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**Simi's 'unshackled: A Story of Growth and Change'**

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**Abstract**

In "A Matter of Time", Shashi Deshpande masterfully crafts Sumi's journey from dependence to independence. Abandoned by her husband, Sumi confronts societal expectations and finds her voice through writing. As she navigates single motherhood, she discovers inner strength, resilience, and a new sense of identity. This poignant narrative explores themes of self-discovery, empowerment, and the complexities of women's lives.

**Keywords:** Transformative Literature, Self-discovery, Empowerment, Women's Identity. Resilience.

Shashi Deshpande's name needs no introduction. Shashi Deshpande, born in 1938, is among the most accomplished contemporary female novelists in the development of Indian English fiction. She is gifted with a rare literary bent of mind. She has made a niche for herself among Indian novelists, particularly among women novelists. Her stories reveal that her protagonists are modern, educated Indian women torn between traditional ideas and their intellect. Though they never cross the limits of their family and walk away from the accepted roles of a wife and a mother, they revolt in their own way. They have their concept of life. Her women protagonists tend to be the architects of their fate. The stories are the authentic, poignant tales of middle-class, educated women and their exploitation in a conventional, male-dominated society.

She considers herself a feminist in her personal life, but not a feminist writer. "I write as a writer but am identified as a woman writer. I am nothing more than a novelist and a short-story writer, but people seek more glorified titles to elevate you to stardom" She dirges the divide between writers as a group based on caste, gender and language and this, she says, prevents writers from playing a meaningful part in society and their powerlessness to take on and write on civic issues. Nevertheless, the free-spirited Shashi Deshpande makes her voice more

distinctive with every new publication. Writing from the margin is also written with felicity to evoke emotions. Their quiet endurance is socio-mystic. Here is a world in Deshpande's novels where women endure various misfortunes yet adapt to every emergency with the progression of time. These sufferings and torment are essential to build up one's uniqueness. Deshpande has dug into the issue of each woman in a dishonest society where she is rendered a subsequent evaluation position; however, she is expected to be the lynchpin of the family. This twofold edginess creates struggle in a woman's psyche. She is confounded about her job in society and family. Deshpande, in search of 'self' outside the challenged territory of a traditional dissertation, slowly disrupts the binaries and rises above to magnitudes where women are mature and free to understand. Her work is crucial as a model emerging from the myth of alienation, loneliness, recovery, and renewal. She is an excellent deep narrator of distant cultural spaces and foregrounds of psychic and cultural identities. Shailendra Singh and Radhika Bansal, in their article, "Patriarchy in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande", expose Deshpande's reasons for writing, which Deshpande herself has expressed in her interview with Gita Vishwanath,

"I have seen girls being paraded; I mean being shown to boys for marriage I remember when I was with my mother's family in Poona; there was a girl in the family who was rejected. I was younger than her and was not consciously thinking about it. Later it came back to me, how much pain that girl must have felt thought of all these things which impelled me to write. In fact, these were the very things that forced me into writing; it sorts of piled up in me and poured out in all the novels. (15)

Deshpande fixes the reason for marital disharmony for the most part in denied youth. Marriage is the end for customary women. Thus, the ordinary women in Deshpande's novels are legendary spouses and mothers. They are known for dread, frenzy, suffocation, and weakness. Remarkably, the mother figures are not the matrons to be celebrated but the suffocating and legitimate figures to be hated. They bear a wide range of enduring, calmly considering it their fate. Although some of Deshpande's female heroes are trapped while rethinking their jobs and associations with the social world as instructed and

stubborn, they are also trapped in an issue toward the conclusion to hold themselves in advancement to take a progressive change. Accordingly, they need to make a ruling for the family at last.

In the novel *A Matter of Time* (1996), she has taken up the issues of sex separation, spouse-wife relationships. Indian females have acknowledged the conventional bound job, which is in the hands of men. The status of the Indian woman battling in her parental home, a conjugal independent writer, she developed a fervor for expression. Her writings depict relationships, and sexual misuse befits close investigation. Being a pent-up emotion, it gushed forth like a stream, using domestic issues, marital problems, and feminist outbursts. She writes about various oppressions inflicted by men on women in everyday struggle. Shashi Deshpande is good at dealing with man-woman relationships in terms of marital dissonance, socio-cultural issues, and socio-political and socio-economic problems. In her novels, there is a welcome shift in the focus of themes of the psycho-social aspect. Her works can be categorized under a broad heading of sociological and psychological fiction.

In Deshpande's novels, women are compelled to return to their natal homes; likewise, Sumi reaches her mother's place because Gopal deserts her. In her novels, the home represents an individual history that the heroes must comprehend to figure out the logical inconsistencies in her social position. Their arrival needs materialistic and psychological haven from their biological home. Deshpande has investigated a woman's changing viewpoint and her quest for holding inside the family as a method of solidarity. Shashi Deshpande focuses on understanding the fragmentation and the dichotomy that prevails in the psyche of her female characters while identifying their individuality. Therefore, in her novels, there is a drive towards identifying one's identity initially, which takes the protagonist on a new journey. The journey appears rebellious, but it is more a journey within than without and, therefore, does not have any direct consequences towards the characters' situation, including other people in general and men in particular.

