

## A LITERATURE REVIEW ON GENDER ROLE PORTRAYED IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE AND ANITA NAIR

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### **Abstract**

*Colonialism and the concept of patriarchy are inseparable in feminist discourse as it accentuates a relationship between inequality and injustice. Though it seems that the colonial master has vanished from the colonized countries, the impact of colonization is still felt in the form of patriarchy. It is obvious that only men are feasting the fruits of independence whereas women are still subjected to persecution by the male. To eradicate this, the women writers are writing about the predicaments of women in our society. In India the centre of family is in principle considered to be 'woman'. Jayadev's Dastam (wife is the home) is a Rigvedic expression, which shows how domestic life is interwoven with the life of a 'woman'. In Indian tradition not only are the goddesses like Lakshmi Saraswathi and Sakthi are adored in every household for their divinity but the women are also expected to manifest this divinity in their daily life. The burden of such expectations does become a form of oppression for the women and the men, in an astute manner, escape the scrutiny of critical eyes. Thus, the women who have to magnify themselves to become Lakshmi Saraswathi and 'Sakthi' see themselves trapped by very mundane situations. Feminists' views on Family: Feminists have played a major part in the ideology of the family, as they provide an alternative view to the traditional sociology of the family. According to Karen Offen "feminism emerges as a concept that can encompass both an ideology and movement for sociopolitical change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society" (151). Feminist consciousness is the consciousness of victimization. It attempts to detect and change the more subtle and deep-seated causes of women's oppression.*



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### **INTRODUCTION:**

This research attempt is going to make a deep study of the changing roles of women in Indian society by taking into consideration the literary works of the great feminist writers like Anita Nair and Manju Kapur, the novelist of the Post independent era who have very skillfully and effectively presented the predicaments which are imposed upon them and while fighting against these predicaments, how they come out of their traditional roles as a mother, daughter, sister and above all as a wife or a home maker and acquire many unimagined and novel roles like teacher, social worker, social activist, businesswoman or corporate personality and many more. The research is completely based on the study of the women

characters in the novels of these women novelists. These novelists are regarded as the feminist writers and their writing is supposed to be feminist. The prime objective with which the feminist movement was started was to change the destiny of the women who have no rights, freedom, no honor and no social importance in such a social structure where the men are supreme. India is one of the traditional countries with male dominated society. In our Indian traditional male dominated society, the condition of the women is the same as that of the women who live in other male dominated societies in other countries. What the feminist movement did in the western countries, the same is done by the feminist movement in India. The changed role of woman is one of the greatest accomplishments. The feminist movement has done a great job by helping women to come out of the slavery of the male dominated society and made them what they wanted to be. The movement changed the very plight of the Indian woman who thought that her world is within the four walls of the house. She never thought that she could have some roles as an individual in the outside world where the men rule with their all whims and might. The woman in the past was completely traditional, uneducated, superstitious and confined. Being lived in such atmosphere; her thinking had become narrow and controlled. They could never think that there can be a different world outside the four walls of their house, there can be some more roles for her to play. She was completely cut off from such dynamic world. It was so because the men of the traditional society wanted them to be so. They too were ruled by the age old philosophy which was anti-woman and which taught that woman's place is within the house. The women living in such an orthodox society became so habitual to their surrounding and age-old philosophy that they too were thinking that the marriage is their destiny and their husbands are their master. Their duty is to obey him and serve him and his family. Male dominated society and its anti-woman ideology is the root cause of women's backwardness and their suffering and victimization. This society was against the education of women. The society used to think that if women got educated, they would change themselves and that would be the great risk to the existence of their society. So, different rules were made for the women that deprived the women from going to the school. So, no education, no progress for women. One of the reasons of women's exploitation, suffering and their victimization is illiteracy which closes the doors of the new world which teaches that there is no difference between and male and female,. They are both equal. That was not the thing in the male dominated society. In male dominated society, men are given supreme status and the women are considered to be a secondary or inferior creature with subordinate status. The Feminist movement analyzed the root causes of Indian woman's miserable plight. The first

commendable thing which movement did was that it campaigned for woman's education. It gave the new voice, new power, new vigor, new confidence, new thinking which changed the very life of the traditional woman. It expanded the horizons of her thinking. She realized how much she has suffered due to anti-woman society. She could not be what she wanted to be in her life, its just because of this society. She broke her silence with the support of the feminist philosophy and protested against the injustice done by the contemporary society. The Indian women rebelled and revolted against the patriarchal social structure and its old conventions. She fought for her rights of freedom. She fought for her education. Education gave birth to a new woman who is confident, bold, unafraid of men and financially independent. Education assigned them new roles which they could never think of when they were within the four house of the male dominated society. Education took them out of their house and introduced them to a new world. Anita Nair and Manju are the prominent feminists of the post-Independent India who have depicted this change in the woman, in her predicament, in her destiny and above all in her role. Their women characters represent Indian women fraternity. Their works for example Manju Kapur's Difficult Daughters, shows how a girl, Virmati fights against her own family and its age-old conventions and social values. She fights for her right to educate herself. She fights for her right to marry the person of her choice. The novel very nicely displays the struggle of this woman who through her education gives up her traditional role as a traditional daughter comes before the audience in different roles like a girl fighting for her education, fighting with the society to legitimize her marriage with the married professor which is against social conventions and in the role of woman who fights for her right to be a wife of the professor.

