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Reconnaissance of Female Ipseity in Shashi Deshpande's A *Matter of Time*

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Abstract:

In the novel A Matter of Time Shashi Deshpande, explains the reconnaissance of female ipseity through her three female characters: Kalyani, Sumi and Aru. She depicts the feelings and sufferings of female in the context of marriage. In this novel Kalyani is the most important example of a long silence. She suffers a lot in her life due to the long silence that is given to her by her husband and also because she lost her male child. Sumi, the daughter of Kalyani, also suffers from the same pain but she is not able to make out the reason as to why her husband asks her leave his home. Sumi explores her female ipseity after leaving her husband's home when she becomes independent and uses her talent of writing. She tries to learn all the things that are important for her with the help of Aru. Aru also explores female ipseity when she takes on all the responsibilities of her home and provides help to her mother in learning things related to every day (modern) life.

Keywords: - Reconnaissance, female ipseity, sufferings and emotions, individuality.

Shashi Deshpande is an award- winning Indian novelist. 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 for the novel *That Long Silence* in 1990 and the Padma Shri Award in 2009.

All these women writers like- Kamla Das, Shashi Deshpande, Kamla Markanday, Ruth Pawer Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Jumpa Lahiri, Shoba De and others have contributed to Indian writings. All women have their own perspective in writing but the common and main perspective is the same i.e. to study about women's sufferings and rights. In *A Matter of Time*, Shashi Deshpande portrays many facets of feminine life like her suffering, her struggle for individuality etc. The novel represents three generations of women who struggle for their identity and how they are eventually able to explore this identity through their will power.

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The three characters namely, Kalyani, Sumi and Aru, represent women empowerment and show to the society that a woman can do anything even after leaving her husband's house and also that a woman can become independent without her husband's economic help. The females of this novel are also shown as strong souls who may bend but never break.

It is a story around three generations of women who suffer all the hardships of life and eventually are able to turn the course of their life by becoming independent. This novel is related to theme of silence, familial relationship, sufferings of women and gender differences. It represents the society's trauma towards those women who have left their husband's house after marriage. This novel deals with female ipseity and explains about the complexities of the man-woman relationship especially in the context of marriage. Indian woman becomes the victim, and a silent sufferer. While she has played different roles for her family as a wife, mother, sister, daughter, she was never been able to claim her own individuality. Shashi Deshpande describes, in unequivocal terms, her idea of feminism. To a question from an interview, whether she would like to call herself now a feminist, she reacts thus:

> Yes, I would, I am a feminist in the sense that, I think we need to have a world. Which we should recognize as a place for all of us human beings. There is no superior and inferior, we are two halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone de Beauvoir that the fact that we are human is much more important than our being men and women. I think that's my idea of feminism.

In this novel Kalyani suffers firstly because of her mother Manorama because Manorama wants a son instead of Kalyani. Kalyani represents her failure that is why she does not like her own daughter. The behaviour of Kalyani's father is different from her mother. He allows Kalyani to study. He wants that Kalyani should become an engineer because she was good in maths. But

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Manorama does not allow her to continue her study because she fares that Vithalrao might adopt a son. Due to this insecurity she decides about the marriage of Kalyani with Shripati. She wants that property should be remain in the home that is why she decides marriage of Kalyani with her brother, Shripati and these lines of *A Matter of Time* represents her insecurity:"Perhaps' after this, Manorama felt secure. The property (Vishwas) would remain in the family now" (129).In the second phase of her life Kalyani emerges as the most powerful example of a long silence. She suffers from this silence since thirty five years because she loses her male heir at the railway station. In *A Matter of Time* at that time Premi tells to Aru: "Baba had gone to check the reservation; leaving Amma with the children, when he returned the boy wasn't there" (140).

Her husband thinks that she left their son because he is not mentally stable and she does not want him. Shashi Deshpande's novel *A Matter of Time* starts with an epigraph drawn from the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad: "'Maitreyi', said Yajnavalkya, 'verify I am about to go forth from this state (of householder)" (1). This line represents the meaning that the house is built by man not just for himself but for his son and son's son. That is why for Shripati his male heir is most important for him. He gives a long silence in return of that mistake to Kalyani. Kalyani suffers a lot in her life. She does not want to see her daughter in the same condition which she suffers. When Gopal decides to leave Sumi Kalyani goes to meet Gopal with her granddaughter, and the first time she breaks her long silence for her daughter and asks from Gopal why does he want to leave her daughter? She bursts into words: "What have you done to my daughter, Gopal, don't do this, and don't let it happen to my daughter, what happened to me" (46).

