



LITERARY QUEST

An International, Peer-Reviewed, Open Access, Monthly, Online Journal of English Language and Literature

Hidden Self: A Psychoanalytical Journey into the Self of Manjari in Shashi Deshpande's *Moving On*

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Abstract

While other feminist authors portrayed the suppression of plain women in life, Shashi Deshpande moved a step forward and made educated women as the subject of her writings and voiced the agony of such women who had to depend on their male counterparts for the choices and decisions of life. *Moving On* is in many ways, a departure from Deshpande's earlier novels. She ventures even deeper into the territory of the female psyche. She focuses on the women characters trapped up in a conflict between tradition and modernity. Focusing on the marital relation, she seeks to expose the tradition by which a woman is trained to play her subservient role in the family. Her novels reveal the man-made patriarchal traditions and uneasiness of the modern Indian woman in being a part of them. Shashi Deshpande uses this point of view of present social reality as experienced by women. The present paper brings out the hidden self of the female protagonist Manjari in Shashi Deshpande's *Moving On*.

Keywords

Hidden Self; Transformation; Patriarchy; Shashi Deshpande; *Moving On*.

Introduction

Shashi Deshpande, the daughter of an eminent Kannada dramatist and Sanskrit scholar Adya Rangachar Sriranga, is a widely acclaimed writer who has written ten novels and five volumes of short stories to her credit. Her father is called “the Bernard Shaw of the Kannada Theatre.” Like her father, she has also won various awards such as “Thirumathi Rangammal Prize” and prestigious “Sahitya Akademi Award” (National Academy of Letters) in 1990 for her novels. She also won the “Padma Shri” award in 2009 for her valuable contribution as a writer. She also wrote the screenplay for the Hindi film “Drishti.” She is a postgraduate in English from Mysore University.

Shashi Deshpande’s Portrayal of Women

Shashi Deshpande, a novelist of the latter half of the 20th century, has made a profound psychological journey into the minds of women. Shashi admits that three things were responsible for her development as an English writer. She says: “These are the three things in my early life that have shaped me as a writer. They are: that my father was a writer, that I was educated exclusively in English and that I was born a female” (Of Concerns 107). This statement clearly echoes the voice of a feminist soul in her. Unlike the other feminist authors who portray the suppression of plain women in life, Shashi Deshpande moved a step forward and made educated women as the subject of her writings and voiced the agony of such women who had to depend on their male counterparts for the choices and decisions of their life. The words that are always associated with the concept of an ideal woman are self-denial, sacrifice, patience, devotion and silent suffering. “It has become so very much a part of human thinking that any woman

who differed from this conventional subservient role could only be thought as a sorceress or a pervert” (Ravindranathan 105).

Her focus is on the Indian women – women who are urban, middle- class, educated, and even empowered. Now, one can raise the question if her women have so many qualities and comforts then what is the necessity of bringing their stories into the dominant discourse. Here lies the gender politics. When women are educated and empowered, the trap of patriarchy is invisible and subtle. Shashi's novels help to understand the trap. She gives a clear picture of the state and condition of the present day women who are intelligent and articulate, aware of their capabilities, but suppressed under the weight of patriarchy. They are prevented from exhibiting their talents. Shashi's fictions focus on the women characters trapped up in a conflict between tradition and modernity. Focusing on the marital relation, she seeks to expose the Her young heroines rebel against the traditional way of life and patriarchal values. The present paper focuses on the hidden self of Manjari in Shashi Deshpande's *Moving On*.

Moving On

Moving On (2004) is, in many ways, a departure from Deshpande's earlier novels. She ventures even deeper into the territory of the mind, dismantling the comfortable notions about the relationships within families. The two voices, distinct and separate, are those of Manjari, the narrator, and Baba, her father. The past is unraveled through Baba's diary that Manjari finds after his death. As Manjari grapples with a challenging present, she reviews the events of the past in the retrospective light of Baba's self-disclosures.

The novel also reveals the secret lives of men and women who love, hate, plot and debate - a father who delights in the human body, its mysteries, its passion, and the knowledge that it contains and conceals; a mother who wields the power of her love mercilessly; a sister separated in childhood; an uncle who plays games of life and death as a member of the Bombay underworld; a

passionate love affair that tears the family apart; and a young woman left to make sense of the world and of her own sexuality.

It is a story that begins, conventionally enough, with a woman's discovery of her father's diary. As Manjari, the female protagonist of the novel unlocks the past through its pages, rescuing old memories and recasting events and responses, the present makes its own demands: a rebellious daughter, devious property sharks and a lover who threatens to throw her life out of gear again. The ensuing struggle to reconcile, nostalgia with reality and the fire of the body with the desire for companionship races to an unexpected resolution, twisting and turning through complex emotional landscapes.

When one takes a deeper look at the novel, one can clearly understand that woman-to-woman relationship is stronger and comfortable compared to a woman-to-man relationship. Shashi Deshpande's novels featuring female protagonists, reconstructs the role of women, their experiences and attempts to give voice to their muted selves. In her novels, she explores the inner selves of women. She provides her women characters the chances to understand their selves. She explores the nature of the female world and re-frames the suppressed records of female experience.