### **Objectives of the present work**

- 1) To explore the various psychological aspects of the women characters in both the Novels.
- 2) To understand the gender discrimination prevailing in the society.
- 3) To study cultural, social and emotional backgrounds of affected women in the novels of both the writers.
- 4) To study the scenario of the society related to equality of man and woman relationship in marriage.
- 5) To have deeper understanding of both writer's work.

## **Gender Role portrayed in the novels of Shashi Deshpande and Anita Nair**

Shashi Deshpande is one of the prominent contemporary women writers in India writing in English. She has created ripples in the society of male domination by taking women as women seriously in her novels. She takes us inside the consciousness of her women characters to present their plight, fears, dilemmas, contradictions and ambitions.

The protagonists in Deshpande's novels are on the road to self-discovery. Usually some domestic crisis propels them in this quest. Shashi Deshpande's novels also frequently ruminate over the condition of human alienation and the vicissitudes of time. Past resides with the present, and the novels often digress into Indian myths, fables and folktales that show the power of tradition and the society's reluctance to change. But her novels are infused with a rich inclusiveness, which in itself enhances the possibilities of the hope. Her novels are essentially reflective of the unenviable situation of the beleaguered contemporary Indian women, which she has depicted with great artistic finesse and astounding originality. Shashi Deshpande's commendably realistic depiction of the contemporary Indian women's situation and the pragmatic solution she puts forward accord her novels, an imperishable importance for their affirmative eloquent marriage for women and the whole humanity as well.

### **Chapter 1. : Introduction**

The present thesis is the mirror of the society where there is social dilemma of a downtrodden.

The select novels of the novelists render the themes of gender discrimination whether a son or a

Daughter, the power and authority of a male dominated. It raises a question whether a woman can live without a man ? A single woman can live or not? It shows;

**'Love for man is a thing apart. But for woman her whole existence.'**

### **Chapter 2: Feminist Dilemma presented in 'The Dark Holds No Terrors '**

Shashi Deshpande is an award winning novelists. She is the second daughter of famous Kannada dramatist and writer Sriranga. She published her first collection of short stories in 1978 , and her first novel , 'The Dark Holds No Terror ' in 1980 She won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel 'That Long Silence' in 1990 and the 'Padma Shri ' award in 2009 . She has written four children's books , a number of short stories , and nine novels , besides several perceptive essays. Her first novel 'The Dark Holds NO Terror 'is a masterpiece in Indian English novels. The novel is a tremendously powerful portrayal of one women's fight to survive in a world that offers no easy outs. 'The Dark Holds No Terror 'is a

story of a girl finding her inner silk. Long time back Sarita, the protagonist still remembers her mother's bitter words uttered when as a little girl she was unable to save her younger brother from drowning. And her mother is dead and sarita returns to the family home, seemingly to take care of father. Sarita wants to forget all her grief. Sarita reflects on the events of her life. It includes her childhood her tyrannizing mother, her marrying to the Christmtic Monohar , her children etc. She explains how her husband turns cruel when he realizes his career is going no where and that his wife has overtaken him professionally. In his case a sort of male Chauvinism worked out. As she struggles with her emotions and anxieties.

### **Chapter 3 : Jaya 's Quest for self identity in “ That Long Silence ”**

'That Long Silence 'is the story of a wife who is torn between love and hate, liking and disliking for her own husband life situations. As the title of the novel indicates, Jaya for very long in her past life tried to the role of traditional woman, the embodiment of tolerance, suffering and courage. However her courage deserts her and she becomes the modern, egoistical, self – assertive, rebellious woman – all these being marks of modern feminist awakening. But the desertion of the traditional submissive role and adoption of the new role do not leave the psyche of Jaya unstinted and intact. She faces great emotional turmoil. But the novelist has chosen as humanistic byline, a psychological solution to jaya's problem. She is allowed to retrospect her own silence and indulge in her own egoistical feeling. The elements of tiredness and disgust, the bearing of many types of burdens while playing the role of ideal wife, the discard of her selfhood and identity as a writer and subordinating everything to the wifely role – accumulate and tell upon her nerves and weaken her emotions equipoise, efforts fully maintained all along Jaya , the mature woman has to play two roles one, that of royal wife , mutely and silently serving her husband and children. It is this role which goes against her grain, She is unable to control the long muted rebellions insides her.

