

Chapter -I

INTRODUCTION

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*“What a piece of man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving.”*¹ Hamlet’s speech focuses on the true nature of human beings that things are completely predictable and unpredictable about them. We see through the ages that humans are always curious to know more and more about universe and their inner selves, so a quest for betterment roams into their psyche. All the time they are involved in creating something new that is unknown to us and open new vistas by their innovations. Is this quest of man for getting happiness? This question has always haunted people and strikes in the mind.

*“Man is born free but he is everywhere in chain”.*² In his famous treatise ‘Social Contract’ Rousseau affirms that in the initial phases of life humans were free in their natural state. They were free to make choices and what they wanted to do as they were used to live and wander in the forest freely. They used to sleep in natural caves and quench their thirst by drinking water direct from natural water resources. They had not any personal property and used all natural products combined. But in the course of the time progressing human psyche started to possess natural resources as their own and other creatures accepted the dominance and there came the feeling of struggle and quarrels to exist in the world. At this stage some social structures developed and man was caught in the mighty web of rules and regulations.

He asserts that the limitations which were imposed on humans by the society have restricted them. But he also emphasizes that humans had

easily and heartedly accepted those social contracts. Those contracts facilitate human's life and with the pace of time there also developed religious concepts. In that ambience humans were gratified and contented because the ambience was surcharged by love, ease, comfort, compassion, peace and satisfaction. Human virtues as wisdom, justice, fortitude, self control, love, positive attitude, hard work, integrity, gratitude and humility had higher place in society. People were more close to nature and their lives were extremely simple. The world was like that of More's Utopia that slowly and slowly converted into dystopia.

But with the course of time man feels fed up with the social, religious and cultural practices. They have instinctual revolt against all dogmas and practices; they feel society and religion a demonic force which diminishes human's freedom. There are numerous reasons behind the change of human behavior and nature and one of them is evolution made by science. Science has affected human's life largely. Due to the scientific innovations there was a change in social scenario and we were familiar with the new world of technology entered into the different fields of industrialization, urbanization and globalisation which we had ever imagined. As we know, "*Industrialization is the period of social and economic change that transforms a human group from an agrarian society into an industrial one.*"³ Urbanization is defined as "*Urbanization is the physical growth of urban areas as result of rural migration and even suburban concentration into cities.*"⁴ And "*Globalization can be viewed as the process of metamorphosis of local or regional phenomena into global ones.*"⁵

The emergence of science gave new interpretation to each and every single atom of universe and in this way humans started to doubt the accepted social beliefs, norms, customs, conventions, traditions and whatever existed prior even in the existence of God. Along with, there is a wide spread of over-crowding, housing-shortage, growing forces of vice and crime, decline of moral values, sexual promiscuity and ugliness everywhere. It is because of automobile old has lost control over the young and social scene has become more and more complex. This social complexity is due to rootlessness which is *“the state of having no roots, esp. (of a person) having no ties with a particular place or community.”*⁶ This rootlessness has left man alienated and he feels withdrawn from the universe.

Man's emphasis to give importance to material possessions lay aside to his belief of an omnipotent power to control him. Now, humans wish to be in full control of themselves and aware to their existence in this materialistic world and ignore and reject the concept of hell and heaven after death created by God. Now, they believe there is no life after death and in this way, they wish to satisfy all their desires, will and for this they fight with the other creature of their own race for the survival at the earth. This attitude shows their materialistic approach as Materialism is defined as *“a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.”*⁷ Man's all efforts are to exist in the world freely belong to the existentialism philosophy which emphasizes on *“Individual existence, freedom and choice. It is the view that humans*

*define their own meaning in life, and try to make rational decisions despite existing in an irrational universe.*⁸

Their entire emphasis is on getting happiness at any cost as it is described in utilitarianism doctrine that “*actions are right if they are useful for the benefit of the majority.*”⁹ In making life heaven they are amid frustration, anxiety, depression and have mental unrest while creating hell about them. On one side, he struggles hard to survive in this world but on other side, he encounters all his actions futile and meaningless and finds his life absurd and wishes to die with the declining values of living. Man’s thoughts are pragmatic in modern time. His psyche is well developed with the idea of pragmatism while ignoring emotional aspects of life. He is more concerned about his own self and is less approachable to others.

