Shashi Deshpande is known for creating women characters who are contemporary. Deshpande's women protagonists are victims of the prevalent gross gender discrimination, first as daughters and later as wives. The objective of this study is to find out if Shashi Deshpande's women characters are really empowered women or if they are just wearing a mask of tranquility. The study aims to find out if Shashi Deshpande's women really assert themselves or somewhere in their assertion process conform to endurance. The study wishes to find out if compromise is the key word in Shashi Deshpande's heroines' vocabulary. Shashi Deshpande believes that women have a great strength. All humans do. Actually women have reserves we are often unaware of. Women are better at dealing with emotional traumas. This is because women, unlike men, have never had to suppress their emotional selves, they are more open about these problems - both in articulating them and unmasking them. Shashi Deshpande has dealt very minutely and delicately with the problems of middle-class educated women. Shashi Deshpande is only making her voice more distinctive with every new publication. Writing from the margin is also written with felicity to evoke emotions. However much she may deny the influence of feminism in her novels, it is the core of her novels.

**Key Words**

- Life and Work of Shashi Deshpande
- Style and Technique in Her Work
- Women Characters in Her Short Story

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Shashi Deshpande believes that women have a great strength. All humans do. Actually women have reserves we are often unaware of. But for the woman the situation is made more complex by the fact that they have been told they are weak, they are made to believe in their weakness. And often they learn to hide their own strength, because a woman’s strength seems to weaken a man. She says that women are the main support of the family, though the male is the titular head.

Women are better at dealing with emotional traumas. This is because women, unlike men, have never had to suppress their emotional selves, they are more open about these problems - both in articulating them and understanding them. Shashi Deshpande has dealt very minutely and delicately with the problems of middle-class educated women. She always had in her mind people from the real India to write about, but as she proceeded, spontaneously and involuntarily, woman became the focus of her writings.

When interviewed by Vanamala Vishwanatha, Shashi Deshpande makes it clear by saying: “It all starts with people. For example, The Dark Holds No Terrors came to me when I saw a couple. She is uniquely Indian and her use of Marathi words very evidently presents the customs and traditions of the people belonging to Maharashtra and Karnataka. For example, words such as Kaka, Kaki, Atya, Dada, and so on, are essentially Marathi words and might be a bit difficult to grasp by the readers who do not know the language.

Shashi Deshpande cares more for literary qualities of her creative works. Her language is transparent. It does not draw attention to itself, nor does it come in the way. 11 She is basically Indian and writes for the Indians. She states that if you try to make everything easy for everyone, then, you end up belonging nowhere. So, I’ve left it at that—characters in their middle-class life of the common run of the middle-class women in India. Her stories suggest that compromise is what characterizes the writer, then ‘man’ should be prefixed to male writers as well.”

Such statements flowed in abundance, perhaps personifying her womanhood. It made a lot of sense particularly in the run-up to the International Women’s Day celebrations. With much ease Shashi Deshpande debunked myths that overwhelm the Indian intelligentsia. The prickly issues of language and writing, the widening divide between the non-resident Indian authors writing in English and the writers writing in English in India, the importance of readers and a writer’s obligation to self-censorship, globalization of literature and the impact of feminism on marginalized women - the rich repertoire of debatable points that have always troubled her and continue to do so. She laments the divide between writers as a group on the basis of caste, gender and language and this, she says, prevents writers from playing a meaningful role in society and their inability to take on and write on public issues. But the free-spirited Shashi Deshpande is only making her voice more distinctive with every new publication. Writing from the margin is also written with felicity to evoke emotions. However much she may deny the influence of feminism in her novels, it is the core of her novels.

Conclusion:
Shashi Deshpande’s protagonist finds herself enmeshed by desires and despairs, fears and hopes, loves and hates, withdrawal and alienation, suppression and oppression, marital discord and male chauvinism.

Indeed, Shashi Deshpande’s chief thematic concern is with a woman’s struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, her effort to find and preserve her identity as a wife, mother, and most of all as a human being. And accordingly in her novels the operative sensibility is distinctly female and modern.

Shashi Deshpande feels embarrassed to be called a woman writer and she is not very enthusiastic about the label feminist. She considers herself as a feminist in 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.”

“If critics and reviewers insist on calling me a woman writer, then ‘man’ should be prefixed to male writers as well”

“Women writers are expected to write for women’s magazines and be read by women readers only. Males generally do not want to read women writers.”

REFERENCES