*A Matter of Time* (1996) is a novel that traverses the lives of four women: Manorama, Kalyani, Sumi, and Aru. This multi-generational story, told discreetly, expresses the characters' discoveries, each in turn, in the sequences of love, loss, power, and renewal that become an essential part of her identity. The novel reveals the hidden springs of character while painting a nuanced depiction

of the difficulties and choices faced by educated women in India today. Although the novel does not show the devastating impact of poverty on the lives of its female characters, it tells how a developed woman worries about the concern of cherished recollections. Kalyani, mother of Sumi, is the casualty of the forced game and perseveres through the anguish of the dismissal of her mother Manorama. Kalyani's mother dismisses her intellectually for being brought into the world of young women; likewise, Kalyani, in one way or another, bombards her mother on each record – she has been neither lovely nor keen and not in any case enduring. Children are denied adoration because of different familial conditions, of which a wrecked family is the preeminent. Kalyani's little girls, Sumi and Premi, are the casualties of the above condition. Their father has denied both Premi and Sumi's love. Premi uncovers, "Both are the survivors of the forsaken life of their abandoned mother. They are left psychologically shaky about marriage and the oblivious phantom of the dread of instability frequents them later when Gopal leaves family" (18).

*A Matter of Time* is a novel interesting in that the husband walks out on his family, comprising the wife and three daughters. Sumi's the protagonist husband is the protagonist, and he was so shocked that he lapses into complete silence but tries hard to keep things regular for her daughters. When she returns home, she is grieved by a feeling of hardship. Presently, she is an expert and the wife of a fruitful legal counselor; however, she says, "The second I return home, this wanes into nothing and I can feel myself sliding go into immaturity, getting by and by under the skin of that terrified youngster Premi who is continually hanging tight here for me." (17). These lines show how Premi is influenced by the air at home because of the connection between her folks, Kalyani and Shripati. When she thinks about Gopal's abrupt choice to leave the family, the oblivious apparition of the dread of instability makes her concerned and urges her to meet Gopal. He likewise has a damaged adolescence. Gopal's father has hitched his sibling's widow, who later becomes Gopal's mother. Concerning the picture of his father, there has been a firm conviction in his psyche that his father is a man who trespassed against his sibling by cherishing his wife. He discovers his father as a man capitulating to his enthusiasm for his sibling's wife, and after the sibling's passing, a marriage of convenience is solemnized. He can never relate to his father, always thinking of him as his mother's guilty partner. Later, his parents' gruesome death leaves a void in his life. However, more than that, the

realization that his sister, Sudha, and he did not share the same father shatters his equilibrium. As he later reflects, therefore, Gopal has long been nurturing a sense of loneliness and desolation, as evidenced by his ruminations: He says,

“Emptiness, I realized then, is always waiting for us. The nightmare we most dread of waking up among total strangers is one we can never escape. And so, it's a lie, it means nothing, it's just deceiving ourselves when we say we are not alone. It is the desperation of a drowning person that makes us cling to other humans. All human ties are only a masquerade. Someday, some time, the pretence fails us, and we must face the truth”. (52)

In conclusion, Gopal has discovered the impressions interbreeding, and in his ethical vision, it is incomplete. Gopal has ended up lost. Identity is a complex phenomenon. Gopal's father is his mother's guilty partner. Their dreadful death leaves him in a great turmoil and void. What ruins his peace is his painful insight that even his sister Sudha and he do not share the same father. This bitter childhood experience must have vexed him and made him walk out of his wife's life. Gopal began his life with high ideals. It was against him that Premi “measured all other men” (134). The potential to walk out on his wife and children was always there in him. While others were busy with their wild guesses, his wife knew that “the reason lies inside him, the reason is him” (24). Shashi Deshpande says, “The point is, they are both unusual people. People are puzzled by the abandoned wife not feeling bad” (256). She does not ask for any explanation from Gopal as to why he had left them without any apparent reason. Whenever the gate creaks or the phone rings, she expects it to be Gopal. She feels a sense of alienation, not loneliness. The one question she prepares to ask Gopal remains unsaid...

I meet Gopal, and I will ask him one question no one has thought of. What is it, Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in this age of acquisition and possessions walk out on his family and all that he owns? Because, and I remember this so clearly, it was you who said

that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How can you, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back on everything in your life? Will you be able to give me an answer to this? (27)

Sumi cannot comprehend the meaning of such an existence, and she thinks, whereas Aru, the daughter of Sumi, considers her father's walkout of the family as "not just a tragedy, it is both a shame and a disgrace" (13). The "desire to rebel" (11) is deeply ingrained in her. She is no longer interested in Gopal's answer, but she will not let him get away scot-free (137). She says, "He cannot get away like this! He has to give us maintenance (61).

Usha Bande makes a perceptive observation on Kalyani, Sumi, and Aru and says:

Though the three women are victims of patriarchal dominance, they reclaim their identity through their acts of resistance. Aru tries to reposition her lost situation by angry protests: Sumi regains her identity when her merit as an individual is recognized and Kalyani feels empowered when Shripati's will, referring to her as Vithal Rao and Manorama's daughter and not as his wife, is read out to her. She does not feel the sting of having been robbed of her marital status (198).

Sumi's self-respect makes her take up a job for herself and her daughters. In *A Matter of Time*, Deshpande once again touches on female sexuality. Sum recalls her friend, Vani, confiding in her when her husband was away for a year abroad, "Oh, I miss him so much, especially at night. There it's out. I can't say this to anyone." (191). Though Gopal, her husband, returns, she is a new Sumi. She has coped with the tragedy with remarkable stoicism. At the novel's end, Gopal returns on hearing of her death; meanwhile, any words of sympathy from relations fail to console her. The dynamics between ego and self and the interplay of separation and union are intriguing psychological concepts that can shed light on characters' experiences and transformations in literature. Shashi

Deshpande has emerged as a superb literary force, reflecting a realistic portrayal of a contemporary middle-class female. She concentrates on female issues that are evident in Indian households. Shashi Deshpande wanted to develop her creative world of how a woman can be empowered. Imaginative writing enables her to find a secure place to inspect a broad range of experiences, particularly regarding female status in society.

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