Since the ancient age man was running on the pattern which has been demolished in few centuries. Humans made progress in every field of life without sensing what he is going to loss. A new pattern evolved by him when does not fulfill his all aspirations, he becomes perplexed and suffers mental uneasiness. Somehow, he wishes to come out from this mental crisis. How a human being copes with the calamities of the life forms his entire personality as “*Psyche means someone’s mind or their deepest feeling which controls attitude and behavior.*”¹⁰ The objective of the present study is to explore human psyche in Deshpande’s novels. In the present study I have discussed all the modern practices, theories and tendencies which influence modern Indian Psyche.

Literature is the presentation of human lives in its various manifestations on wider scale through the medium of language. If we talk about the twentieth century literature of the countries like America, England, the continent, Africa, Australia, India and all commonwealth literature we find a similarity in the content, style, concerns, form of writing, despite of the cultural, sociological, political and geographical barriers. It seems the whole world has been turned into a global village. All the practices and tendencies are common in global literature.

Indian writers have written and are writing to communicate to world through the English language. English literature bears an indelible stamp of Indianness which implies “life attitudes”, “modes of perception”, “life patterns”, “behavior of the people” and “traditions” that have emerged over the years in India. Indian experiences of life cannot be restricted to rigid definitions, as its expression varies from person to person, writer to writer, poet to poet and novelist to novelist. It is this richness and variety of experience which imparts colour and beauty to Indian English literature. It embodies the Indian sensibility which has come down to us through the Vedic period.¹¹

Indian English literature reflects the new challenges and changes than its sister literatures in India, because of the simple fact that its vehicle itself is globalised language. The leaders of the new fiction have mostly been a part of the Indian Diaspora. Living (for brief or long periods) in the west, and using English almost like a mother tongue, they have been thoroughly exposed to significant modern western literary movements like post- modernism and magic realism. This has enabled them to give a fresh

orientation to fiction. At the same time, the best of them continue to have strong roots in India, so that they remain true to the kindred points of India and the west.¹²

Shashi Deshpande, one of the great academic intellectuals in Indian English Literature, was born in Dharwad in Karnataka in 1938 as the second daughter of renowned Kannada dramatist and great Sanskrit scholar Shriranga. She pursued her education in Dharwad, Mumbai, and Bangalore. She received degrees in Economics and Law and earned a gold medal. After getting married, she shifted to Bombay. Here, she studied journalism at the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan and worked for a couple of months as a journalist for the magazine 'Onlooker'. While working with the magazine, she began writing and her first short story got published in 1970.

Her short stories headed their way in popular magazines like Femina and Eve's weekly. Her maiden collection of short stories was published in 1978 under the title *Legacy*, *It was Dark* in 1986, *It was the Nightingale* in 1986, *The Miracle* in 1986, *The Intrusion* in 1993 and *The Stone Women* in 2000. Deshpande has written four books for children, a number of short stories, and nine novels, besides several perceptive essays, now available in a volume entitled *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*. Her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* was published in 1980, after that, *If I Die Today* in 1982 followed by *Come up and Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadow* (1983) and *That Long Silence* (1989). She wrote *A Matter of Time* in 1996, *Small Remedies* in 2000, *The Binding Vine* in 2002, *Moving On* in 2004, *In the Country of Deceit* in 2008 and

Shadow Play, Aleph in 2013. She has written children's books *A Summer Adventure* (1978), *The Hidden Treasure* (1980), *The only witness* (1980) and *The Narayanpur Incident* (1982). She has written a play *Driste* in 1990.

That Long Silence (1989) for which she received ShahityaAkademi Award in 1990 and has been translated into several foreign languages, like: German, Finnish, Dutch and Danish. *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1982) won the Nanjangud Thirurnalamba Award in 1990. It has been translated into German and Russian. Her first novel *Roots and Shadows* (1980) which earned the Thirumate Rangammal Prize in 1984 was selected for the coveted prize for the Indian Novel of 1982- 83. *Shadow Play* (2013) was shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize in 2014. Her collection of short stories, *The Legacy*, has had the single distinction of being used as textbook in Columbia University for a course in Modern Literature. While staying in England, she wrote a piece of work which her father got published in three parts in the Deccan Herald- the local newspaper in three parts, with the title *Innocents Abroad*. This was her first attempt as a writer. The publication of *Innocents Abroad* directs her confidence and she started writing which later became a passion for her.

Shashi Deshpande is well-aware of the Indian sensibilities and portrays her characters' lives amid them. After being familiar with each of her characters, we start to think that they are the part of our own surrounding; and the circumstances she weaves, seem to be taken from our own life. While living in India, she is deep attached with the issues which progressing India faces in recent scenario. Her novels are the clear pictures

of an average metamorphosing Indian psyche. Through her novels, she brings forth such issues which in reality are not easily acceptable and digestive in Indian society.

