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✂ Research Article

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## Women: Perspectives and Issues in Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time and Small Remedies*

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### Abstract

A noteworthy novelist and author of many children books, Shashi Deshpande, has acquired a unique place in Indian writing in English. Her novels are written in simple and lucid language. All of them deal with simple people belonging to small strata of society in general as well as predicament of women in particular in the society and family. Her women characters seem to be alive and breathing in the surrounding nearby each of us as we see in our daily life. They

are ordinary women who struggle for their own identity, self-realization and emancipation. Since Indian society is adhered to patriarchal set up, as a result the traditional women in Shashi Deshpande's novels face the problem of suppression, oppression, injustice, exploitation and marginalization. Even if they are educated, they are the victims of several kinds of evils. Shashi Deshpande is much sieved to think the condition of women and fought for the cause of women. In the time of Shashi Deshpande men thought women as child-bearing machine. She tries her best to make aware her women their rights and fills them with courage in order they may demand their rights and make a niche in the society.

**Keywords:** Emancipation, Empowerment, Exploitation, Identity, Patriarchy and Solidarity

This research paper aims at finding out the predicament and issues regarding women in the two novels; *A Matter of Time* and *Small Remedies* of Shashi Deshpande. So, first of all the study will be fixed upon the novel *A Matter of Time* and then *Small Remedies* one by one. Shashi Deshpande's novel *A Matter of Time* is made-up to be a multi-generational account finding out the complex relationship within such a family which covers four generations of men and women. The novel focuses upon Arundhati and eighteen-year-old girl, the chief character in the novel, struggling hard to maintain the splitting fabric of relation which has been with Gopal and Sumi and also tries to understand the broken terms of relations between her grandparents. Sripati and Kalyani. Arundhati is one of the Indian women who get caught in the web of patriarchy, loss pain and agony. The novel opens with the deserting his wife and the three daughters Aru, Charu and Seema by Gopal, who is a person coming from patriarchy. After deserting the whole family made by Gopal, Sumi feels deep grief, humiliation even after she remains keep quiet. Her remain silence, with the passage of time, becomes a cry of despair. She is fully broken with her heart and does not have courage to face the inhuman relationship. By giving comfort to herself she says, "It takes time to get used to sharing your life with another person, now I have to get used to being alone" (Deshpande, 23). A storm of adjusting to her family, even the circumstances are against her, for the sake of her left but to adjust the family for her daughters. She asks herself; "Am I the enemy? Do my daughters blame me for what Gopal has done? Do they think it is my fault? Why can't I talk to them, tell them what I feel, how it was? Why can't I open my heart to them? (Deshpande, 23).

Sumi tries to fight with courage against her husband Gopal's desertation to her but maintains a friendly and sympathetic relationship with her daughters. Sumi and her daughters are united cordially. Deshpande has shown the character of Sumi as a submissive woman who bears all the injustice suppression and oppression even though is ready to bow herself before her family. She does not show any kind of anger, irritation or annoyance what generally people specially women have in their heart. She seems to be adjusting woman. Whenever her daughters ask questions, she replies them with patience and implausible stillness. She finds the ways to listen to the frequently repetitive screams with profound persistence and tranquility. Her momentousness seriousness, stillness, endurance, compliance and meek nature fetch different kinds of difficulties her daughters cope with the extreme enormity of happenings. Aru

one of the daughters of Sumi feels astonished to find her mother's routine quite peaceful. She finds herself surrounded with distress asks interrogations to her own self; "My God, what's happening to us and what am I doing, lying here on the floor like a refugee? (Deshpande, 12). The very interesting thing is seen here that Sumi does not have ill-will or malice against her husband Gopal for whose cause the whole family has disturbed; she does not have a sense of revenging from her husband and she still wants to tolerate all the injustice done to her but her daughter Aru wants to revenge from a brutal father for the wrong he has done against the whole family. She calls him a brutal father, a callous husband. She is full of hatred and contempt to her own father because of the incidents happening in her life. She makes exclamations by asking questions to herself; "why did you get married at all, why did you have children?" (Deshpande, 12).

Gopal's desertion has brought a great disturbance for her family members. Sumi, under crucial position, is to face bravely the horrors and prove herself inner strength and woman power to survive in the selfish world. She is economically in bitter condition but her sense of pride and self-respecting nature does not permit her to ask for any kind of help from her known ones. She is by nature a kind of great epitome of self-respect so she does not want to be pitied and sympathized in any way. She learns how to ride scooter and other vehicles and discloses her inner strength to live life without the grace of others. She develops self-motivation and confidence without being conditioned by others' wills. She has her own terms and conditions to life. We are told by the novelist: "She begins all by herself...Aru is there to help her the next day. But it is not long before she dispenses with all help and rides it herself, going in circles round the pond, slowly, ready to put her first down the moment she feels unsure of her balance.... The next day, Sumi suddenly gathers speed and in a burst of confidence, goes out of the gate.... Aru is anxious too: she wanders to the gate and waits there until Sumi returns and runs back in after her. Sumi stops and holds both her arms above her head in a triumphant gesture" (Deshpande, 33-34).