Manjari – The Protagonist

The novel begins with the discovery of Baba's diary. Manjari at first hesitates to read the diary. But somehow she is convinced. She starts to read her father's diary. She opens the diary with a hope that her father would have written something about her. But it was totally different. The diary starts by narrating her father's life and eventually moves through all the incidents in their lives. When Manjari proceeds to read the diary, the incidents that were penned down were the same, but the view with which she reads them were totally different.

In the beginning of the novel, Manjari is portrayed as a woman who was frustrated with her parents. There is no justification of this act of her. The

memories which explain the bond shared between the members of the family makes the situation worse. The readers are pushed to a state of confusion. But as the novel proceeds the diary and the memories of the past help the readers to unravel the hidden mysteries of Manjari's life.

Manjari was a girl who was greatly attached to her family. She loved spending time with her parents and especially with her sister Malu. She was always ready to do anything that her family wanted her to do. She loved her mother very much. One can also say that Manjari was possessive of her mother. "Yet, I always knew I had to work harder than Malu if I wanted to be loved" (Deshpande 44).

Manjari loved her younger sister Malu unconditionally. Even though she knew that Malu was the most important person and the center of the entire family, she was never jealous of her sister. She always loved being the protector of Malu. The separation of Malu from her family was intolerable for Manjari. Her love for Gayathri was immense. Gayathri in turn loved Manjari unconditionally. She always kept other's priorities in the first place. She was ready to do anything that could please her family. Such a girl was immediately transformed into a rebel once she fell in love. "From where had this woman come? Had she been there all the while, concealed behind the so-eager-to-please-Jiji? And now this ready-for-violence-person..." (Deshpande 142).

She shows extreme steadfastness when she decided to give up studying medicine to marry Shyam. It could only be seen as love's blindness. Giving up studies cannot be considered as an intelligent act. This incident only proved that she didn't analyze things on a broader perspective. But taking a look at the incident from a lover's point of view, it is considered to be a courageous act. Even in her in-law's house she tolerated many difficulties. The new family was totally different when compared to her family. She accepted everything for the sake of her love.

She showed extreme courage and persistence at the worst moments, when her sister Malu was pregnant with Shyam's child. Manjari faces a painful period of struggles and stress after the death of Malu and Shyam. She had to struggle a lot to support herself and her son. Separated from her family, she faces innumerable difficulties to support herself and her baby son. She turns down Raja's repeated proposals of marriage. According to her, marriage without the foundation of love and only for the sake of security is not acceptable.

Raja is a strong believer of the patriarchal norms. Manjari shocks him by learning to drive her car and even trying to run it as a taxi. She further shocks him by installing and operating a computer at home and typing manuscripts for others as self-employment. Even when she is threatened by some unknown people belonging to the underworld and subjected to psychological pressure, and forced to sell the house, she refuses to take Raja's help. She disapproves him of playing the role of a protector saying, "I want the brakes under my feet, and not someone else's. I don't want a dual control, the control should be mine, mine alone" (Deshpande 88). Manjari's struggle for freedom and independence is a challenge to patriarchy, not confronting it headlong but discovering one's own strength as a woman.

As a young widow she was faced with many difficulties. Whenever she was faced with problems, she never stepped back. She faced it with immense courage. She had total control of herself and of her life. She had total control of her physical self too. She proved that only she was the ruler of her body. It is only when Raja blamed her for her misdeed, that she narrated the agony of her marriage life and how she was betrayed by her husband. There are revelations throughout the novel.

Manjari the narrator travels through her life twice; first as a traveler and second as a distant recollector analyzing every second of her life. The narrative moves through different layers-the real, the visible, and the reality that lies under the visible part. She is faced with resentment, homesickness, betrayal, neglect

and alienation. One can conclude that Baba's diary has served as a key to open the secret locks of her life. Finally she lives the life she wishes to. An independent life and this is what the society refuses to give a woman. And it is what all women wish to achieve.

Conclusion

In the novel *Moving On* the female characters travel their path searching for their own selves and the male characters stand as the symbol of the strict patriarchal society. But analyzing the novel keenly, one can find that, there is a constant search for self-realization. The way the female characters play their roles, clearly shows that they are not women who are washed away by the currents of patriarchy. They firmly set their foot on what they want. They thrive hard to achieve their destiny. They neither give-in nor give-up. They all have a journey into their psyche and find out the hidden selves, and this realization makes them as better human beings to live in the world in harmony. Not as man and woman but as human beings.

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MLA (7th Edition) Citation:

Sindhuja, Maria Ponn P. "Hidden Self: A Psychoanalytical Journey into the Self of Manjari in Shashi Deshpande's *Moving On*." *Literary Quest* 1.9 (2015): 128-134. Web. DoA.

DoA – Date of Access

Eg. 23 Aug. 2015. ; 05 April 2017.