

Indian Culture: A Study on Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time*

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Abstract

Shashi Deshpande is one of the contemporary writer from Karnataka and she has a well known name in the field of Indian Literature. In her novel, 'A Matter of Time' she brings out the reality of Indian culture in Indian families. Also she describes the importance of culture followed by the Indian Women. Her Novels highlights the natural depiction of Indian people and the culture of Indian living. In this novel A Matter of Time she had used the Indian names and also the role of Indian Middle Class Women through the character named Sumi. She not only discusses about Indian Women but also about Indian Culture, Indian Religion, Indian Family faiths and beliefs, Family Traditions and Emotions. Hence, this paper gives clear idea about the Indian Culture according to Shashi Deshpande's novel *A Matter of Time*.

Sashi Deshpande falls under the category of Indian English Literature and her works have considerable Indianness in many respects. Indian literature would mean literature in any Indian language. The term 'Indian English literature' emphasizes two significant ideas; first, it is a product of English literature since its medium is English and secondly this literature constitutes one of the several streams that join the large oceans is called Indian literature, which though written in various languages, has an distinctive unity. It is a process of Indianizing English language, of transforming and expressing the Indian sensibility into English and thus shaping Indianness in English.

Indian writing in English is a body of literature which has arrived in the global market place with its own brand name. What is noticeable here is that in spite of its global presence, its idea and formulation cannot be delinked from Indianness, a concept rich and diverse in many ways and carrying many other concepts like history, culture, society, morality and religion.

Indian English writers have boldly experimented with language and various literary techniques. Indian English literature is that it includes not only the writers writing from India about India, but also those who are writing from abroad about India. It also includes writings by Indian diaspora. The Indian diasporic writers mainly occupy the contemporary scene in Indian writing in English. It is mainly through the contribution of Indian diasporic writers that Indian literature in English has gained recent recognition. There are some obvious reasons for that. One of the

reasons is that the diasporic writers take the characters and themes from the greatest resources of their native culture with the help of their talent, creativity and learning. The diasporic represent themselves to an alien audience and have wider access to readers all over the world. Exchanging one tradition for another, one culture for another and one home for another, the diasporic writer creates and inscribes alternative worlds.

The Indian English literature deals with the effects of colonization on the Indian culture and society which signify the political, social, linguistic and cultural experiences of and changes in colonized society. Decolonization is carried out by the presentation of Indianness. Indianness has elements, reflecting the variety of life, unity in diversity and a rich civilization. Indian civilization has been enriched by many cultures and mingling spiritual and material aspects of living. It is capable of becoming a source of inspiration for others and of unique importance to make its people proud for its ancient times and its function and relevance in the modern age.

Indianness is a concept which is the centre of discussion for critics and many have tried to define and theorize it. The Indianness in Indian English literature has controversial and continuing history. They argue over the problem of defining Indianness is not of recent origin. Many critics have tried to solve the problem. Indianness is little more than the creative blending of Indian concepts and the English language as a cross breed in other words.

Indianness is in style and diction, the setting or background colour, the imagery, the literary forms used,

etc. Indian writer is a person who carries with him the entire Indian heritage and not merely a portion of it. An Indian has cultural awareness. The cultural awareness is an essential feature of Indianness. Indianness imparts sense of merging oneself into another without losing the essential goodness but with adopting goodness from other. The history of India shows that India had been invaded by many rulers, but Indians maintained their Indianness and adopted other important qualities of their religion, society and culture. Indians always have a sense of awareness of being an Indian.

Shashi Deshpande's stories are about a woman: her sufferings and privations, tensions and irritations, pains and anguishes. Deshpande writes mainly about everyday India - A society in which Indians breathe and a culture which Indians belong. Her major concerns emerge from own environment and from immediate world, holding up mirrors to their own lives. Her works, particularly novels, demand undivided attention from the readers, insist that they understand the world that is being presented to them without any decoration.

