

Vol 4 Issue 3 Dec 2014

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2249-894X

Review Of Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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THE SOCIO – ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE SELECT WORKS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

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Abstract:

Women writers were not taken seriously amongst the readers either male or female. This is a tendency of the society that throughout the age's woman has been associated more with hearth than the heart. There was influence of men on religion, literature and all other activities. But, the ancients, Aristotle, thinker and evaluator of literature, and his teacher, Plato, were aware of the dual role of women in society. They speak about many roles of women as a family care taker, ruler, administrator and literature. However, there were exceptional women in all ages and in all countries. There were also women writers in all countries in all periods. For example The Bronte sisters and Jane Austen are classical female authors beyond of dispute. There was a positive change after Second World War. Her earning for the family along with the husband has become the practice among the middle classes. While discussing the predicament of women in the changed situation, it is necessary to bring in, some women authors associated with the subject. Willa Cather, Margaret Drabble and Doris Lessing have dealt with the issue in their writings. This is "labeled" but the term has been differently interpreted to suit the ideology of the interpreters. All writings of women to their individual development free from familial ties to a certain extent can be labeled as feminist.

KEYWORDS:

Socio – Economic Emancipation , Shashi Deshpande , literature , administrator.

INTRODUCTION:

O Pioneer by Willa Cather, *The Diary of a Good Neighbor* by Doris Lessing reveals how women are capable to compete with men in activities where hitherto men had proved their mettle. Woman's search for identity is the soul of these authors. Margaret Drabble's *A Summer Birdcage* also another example of woman's career versus marriage.

Shashi Deshpande, well-known and prominent female Indian writer in English speaks about women, profession loving women reconciled to their bread – winning work. She writes gyro centric novels and deals with issues related to the frustration of middle -class women. Personal failure and professional success is prominent in the novels of her. She injects courage in the veins of ailing women in her characteristic mild tone: we have to go trying. If we can't believe in ourselves, we are sunk. Women are subject to change, not object for subjugation by men.

Throughout the centuries man dominated the literary activity as well as the political and social

Title: "THE SOCIO – ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE SELECT WORKS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE", Source: Review of Research [2249-894X] Sunil Patil yr:2014 | vol:4 | iss:3

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events of the countries around the world. In Sanskrit dramas there are conventions governing the language uses in dialogues. Women should only speak in Prakrit language where as men are allowed to do it in Sanskrit. Women in the ancient days were placed in secondary position.

Shashi Deshpande, in all her novels, has dealt with the problem of new women. Especially she has concentrated on the theme of meaningless and sexual confusion suffered by women in tradition – oriented institutions. She (women) is in a state of utter confusion. Coming out of home she has been and experienced the world on her own and therefore has developed different attitudes towards this aspect of life. Their attitudes sometimes reject the tradition and sometimes rebel against them. That is why she feels a kind of imbalance between the traditional expectations and her new sexual demands. In this process she suffers, questions and looks for answers. She shows not only path but the right path which is necessary to live happy life, for modern, emancipated, educated and intelligent middle – class working women.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* shows the frustration of Saya when she finds her name missing in the family genealogy. Her uncle in spite of his regard for her did not mention her in the list of members of the family he prepared. Women cannot hope to find a place in both the lists; she is neither belongs to her in – laws or to her father's family. Are they not persons? Is the world only for men? Indu is a protagonist, clever, educated and self – opinionated, brought up in a joint – family, ruled by a tyrant called Akka, not so unkind at heart in *Roots and shadows* (1983). She leaves the family for her prosperity elsewhere, marries and returns to the old home after Akka's death. Her self – discovery in the old home is important. Woman as a being loses her identity in the traditional family. The rituals here obstruct the growth of inner – self. Indu moves on the road to self – realization and the destination seems to be the point of comprehension of the mystery of human life, the very predicament of human existence is seen in the self – analysis of Indu married to Jayant. She thinks that parental bondage can be removed but marrying and going out of the family. This creates bondage. This is the predicament of human existence. Love for power over others dominates in life. This novel transgresses the boundaries of feminism and touches upon existentialism. Indu realizing her roots and dismissing shadows that covered her vision in a mist is the essence of this work.

Sarita or Saru is the protagonist / heroine in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980). Manu or Manohar is her husband. Saru leaves home not being able to bear the fortune of her orthodox mother. Strange mother, but real. She wishes her daughter's death because she firmly believed that Saru allowed her younger brother drown in a well. Sons elevate the sufferings of the parents when the latter die and reach the nether world. Daughters are of no consequences. Saru becomes a doctor and also takes up higher studies in medicine but her good – for – nothing husband, a manic, sexually assaults her almost every night to camouflage his failure in life. In this novel, Saru comes home after the death of her tyrant – mother and meets her sage – like father. She ruminates and learns that she is her own refuge. The message of this novel is 'If we can't believe ourselves we are Sunk'.

The crisis in the lives of Jaya and Mohan is described in *That Long Silence* (1988). The husband who follows the footsteps of his ruthless father suppresses the educated woman all along. Women should be silent, no questions should be asked. The comings and goings of men should not be questioned. They come late in the light and expect their women not to dine till their men folk arrive. Men show regard for women who abstain from eating till they finish taking their meal. Her father who liked classical music curbed Jaya's craving for light music. Jaya liked only light music. Her husband in some other way curbed her. She is not allowed to write in her own way. He insisted that she should write only for women's column. Women cannot choose. They should follow the norms set by her elders. Caste, class and religions govern the complexity of gender construction in India. Still the images of Sita and Savitri appear to be dominating the men of this nuclear age.

Thus, In India, however, women are still suffering from this enforced act of men upon her. The socio – economic emancipation of women in India has brought in its train changes in their status and outlook. The widely affected area of this change has been the vital relationship between man & women. Women, who was dissatisfied with the inhibiting cultural and sexual roles assigned to her from the unconscious dawn of the patriarchal India, is now gaining strength to rebel against the cultural social oppressions. But at the same time she fails to reject totally her social and cultural background. She stands therefore at crossroads caught between tradition and modernity.

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