

FEMININE CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

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ABSTRACT

Indian women novelists in English have been presenting woman as the centre of concern in their novels. Shashi Deshpande is one of the most significant novelists among them. She depicts women's issues and problems very deeply in her novels. A woman's quest for identity and redefining her self finds reflection in her novels and constitutes a significant motif of the female characters in her fiction. Her deep instinctive insight into women's problems and dilemmas helps her drawing a realistic portrait of a contemporary woman. She explores and interprets the emotional reactions and spiritual responses of women and their predicament with sympathetic understanding. The chief protagonists in her novels are female characters who are in constant search for meaning and value of life. In some of her novels she presents an existential struggle of a woman who denies to flow along the current and refuses to submit her individual self. The woman emerging out of a such situation is a defeated individual undergoing much pain and suffering. Such characters exhibit a sense of insecurity due to their traumatic experiences and also due to the collapse of one value system and the absence of any enduring values. In her novels Shashi Deshpande traces a woman's journey from self-sacrifice to self-realization, from self-denial to self-assertion and from self-negation to self-affirmation. The feminine consciousness is felt in all her novels. Shashi Deshpande offers us a glimpse into the lives of ostensibly content housewives who are nevertheless suppressed under the weight of male dominance.

Deshpande, however, avoids the facile solution of laying the blame on men alone and tries to view the men-woman relationship objectively. Shashi Deshpande offers us a glimpse into the lives of ostensibly content housewives who are nevertheless suppressed under the weight of male dominance. Deshpande, who is an acknowledged master at expressing the anguish and frustration of women, gives a true to life saga of the trauma faced by her protagonist. Feminine consciousness for 'self' is felt in the novels of Deshpande.

KEYWORDS: Man-Women Relationship, Anguish, Frustration, Feminine Consciousness