While building up a plot in a coherent way, she projects several aspects of Indian culture in an artistic way. At one place, we find the characters who believe in old traditions and superstitions, on the other hand they inhibit in modern world by acquiring rational approach towards life. Her novels are the journey of the characters' mind who wish to survive at any cost, show deep interest in material possessions instead of the spiritual aspect of life and suffer loneliness, corruption and moral degradation on their part. Sense of nothingness and loneliness is rampant in her novels. The characters are drawn from middle class family, most of the protagonists are writers and doctors, obviously, these professions are the part of author's own life and issues she has discussed are from day to day activities of human life.

In fact, her novels are all about the Indian society in which one is learnt to suppress one's will for the betterment of the rest but her characters seem to be rebel in this concern. They crave to choose their path of life in accordance with their will and takes responsibilities of their actions which bring catastrophe in their lives. We don't find any tinge of religion even no character shows high faith in God. Some of her protagonists keep secular and intellectual approach towards life.

Although, the protagonists of her novels are female characters and male acquires only a namely figure but she puts forth the issues of human

beings whether they are of male or female. She does not present her male characters as an antagonist; they are human beings like woman having weaknesses to conquer. Some of her male characters show great support to establish woman as an owner of her life. Not only her female characters but male characters also suffer and strive hard to make balance and to keep pace with the society.

In making her characters real, Deshpande places them amid the circumstances and situations in which an average Indian lives his life. The study of her novels shows that fascination of an individual towards movie is common as it happens in real life. One or two characters are easily seen to be drawn to cinema in each of her novels. It shows how much people are fascinated by the imaginary world which does not exist in reality. A person, who does not have something in real life, wants to satisfy his inner selves by watching movies. The setting of almost all of her novels is southern India, specially Bombay and Bangalore- the highly developed city of India with which she is deeply attached

In her novels, Deshpande signifies the utility of dream to portray the actual condition of human mind. Her psychological insight peers into the mind of characters through dream which has a symbolic significance to provide the glimpse of upcoming happening. An utter change in the way of living is sensed through her novels. Her protagonists amid all the negative forces of life know the value of survival by searching and finding their own truth. Hopelessness, loneliness and alienation seem common and natural factors which modern reader senses and attaches with the story.

Her protagonists do not follow any dogma and principle but search and see the actual version of happening by their keen insight like a seer. The progressing psyche of human in post modern era is much attached with the new theories and discoveries and their awareness lead them to the fresh orientation of the facts. We find dynamic interpretation of Epic like Mahabharata, Ramayana, allusions from the Upanishada along with the writings of Camus and Kierkgaard. With this new fresh orientation we find her characters facing challenges in the modern era. She writes in her novel *Moving On* “*Why, between this and the brain, we’ve conquered the world, we’ve changed it to suit our purposes.*”¹³.

All of her novels doom with the horror of death but the ambience is charged with such positivity that characters search and find the meaning of life at the end. Life is a continuous process in which happenings occur even after death. So, there is no definite end but all mysteries are resolved in a logical way in her novels as it happens in real life. Thus to my view point is to see and read her novels on the themes of materialism, existentialism, rootlessness, nothingness, decay in moral values, corruption, absurdism, pragmatism, humanism, pursuit of happiness, fear of death, love and marriage etc.

Deshpande’s novels are surcharged with the towering presence of woman and the issues concerning woman on upper surfaces. This is the reason that she is often labeled as a feminist writer but she refuses to be confined within the circle and whatever she writes are the dilemmas of human being and choices they make in the lives. Her protagonists are female characters so this is quite obvious the novels are concerned with the

problems of women but through these women characters, she raises the issues which prevail in modern Indian society and which are worth to discuss. In her rejection of being labeled as feminist writer she says:

*It took me years to say even to myself, 'I am a feminist'. It was the culmination of a voyage that began within myself and went on to be the ocean of women's place in the world. Today, when I call myself a feminist, I believe that the female of the species has the same right to be born and survive, to fulfill herself and shape her life according to her needs and the potential that lies within her, as the male has. I believe that women are neither inferior nor subordinate human beings.*¹⁴

In what way she admits herself feminist is only to feel on woman's part they are human being. Her idea of feminism is different from the other writers as well as the western feminist writers of her age. Deshpande clarifies:

But to me feminism isn't a matter of theory; it is difficult to apply Kate Millet or Simone de Beauvoir or whoever to the reality of our daily lives in India. And then there are such terrible misconceptions about feminism by people here. They often think it is about burning bras and walking out on your husband, children, etc. I always try to make the point now about what feminism is not, and to say that we have to discover what it is in our own lives, our experiences. And I

*actually feel that a lot of women in India are feminists without realizing it.*¹⁵

A thorough study of her novels shows that she presents the issues which modern Indian human being is confronting. She presents women characters because with this world she is more familiar. She has observed the plight of an average Indian who is paying relationship on the threshold of ongoing deep buried thought of tradition and inclination towards the upcoming new theories. So the novels are the stories of tangible human relationships while facing modern challenges and how they are caught in the web. Deshpande admits to Geeta Gangadharan in an interview:

*We know a lot about the physical and the organic world and Universe in general but we still know very little about human relationships. It is the most mystifying thing as far as I am concerned. I will continue to wonder about it, puzzle over it and write about it. And still find it tremendously intriguing, fascinating.*¹⁶

Deshpande has an in-born literary bent of mind and breathed in literary ambience as the daughter of AdyaRangacharya- an eminent playwright, author and scholar of Sanskrit and Kannada language. He is known as the Bernard Shaw of Kannada theatre. She regrets of having no guidance from his side and being detached with him. She responds to Vanamala Vishwanatha:

If I should criticize him, I should say he was somewhat detached from us...never guided us. May be if he had directed

*us at an early age, I could have done better. He never did that.*¹⁷

If we talk about the objective of a writer why she/he writes then we find a writer is highly concerned what is going in the society and the observations with which he/she is deeply attached and what disturbs the writer becomes the cause of creation of literary work of art. The writer's own sensibility and an urge to pour those emotions, thoughts and ideas is enough for creation as it is with Deshpande. Writing is both self learning and self discovery to her and with this way she secures the place in the society. Driving forces of her writings are anger and confusion of a woman. As she says:

*To the beginning of my own writing, I can see that it came out of both anger and confusion. Something I felt, was not right with the world, with my world. It was hard to get a clear sense of what was wrong; there was only this confusion and anger. It was only much later that I was able to connect my anger to the sense of denigration. I was made to feel about being a female, about the roles that my gender identity seemed to have locked me into, roles which I often chafed against. Worst of all was the idea that this gender identity and the roles that came with it seemed to deny my intellectual self, a self that was as important to me as my emotional self. It was out of this turmoil and disturbance that my writing was born.*¹⁸

With their creativity most of the writers give voice to those voices who are struggling hard to be heard. In this context, a writer plays a wider role to bring forth such issues which have been marginalized. So, it is not

only her confusion and anger makes her writer but her deep Indian sensibility too. She clarifies:

*Undoubtedly, a writer writes not only of herself, but out of the society she is living as well. However, the basic focus is always the human being. Society is the background; it is the individual's response to society; it is what society does to individual that the writer is really concerned with.*¹⁹

In writing fictional works, Deshpande's authorial disposition and awareness realize her about a writer's status in the society. Whatever she writes is out of the main stream writing. As a result she felt herself isolated among other writers of her Age. As a woman writer writing in English she does not find any model to follow. For a long period in her career, she remains unnoticed. She insists to be called a writer instead of feminist writer. She never tries to conceal her gender identity and her writings seem strongly gendered that one can form an idea that it has been written by women writer:

*As writing is born out of personal experience, the fact that I am a woman is bound to surface. Besides, only a woman could write my books- they are written to from the inside, as it were.*²⁰

The use of English is always controversial in India. Though declared second language still it is a colonial language. Deshpande uses English as a regional language of India. In her narrative she artistically imbues Marathi words as Kaka, Ai, Ajji, Atya, dada and some Hindi words which fit in

easily and naturally that it does not appear to be foreign language. To her, English is the language of creativity. Deshpande belongs to those strata of society which breathe in the very ambience of English so it comes to her genuinely. She expresses her thoughts in English clearly and effectively as she expresses in other regional languages. Like other writers of her age, she does not make any linguistic innovations in her writings. For her English is the most convenient mode of writing.

