of the protagonist sensitively.

Shashi Deshpande uses the technique of the double voice in *Moving On*. The first voice is that of the woman protagonist Manjari (Jiji) and the second voice is that of her father's speaking through his diary which the protagonist reads after his death. The writer, once again, adopts the stream of consciousness technique. The flashback technique is used in such a subtle manner that sometimes the reader has to literally search for the identification of these two voices whether it is male or female and past or present. The first person single voice narration is replaced by the double voice narration.

Shashi Deshpande's skill, according to Reddy Sunita, lies interconnecting myriad themes into a coherent whole. The several themes in *Roots And Shadows* like the theme of Indu's terrifying experience and relentless probing to discover truth, the theme of Bohemian attitude in the person of Naren and the theme of old order giving place to the new are interwoven in a harmonious whole as interweaving of several plots into a unified whole in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Shashi Deshpande makes constant reference to myths, particularly to the great epics of India—*The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*, and the folk-tales. Shashi Deshpande's novels have an archetypal appeal through the use of allusions, myths and folk tales. She employs Indian myths to express collective memories and the impact on female psyche. She has given voice to the women in the Epics. These myths are exploited by the novelist to illuminate the inner landscape of women's mind.

There is no room in the fictional world of Shashi Deshpande for sentiments and romance. Romance, sentimentality, and other such features merely diminish the serious concerns of the novel. She reminisces how a publisher rejected a story because it was neither a sentimental nor a romantic love story. The foregoing discussion, thus, brings out the literary artist in Shashi Deshpande in whose hands her fictional corpus makes use of devices such as the choice of English, the narrative structure, the use of interior monologue, the deployment of myths and folktales, the employment of metaphor. These techniques reinforce the central burden of the novel, and contribute to the totality of its meaning.

Shashi Deshpande makes a meaningful use of metaphors and symbols. She employs images noted for pregnant suggestions. She is not contented with the description of her experience or feelings. But through symbols and images she is eager to dramatize them and recreate them in the mind of the readers. They are not embellishing but illustrating. Santwana Halder is right when she compliments Deshpande's unique way of using symbols that has enabled her ideas to be rendered artistically in *That Long Silence*. He further says "Shashi Deshpande's extensive use of symbols and images helps to highlight the theme of the novel *That Long Silence*. It is an example of her perfect use of figurative language for clarifying her ideas". (Halder, 122). In *Roots and Shadows* there is the image of a cage. 'The cage' is a symbol of spatial limitation. To Indu, marriage is a cage. It

becomes a symbol of restriction of freedom, suppression of identity and feeling of isolation. Saru in marriage dreams of rich fulfillment at physical, emotional and intellectual level, but her dream gets shattered. She gets only disappointment, despair and dissatisfaction.

'Writing' is another recurring symbol in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. Jaya in *That Long Silence* and Indu in *Roots and Shadows* are writers who write mainly for woman magazines about the issues of interest for women. Both of them are against writing this kind of stuff. In the case of Jaya, her husband's disapproval prevents her from being true to the real writer in her. In the case of Indu her husband warns her to carry on with her writing for money which she earns from the job. This kind of writing is symbolic of the mask they wear in the male dominating society. The foregoing chapter points to the fact that Shashi Deshpande is an exponent in the delineation of the sufferings of Indian woman, especially the middle class women through her fictional output, Shashi Deshpande enlarges our understanding of woman's psyche. It needs a different lens and a different lexis to articulate woman's agony. She expands the psychic geography and maps the horizon of the woman's place in the society

Shashi Deshpande loads her novels with everyday images also. The dependence on the husband is seen in calling him a sheltering tree. The husband and wife as two bullocks yoked together is an image discarded in the moment of self-realisation. The hiding of one's emotions is like hiding bits of garbage while the search for self and identity is like a dog scrabbling for a long buried bone. The images in these novels have thus high relevance in the depiction of character.

The Metaphors of the 'dark' and the 'light', 'death' and 'life', 'silence' occur in her novels. The metaphor of light and dark runs through the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. A *Darkness* denotes fear and sorrow, dejection and estrangement. 'Darkness' also represents the mental trauma of Saru, and her desperate yearning for light stands for love compassion and understanding on the part of her husband. Diwedi comments on the metaphor of 'silence' in *That Long Silence*. There is a deep chasm of silence between Jaya and her husband Mohan. The metaphor of *The Binding Vine* used in the novel with the same name refers to relationship binding people with one another. In the novel, for Urmi, *The Binding Vine* is her son and her mother, while for Shakuthai it is her children.

With her expressive erodes highly originally imagery and successful exploitation and resources of her medium; Shashi Deshpande has established herself as one of the most established Indian novelists writing in English.

References:

1. Ramamoorthi, P, *My life is My Own: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's Women*, Indian Women Novelist Ed, RK. Dhawan, New Delhi: Prestige, 1991. Print.
2. Roy, Binod Kumar, *The Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Study*, New Delhi: Atlantic, 2015. Print.
3. Watson C. W *Some Recent Writings from India*, Rev. of *Roots and Shadows*. Wasafiri, Spring, 1995, No.21. Print.
4. Dinesh, Kamini. —Moving out of the Cloistered Self: Shashi Deshpande's Protagonists,|| *Margins of Erasmus: Purdah in the Sub-Continental Novels in English*. Ed, Jasbir Jain and Amina, New Delhi: Sterling, 1995. Print.
5. Mill, John Stuart. *The Subjection of Women* Cambridge; The M.I.T Press, 1989.
6. Mies, Maria. *Indian Women and Patriarchy Conflicts and Dilemmas of Students and working women*, N.D: Concept Publication 1980
7. Iyengar, K.S. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*, New Delhi: Sterling, 1963. Print.