Kalyani does this for Sumi and for her granddaughters only. In the beginning of the novel Gopal asks to Sumi to leave his house with their three daughters. He says: "I stopped believing in the life I was leading' suddenly it seemed unreal to me and I knew I could not go on" (41).Sumi leaves Gopal and his house without even knowing the reason. Then after leaving her husband house Sumi has to face many difficulties. The first thing she confronts is the society because in our society a

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married woman does not leave the house of husband after marriage. Sumi reflects on the fact that the kumkum on the forehead of a woman means everything in their society. Later

> Shankar's mother in law tells Sumi that: "Go back to your husband' he's a good man. If you've done wrong' he'll forgive you. And if he has- women shouldn't have any pride?"(161).

Sumi in this novel gives her best becoming independent and moreover she wants to come out from the trauma of her life .At the age of forty she suffers all the pain that is given by her husband with her three daughters. But she does not emotionally scatter and becomes strong in her life. In the society mostly women shatter when they leave the house of their husband after a long married life because some of them do not have economic independence. Sumi displays extraordinary courage and self confidence in trying to cope with the momentous problems. Sumi becomes independent by doing a job where she uses her writing skills. She also learns how to drive a scooter from her daughter Aru .Sumi displays this extraordinary courage just for her daughters- Aru, Charu, and Seema. Aru is also an important character who explores female ipseity in this novel. Before leaving her house she has a hope that her father will come and when Sumi declares her decision that they will have to leave house immediately. Aru says that: "Vacate the house? You must be joking!"(28).

Aru is skeptical. As long as the house is theirs, there still is a hope but Sumi tells her that we have to leave this house and it is live pronouncing the death sentence of that hope. Aru always notice everything in her grandmother's house and she thinks that everyone gives attention to their past life rather than future. Aru takes the charges of the house both as a daughter and as a son and she trains her mother in driving. In the novel: "She has the concentration of a rope-walker, holding the weight of her grief in her two hands, not as if it a burden' but to balance herself"(234).At the end of the novel A *Matter of Time* she takes upon responsibilities of the householder upon herself.

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She tells to Gopal: "Yes, Papa, you go. We'll be alright, we'll be quite alright, don't worry about us" (246).

Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields. It encompasses work in a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, economics, women's studies, literary criticism, art history, psychoanalysis and philosophy. Feminist theory aims to understand gender inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. Themes explored in feminist theory include discrimination, stereotyping, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression, and patriarchy. In the field of literary criticism, Elaine Showalter describes the development of feminist theory as having three phases. The first she calls "feminist critique", in which the feminist reader examines the ideologies behind literary phenomena. The second Showalter calls "gynocriticism", in which the "woman is producer of textual meaning". The last phase she calls "gender theory", in which the "ideological inscription and the literary effects of the sex/gender system are explored". In A *Matter of Time* Shashi Deshpande vindicates feminism through three characters: Kalyani, Sumi and Aru. In *A Matter of Time* she puts in plain words that Kalyani represents feminism when she asks questions from Gopal that why does he want to leave her daughter? And the character of Sumi reveals the difficulties and hardships that she faces in Indian society- especially educated women. The character of Aru also validates the concept of feminism when she, at the end of the novel, tells to Gopal that she can manage. All three characters stand for their ipseity in a perfect manner in male dominated society.

Siddharth Sharma in his book, *Shashi Deshpande's Novels: A Feminist Study,* looks to find about the concept of feminism. He recognizes the value that Shashi Deshpande illuminates about women who are victim of male dominated society. Sarabjeet K. Sandhu also gives her views in her book, *The image of Women in the Novel of Shashi Deshpande,* in the context of feminism. Neeru Tondon

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is also important in this perception of feminism. She discusses every phase of feminism in her book, *Feminism: A Paradign Shift.*

So the novel represents female's struggle for exploration of female ipseity and in this novel the three women achieve their identity. Kalyani gets her identity when she loses her husband and daughter. After the death of Shripati they find his will which he has left in his house for Kalyani. "On the contrary, it is as if the words have given her something more than the house' restored something she had lost; they seem, in fact, to have strengthened her" (245). In these lines the world gives her identity back to her. Sumi gets her ipseity when she becomes successful in her economic life, and Aru achieves her ipseity when she plays both the role as a girl and as a boy just for her house as she takes all the responsibilities even after the death of her mother.

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