Efforts were made to reconcile Gopal and his wife Sumi by arranging family get-together by Devaki, but all attempts made by her prove failure. Sumi finds herself fully unsuccessful on the platform of understanding and reconciliation to her husband; she therefore wants to make herself aware and full confident to life. Sumi is self-respected woman; she therefore goes on to live on her own hard work and struggle; she does not want to get any gift free of cost; her womanhood has aware and now she is no more captive in the grip of patriarchy; she wants to get rid of from the web of patriarchy. She is full of confidence to struggle and earn money for her livelihood; she therefore goes in the residential school to get a job. She has no intention anymore to keep Aru and Charu wither. She speaks Aru as;

Now well be on our own..... Be happy for me, Aru. This is the first thing in my life I think that I've got for myself. I was sure I wouldn't get it..... But one of the members of the Board saw my play..... And do you know, Aru,, I'm already thinking of another one. It feels so good you can't imagine! I've been so lazy all my life. And suddenly I want to do many things..... There's Amma and Baba, I feel good think that you'll be

with... you'll be alright, won't you?..... You'll come to me often, I'm getting my own place, just a room and a kitchen but we can be together. (Deshpande, 230-231)

Aru is to handle all the household activities after the death of her mother and grandfather's death. She tries to maintain the relations and control of the situation firmly. She could understand her mother just after her death. She now thinks that she should be like her mother in full of courage and strength. She is full confident about future life.

The novel *Small Remedies* of Shashi Deshpande is also full of feminist perspectives and issues what we confront in the novel *A Matter of Time*. *Small Remedies* expresses that there is solution for the problems from the time immemorial but there is no permanent relief for healing or cure of long-life disease. The novel talks of three women characters named as Madhu, Saptarshi, the narrator of the novel; Savitri Bai, the grand name of Gwalior. Gharana and aunt Leela, a political activist. The narrator of the novel is Madhu, Leela's niece who happens to reach Bhavanipur Savitri Bai's home in her last years to write a biography of Bai.

The novel tells that Savitri Bai, the granddame of Gwalior Gharana begins her youthful life under the strict terms and conditions of patriarchy in an orthodox Hindu household, but she elopes with her Muslim lover and accompanist, Ghulaamsaab; Leela on the other hand gives full time in the accompaniment of the factory workers of Bombay. These two women want to live independently without any bond or burden. Love and unhappiness are the core theme in *Small Remedies*.

Being Vigilant to the vast sinews and importance of words which make different kinds of changes in human life, Madhu is stunned by her own recognition and present she creates a wide and overpowering image of Savitri Bai. She has been presented as "A great rebel who defies the conventions of her time, the feminist who lived her life on her own terms, the great artist who sacrificed everything for the cause of her art" (*Small Remedies*, 166), or the impulsive lover who left traditional and secure married life in Brahmin family to live with her Muslim ways of life. The publisher of Madhu has a fantastic feminist biography; "Victims stories are out of fashion, heroines are in" (167).

Each session with Bai activates the reminiscences of Madhu in which various of them were connected with Munni, Bai's daughter by her Muslim husband who had been Madhu's friend once' completely unrelated with Bai and to with Madhu's own disturbed life. We have the outburst of Madhu as,

To me, she was Munni's mother. I knew her as Munni's mother. When I come here, it was to meet Munni's mother. But she hasn't spoken of Munni not once. She has not identified me, either, as Munni's friend, or as the daughter of my father, her doctor and her admirer, I find it strange. Has she forgotten? Does she remember those days at all? Am I nothing more than an unknown woman who's come here to speak to her before writing her biography? Why haven't I declared my identity to her either! Why haven't I said I'm Munni's friend Madhu remember me? (29)

As the story of the novel progresses, we find Madhu thinking back and forth in time, retelling the stories of Leela and Bai and Munni. Having total control over her wedding life she creates a fabric of intricate design in this novel where music stands one's need. She is fully

aware that the life she is passing without chronological account will not of any important work. She muses, “we see our lives through memories, and memories are fractured, fragmented almost always cutting across time” (P.165). Madhu is too much self confident that she has got the omnipotence to create an infinitive range of Savitri bai. Madhu reflects the true nature of Bai:

True Bai is a worldly woman but when she sings, she transcends her own worldliness. Why not then in love as well? She had a child by the man before she left her husband’s home. What else but passion could have led to the conceiving of a child? But let me not forget that she abandoned that child when she left home with her lover. I am suddenly halted by the thought. She left her baby scarcely year old, behind could a woman who did that be capable of great love? (P.176)

We find that women in the novel ‘Small Remedies’ also suffer for love and care. They don’t get proper place in the patriarchal fabric of society. Bai is the fine example. Who is unable to adjust in the society where orthodoxy is practiced; she desires to move freely wherever she wants to go. She is the master of her own desire whereas the rest women characters like Madhu and Leela themselves want to have the programme like Bai. They also try to move freely for the reason Madhu mentally prepares re – write of this famous mother professed to hate music what she has no intention at all. This girl has different character in the novel who is tortured, swoppressed and oppressed by Savitri Bai. This girl wants to have her different identity. When Munni meets Madhu in the bus she does not ready to recognize her and ignores her; but when she is pinched by Madhushe boldly declares herself that she is not Munni but Shailja Joshi.

Shashi Deshpande’s women characters are ordinary creatures coming from poor streta of society but they are all prey of circumstances. She presents several view points as per the personal view of looking at things. Some of them do not follow the existing system while others go parallel way never to meet anywhere. The condition of women in the novel, *A Matter of Time* happens; the same but little different condition of women we come across in the novel *Small Remedies*.

Thus, both the novel *A Matter of Time* and *Small Remedies* are full of feminism and their predicament. They suffer variously sometimes by chance and fate and sometimes by patriarchal system spreading in Indian society. Not respecting the women is also today’s burning issue.

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