

COMPROMISE AS A STRATEGY IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVELS

[With special reference to *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine*]

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Shashi Deshpande is one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian Women Writers in English. Daughter of the renowned Kannada dramatist and Sanskrit scholar, Sriranga, she was born in Dharwad in Karnataka in 1938. At the age of fifteen, she went to Bombay, graduated in Economics, and moved to Bangalore, where she gained a degree in law. She devoted early years of her marriage to the care of her two young sons. Later, she took a course in Journalism and for some time worked in magazine. Her writing career began in 1970, initially with short-stories, published in various magazines. Later, these were published in book form. She is the author of four children's books and seven novels. She lives in Bangalore, with her pathologist husband. She has emerged as a great literary force. In her writings, she reflects a realistic picture of contemporary middle-class women. She focuses on women's issues. She has a woman's perspective on the world. One of the finds that the primary reason for Shashi Deshpande to write is that she allows to create her own world. Creative writing allows her a 'safe place', from which she can explore a wide range of experience, especially – in regard to woman's status in society. As Amar Nath states ...“Almost all the literary ventures of Shashi Deshpande revolve round the pathetic and heart rending conditions of women in a male-dominated society”. Life is full of choices. Life is full of compromise. Life is an adjustment. Even a compromise is one of the respectable choices that are developed as a survival strategy by Shashi Deshpande in her novels.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, she excels in portraying Saru, as a protagonist, in flesh and blood. The novel is a saga of mental and sexual suffering of Saru. It is at every stage in her life she has to submit herself unwillingly to her husband and her mother. Here it is observed that Saru makes a compromise in her life with her husband and her mother for survival. Without compromise, there is nothing possible. As a girl, she has to adjust herself twice in her life, first in her father's house and then in her father-in-law's house. Erving Goffman terms these as the 'primary adjustment' and the 'secondary adjustment'. These

adjustments or compromise especially in latter, put different kinds of bondage or role playing on the girl. As Kailash Baral maintains“Deshpande has employed a conscious strategy of embodying and embedding issues that are reflexive upon Feminism anti-patriarchal stance in the narrative. Among the various issues that the novel focuses on, concepts of 'bonding' and 'bondage' are considered not only in India but worldwide”. The first novel of Shashi Deshpande is *The Dark Holds No Terrors* which is published 1980. It has translated into German and Russian also. It won the Sahitya Akadami Award. It is based on the problems faced by a carrier woman. The novel deals with the story of marriage on the rocks. The novel presents unusual character Sarita whose predicament is rooted in her inability to accept her husband for he is on the one hand and who does not receive the kind of love and understanding the craves from her parent particularly the mother on the other hand. The story of the novel is narrated on two levels, the present and the past. Shashi Deshpande's women characters learn in due course how to arrive at a compromise and find a sense of balance in life. At the end of *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru goes back home with

“...All those selves she had rejected so resolutely at first, and so passionately embraced later. The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife ...all persons spiked with guilt. Yes she was all of them. She could not deny that how. She had not accepted these solve to become whole in. But she was all of them, they were not of her. She was all these and so much more.” The novel focuses on the unhappy conjugal life of Sarita. She is 'two-in-one' woman who in the daytime is successful doctor and at night, 'a terrified trapped animal' in the hands of her husband, Manohar, who is an English teacher. It seems that Saru, whose predicament is hidden in her inability to accept her husband for what he is, on the one hand and who does not receive the kind of love and understanding she craves from her parents, particularly the mother, on the other. As R.S. Pathak rightly remarks ...“The novel focuses on woman's awareness of her predicament, her wanting awareness

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of her predicament, her wanting to be recognized as a person than as a woman and her wanting to have an independent social image. In a society, where these are considered out stepping the limits". His **That Long Silence** is published in 1983. It received the Sahitya Akadami Award in 1991. It has been translated into French and Dutch also. It takes a look at social history from the perspective of the family. While exploring man-woman relationship in Indian society, Shashi Deshpande in this novel, offers us an intimate and domestic chronicle of the subtle tyrannies suffered by women and the pain of coming to self-knowledge. It is the story of personal journey; the heroine learns as she undergoes the mental torture and suffering at the hands of her husband. The novel **That Land Silence** is a saga of mental suffering of Jaya. It is at every stage in her life she has to submit herself unwillingly to her husband. Even her name is not her own, keeps on changing accordingly the wishes of her husband. Escapism is not a solution. A permanent solution comes from within, not from outside. So she makes a compromise as survival strategy for getting happiness from conjugal life. It is the outcome of her long silence and maturity which is Jaya undergoes in the present novel. The author presents unusual character, Jaya. She known by two names – 'Jaya' and 'Suhasini'. Suhasini is the name given by her husband after her marriage. It means a soft, smiling, placid motherly woman. These two names symbolize two aspects of the same personality. The former Jaya symbolizes victory, the desire of her father and later Suhasini represents her husband's expectations from her, that is flattering submission....."Though, when he wrote my name, it had been 'Suhasini', not Jaya. And if I disowned the name, he had never failed to say reproachfully, 'I choose that name for you'".

The Binding Vine (1983) depicts the story of educated middle-class woman and her predicament in male-dominated society. The protagonist, Urmi, is an educated woman, works as a lecturer in college. Against her wishes of her parents, she marries to a man of her own choice but is desperate of her married life. **A Matter of Time** is a bitter commentary on marriage and married life which have lost their original sanctity and compatibility and are reduced to the level

of a façade or shame. Even the paraphernalia associated with them becomes meaningless. This novel portrays an educated middle-class female protagonist's predicament in a male-dominated society. It also enshrines her search for love, meaning and happiness in life. A search for something to cling to in the strange protagonist, Urmi, in the novel is clever, educated woman working as a lecturer in a college. It seems that education and economic condition have the attitude and have created a need to work. The working life has to face the problems of marital adjustment or compromise. Protagonist of the novel experiences a conflict of values. She is not able to combine the two roles thrust upon her, those of the woman in the family and the woman as a worker. She just cannot avoid disturbing the harmony of the family and thus ultimately unwillingly submit to predicament. And this submission or binding vine implies that the compromise as a survival strategy. Protagonist Urmi learns and without this, there is nothing possible. Middle-class educated woman is a cob red winner and supplements her husband's income to maintain the standard of living they aspire to provide for their children. She has thus assumed a new role herself in the wake of changing circumstances. This has not only exonerated her from her traditional role and responsibility in the family, in which to her career consciousness but also has led to serve problems of adjustment or compromise which is undergone by the protagonist of the novel. This becomes the main cause of her agony and desperate, children feel neglected in the absence of the mother from home. Finally, the protagonist realizes that bind one-another through compromise as:

"Each relationship, always imperfect,/ Survives on hole". Thus instead of escapism, which is not a solution, compromise as a survival strategy is the only weapon for meaningful life as undergoes Saru, Jaya and Urmi in these novels. The novelist tries to convey the society that need of the compromise as a survival strategy in this transitional phase, is not a total revolt but a gradual change in the society for which everyone has to put some effort to bridge the gap between sadness and happiness, gap between the old and the new generation.

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