### **Chapter 4 : Akhila's Journey Through Self Discovery in “ Ladies Coupe”**

Anita Nair a best selling author of fiction and poetry, her novels “The Better Man' and “Ladies Coupe” have been translated in to 21 languages. Her novel 'Ladies Coupe' (2001) was elected as one of the five best novels in India, and indeed it was translated into more than 25 languages around the world. Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe' is the story of a woman search for strength and independence. The main protagonist Akhilandeshwari single an income tax clerk and a woman who has never been allowed to live her own life-always the daughter, the sister, the ant the provider. It shows the impact of patriarchy and the lives of the woman. Akhia Struggles against the male dominated society and its age old conventions which do not

allow her to live her own life as she wishes. How Indian woman are exploited and used in human relationship is best discussed in this paper.

### **Chapter 5 : Radha 's Quest for Love in “ Mistress”**

The researcher comments on Anita Nair's Feminism which is displayed in her novels. 'Mistress' is the novel about main heroine 'Radha' who is married but dissatisfied with her husband she feels comforts with Chris a foreigner and likes him and wants to spare time with him . Her desire for love and happiness was fulfilled husband. The story is very interesting with a love story of a married woman and her search for identity.

### **Chapter 6: A Matter of Time**

Shashi Deshpande's novel **A Matter of Time** is a continuation of her exploration into the many facets of feminine experience in writing. With this novel she takes the themes of Silence, gender differences, passive suffering, familial relationships into much deeper realms and lays bare a story which excites Aristotle an pity and fear- pity for those whom we see suffer and fear for our own selves as we realize how amidst our mundane existence we are so near chaos. Set in present day Karnataka, rich with south Indian culture, landscape, folk tales and history, it is a story encompassing three generations of women coming to terms with their life in an all female world. The relation women characters share with their men is hovered with silence, absence or indifference. The family saga opens up when one evening Sumi's world is torpedoed as her husband Gopal walks out on her and their three daughters, Aru, Charu and Seema without any explanation. Sumi too doesn't ask for one. Her indifference unsettles her three daughters as much as it disturbs a reader. The pain of the disintegration of the family troubles Aru who considers herself responsible for her father's action and sets out to undo it.

### **Anita Nair:**

Anita Nair is one of the notable writers in India. She always focuses on the problems of woman in our society. Her maiden novel "The Better Man" has placed her among the most self-conscious Indian novelists and her second novel "Ladies Coupe" has achieved a tremendous success in her career. In "Ladies Coupe", Anita Nair deals with the concept of patriarchy and signifies inequality in relationships. Her novel raises questions about the role of woman in contemporary postcolonial India. Nair's India suffers from a system of sex role stereotyping and oppression of woman that exist under patriarchal social organization. Anita Nair has used the character called Karapagam as a great example for woman empowerment. Besides, she has used this character to bring awareness to the society of woman's demands and their need for self-expression. Karpagam is portrayed as an strong woman striving for



self-definition in a patriarchal social organization. She is a widow but unlike other widows, she wears kikkum and colorful clothes. She is a courageous woman who breaks the shackles of patriarchy when she says. I don't care what my family or anyone thinks. I am who I am. And I have as much right as anyone else to live as I choose. Tell me didn't we as young girls wear colorful clothes and jewellery and bottu? It has nothing to do with whether she is married or not and whether her husband is alive or dead. Who made these laws anyway?

**Significance:** This research work will help the readers to understand the journey of Indian women from a typically traditional woman into a highly modern, educated and independent woman. It will help the readers to understand that how women are growing vigilant and conscious about their rights and how they are coming out of their limited world and acquiring new roles and new position in the contemporary society. It will also provide new insight and new way of looking at the lives of the women. It will change the mentality of the traditional people who believe that the women should be within the house, make them more liberal in their treatment of women. It will create great awakening in the society about the plight of the woman and compel the society to think of women as equal to man. Directly indirectly, the thesis will contribute to feminist cause of woman's empowerment. The research work will help the readers to look at the novels of these writers from different perspective. It will provide them with ample opportunities of doing research on the life of Indian women with the help of these novels. Above all this research attempt is important because it shows that how the roles of women are changing with changing circumstances.

**Justification:** What woman was in the past is not the not the same. Indian feminist movement has given birth to a new woman with multiple roles to play. Today we see women encroaching into the most prohibited territory of men i.e. field and acquiring many prestigious positions in the different spheres of life. Kiran Bedi, Kalpana Chawal, Sheela Dixit are some of examples of the women with the changed roles.

### **Hypothesis**

Up to now very rare attempts had been made to analyze the novels of Anita Nair and Shashi Deshpande. But nobody has attempted to analyze their novels comparatively to bring out feminine psyche, the changing faces of women and changing relationship between man and woman. It is believed that the novels of Anita Nair and Shashi Deshpande deal with the feminine sensibility and changing roles of the women in the Indian society. So it is proposed to study these novels to bring about the changing roles of women in Indian Society.

#### **4.1 Methodology:**

This research works aims to reveal the various aspects of feminine sensibility in the novels of Shashi Deshpande and Anita Nair. So the method of research would be critical, analytical and qualitative research. As it require more library works.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Her defiance is outstanding when she says, “I live alone. I have for many years now. We are strong Akhi, Whatever you think you want to live alone, Build a life for yourself where your needs come first”(LC202). More than any other woman, Karpagam and her words instill a strong desire to live of her choice.

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