Deshpande focuses on the Indian marital relationships in the novels written by her. But there is a quantitative difference in tone and perception in novels which adopt an open or understood feminist attitude. The emphasis is not on the development or mechanics of the relationship but on the forces which work together to make the relationship, an absurd exhibition of togetherness.

According to the comments of Usha Bande, "Shashi Deshpande evolves a balance between traditional demands and modern compulsions and renegotiate the power relations in an attempt to resolve the crisis" (191). In this work *A Matter of Time*, she has used the historical past here and there. She uses the 'big house' named 'Vishwas' as a symbol in this novel.

Usha Bande continues her comments,

She is familiar with both Marathi and Kannada languages and cultures, and her novels, though written in English, are set in the urban middle class environment. *A Matter of Time* and *Small Remedies* have the historical and cultural ethos of Maharashtra and Karnataka; in the former, the rhetoric builds around the history of a family that shifts to Karnataka with Peshwa Madhavrao's entourage. (192)

Shashi Deshpande has used the Indian God, Ganapathi in *A Matter of Time* that how the people clean the God with wet cloth until God emerges and shines. When Sumi's father cleans God, she thinks about the tradition and about putting a dot of *kumkum* on the forehead and the hibiscus in one ear of God and another on the trunk. Here, Shashi Deshpande brings the Indian God and how it is being worshipped and decorated.

Sumi thinks, is following a tradition on standing on a ladder, he cleans the idol with Nagi assisting and Kalyani watching. He wipes it with a wet cloth until the god emerges glossy and shining, clear of his family veil of dust and cobwebs, his pot belly gleaming, one leg daintily crossed over the other. Finally, putting a dot of kumkum on the forehead, Bora tucks a hibiscus behind one ear and another in the loop of the trunk. Then, climbing down the ladder, he looks with satisfaction at his work before folding his hands reverently.

Kalyani, too, perhaps unconsciously imitating her mother whom she must have seen doing this as a child, folds her own hands and mutters, 'look after us, Ganapathi, protect us.' (115)

She brings out the Indian tradition of immersing ashes after a person is buried. His ashes will be immersed in the river with belief that his soul will rest in peace. It is an Indian tradition and culture and it is followed for much number of years.

It has to be done, though, he tells them that he is taking some of Sumi's ashes for immersion in the Alaknanda, a river Sumi and he had seen together long ago. But there are things he cannot say; he cannot tell them that the river, flowing down the hills with a youthful exuberance, had seemed then to be, in its unsullied purity, like Sumi herself. (245)

In the words of K. Vijayalakshmi, a lecturer, "Shashi Deshpande in her writings, has also tried to see and define what an Indian marriage is (in the traditional sense of the term) getting the daughters married is a sense of success for the parents" (120). Similarly, Kalyani was so depressed when her son-in-law Gopal left her daughter. Shashi brings out the parents suffering when their daughters fail in their marital life. According to the tradition of India, marriage is a great thing. The Indians concern about it and give more importance.

In this novel, *A Matter of Time*, Deshpande brings out the Indian tradition with the story of a typical Indian family that Kalyani asks Gopal to come back and live with Sumi. Kalyani demands Gopal to come back and live life with Sumi. Here Shashi Deshpande brings out the Indian tradition that in India after marriage man and woman should not live separately. Similarly here in this novel Kalyani does not want Sumi's life to be like her as her husband is not talking with her for more than thirty years.

Chiefly in her works Shashi Deshpande talks about the life of Indian Women and their sufferings in their family and also in the society.

According to the comments of Mala, a critic, Shashi Deshpande's feminism is not western oriented, because it is born out of a typically Indian situation. Her fiction represents the predicament of Indian woman and is placed between culture and nature. Further Deshpande combines "humanism with feminism in her fiction, and so her vision of the Indian woman tends to be optimistic though radical. (51).

Shashi Deshpande has used Indianness in her works with reference to the things which are exclusive to India.

She has given more importance to Indian culture, tradition, food, places, names, styles etc, Shashi Deshpande has portrayed Indian tradition and culture and specially about the marital life of the Indian women to bring out her point of Indianness.

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