Deshpande uses elliptical and minimal words instead of long sentences to convey her concerns. Her language is simple, direct and terse. Her use of words is designed in such a manner that it produces a rhythm which seems to originate from her soul. Her idiomatic language is enough to enhance the beauty of her writings. She uses far-fetched striking metaphor, simile and phrase to describe the actual condition of the characters. Natural images become the tool of imparting hints of next event and enhancing the desired effects in the novel and one of the means of symbolism. She uses symbolism to justify her narration and makes it a platform of upcoming events. Her use of situational, attitudinal and verbal irony is the perfect medium to express human behavior of having satisfactory possessions craves and desires more for worldly matter.

Deshpande uses stream of consciousness technique to disclose the inner working of characters' mind. Her characters, whether male or female, don't speak much but think and express their thoughts by the medium of writing and other ways. With this process of thinking, we come to know the actual mental condition of modern humans. Her psychological insight gives us a chance to peep into the inner recesses of her characters' mind.

Mentally troubled her characters feel isolated and in this isolation they find enough space to introspect and contemplate over the action. This small pause, her characters suffer and change from self-alienation to self-identification.

In the beginning, her characters seem fragmented but as the story advances they catch the pace, make balance and become more sound and strong than before. They learn to make balance between destructive and constructive aspects of life. Reading of each of her novel shows us that her portrayal of the characters and presentation of the story does not belong to a reformist or a moralist side but she presents things as they are. She analyses male-female relationship with new dimension with which a common reader is hardly aware. Like Jane Austen, she measures her journey within the reach.

Shashi Deshpande is one of those writers who show barbarism in her novels and she is much against violence. It is evident from the current incident when on October 9, 2015 she resigned from her position on the Sahitya Academy's general council and returned the Sahitya Akademy Award. She justifies her social and moral responsibility by joining a broader protest by other writers against the Akademi's perceived inaction and silence on the murder of M.M. Kalburgi.

In the chapter entitled *Demonic Human World* I choose four novels- *Moving On*, *Small Remedies*, *If I Die Today* and *The Binding Vine*. The chapter comprises of the modern tendencies which are responsible for human's dilemma in each sphere of life. In the novel *Moving On* my point

of view is to discuss how her characters in grip of their will, choice, action and passion make decisions which lead them to alienation, loneliness, subjugation of moral values, corrosion of faith in God and spiritual sterility and how with this they dwell in inferno. In *Small Remedies* I analyse the issues which need to be contemplated. I discuss the novel with the issues of fear of loss, alienation, nothingness, materialism, and decline in moral values and carnage. My emphasis in the novel *If I Die Today* is to discuss the lives of doctors as how they are in the grip of utilitarianism, materialism. In *The Binding Vine* I show how from the beginning of their life, woman learn to be dependent on other half of the species but when catastrophe and calamity occur they find nobody to shelter. I discuss various issues love, motherhood, childlessness and rape as a demonic force on their part.

The chapter *The Concept of Absurdity* deals with the elements of absurdity in Shashi Deshpande's novels. Deshpande introduces the elements of absurdity in some of her novels in a very subtle manner but the novel *A Matter of Time* is completely constructed on the theme of absurdity. In the chapter *Demonic Human World* I have shown that how all pervasive concepts as Existentialism, Materialism, Utilitarianism, Rootlessness, Loneliness, Corruption, Moral degradation of human being and Corrosion of faith play vital role in transforming human psyche. Having surrounded amid all the forces which are running in this mechanical world, there develops the concept of absurdity.

I analyze three novels *If I Die Today*, *Small Remedies* and *A Matter of Time* concerning the concept of absurdity through literary elements like

plot, characterization, theme and setting. I also uncover which element is more visible in her novels and in what extent it has been implied. To avoid vagueness and subjectivity I limit my study so that objective result could be acquired. I use extrinsic approach and descriptive analytical method to analyze novels. I support my statements, interpretations and findings by Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *Stranger*, *Plague*; Kafka's *Metamorphosis*; Esslin's *The Theatre of Absurd* and Samuel Backet's *Waiting for Godot*.

In two of her novels *That Long Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* Shashi Deshpande weaves the plot on the theme of pragmatic humanly self. Her characters are not male and female but human and as a human being they both have to face similar challenges. She presents her characters in dilemma of modern human society in which each human being is turning into a pragmatic one for self benefit. After independence there are multitudes changes in Indian society and one of the revolutionary changes occur with the pragmatic views of humans. I analyse how in grip of pragmatic views the characters convert from flat to round characters and achieve different roles in the society. I discuss how pragmatic views create and remove hurdles in the way of characters and how they lose their mental peace.

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