



## Social Stereotypes: Gender inequality as portrayed in Shashi Deshpande's novel *A Matter of Time*.

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**Abstract:** Gender discrimination remains the same in the twenty first century. Misogynistic society never had ears for equality. In the novel of Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time*, Women had to face the struggles under the same roof of gender inequality. Over generations the society has the difference in the degree of freedom and independence given to boys. And there is a lot of distinction and discretion, and emotional balance will adapt to the environment. The plot of the novel deals with the lives of three generations of women, their temperament, values singularity, their attitude toward circumstances. Shashi Deshpande depicts her personal expression about marital life, as they moved to the in-law family as wife, they are trapped into the coop. Gender equality can be clearly seen in the stereotypical social role of women. In Indian society is strongly patriarchal; Women of all ages are handcuffed to the home and treated inferiorly to men. They are not socially accepted if they exceed their limits even a little bit by the rules.

**Index Terms** - trauma, social norms, generations, handcuffed, equality and patriarchal society

### I. INTRODUCTION

The issues that women face is not only a glitch in India alone, but universal and even all the conflicts they face within their families. Shashi Deshpande's novels take the credit for opening a closed and dark world and the response of the readers was extraordinary. She focuses on women's needs was more because of the social norms which gave a large share to the women who had almost no share. According to her, though a girl gets educated, she is always contrived about how to survive in a family after marriage, to endure the entire emotional trauma and also, how to tolerate, adjust and adapt to the glum, treacherous atmosphere in her in-law's family, where she has no choice but to surrender. Shashi Deshpande stresses through her novels a drastic change should occur for the benefit of women, so that she can have a happy and comfortable life. Shashi Deshpande has formulated her novels in agreement with the changing worldview.

*A Matter of Time* represents, Manorama of the first generation, Kalyani of the second generation and Sumi of the third generation are the characters that the author focuses on. The main focus of this paper will be the influence of culture and consequences thereby faced by a woman and the discrimination between them and men and the oppressions of married life. Child marriage is also focused where women soon after their basic education is done, they are forced into marriages, with men much older, widowed, or mismatched. The girls are forced into these marriages when they are too young to realize the concept of marriage. They are innocent and young at heart not ready to face the burdens of married life. Belonging to the first generation Manorama being not able to bear any men, felt disconsolate spending her entire life worrying if her husband might leave her in desertion.

The second-generation Kalyani daughter of Manorama, lived an apathetic life throughout. Manorama on expecting to give birth to a boy child was not much pleased with Kalyani's birth. Kalyani always felt that her mother was sick to show love and affection towards her. Later in the second half of her life, Kalyani happened to face the same apathetic life with her husband on losing the male heir. The third and fourth generation Kalyani's daughter Sumi, and Sumi's daughter Aru were abandoned by their fathers. Sumi was left in desertion for she did not deliver a male heir. Sumi's husband was left alone, after his daughters and wife abandoned him.

Manorama was born in a poor Brahmin family and being the eldest of all four daughters of her mother she shoulders responsibility. As explained in other novels, it was a common and compelling issue that girl child even before attaining puberty are married as per their parents' choice, irrespective of the boy's credentials. This mainly is to avoid the financial restraints and the poverty of the family. The mothers are fully immersed in tradition and its values, and they control their daughters, curb their aspirations and always focus on marriage of their daughters. They were unaware of their state, or not bothered to check them over, for married life physically and mentally. But Manorama was a little lucky in this case because she attained puberty and this helped her to get educated which was very uncommon because most parents don't encourage educating girls, whereas Manorama was able to get a decent education. In this novel, family gives more importance to a boy child than a female child and if a woman is unable to bear a male child it becomes a serious problem. Shashi Deshpande gives a clear articulation of her perspective of having a female child. The family members thereafter demand her husband Vithalrao to marry again just for the sake of a male heir. Manorama gave birth to a girl child and the chances of getting her pregnant were remote. She was terrified by uncle of her husband to adopt his grandson and Manorama was in a fear that her husband would be married again "To add to her insecurity, that main crutch, the one most women depended on, a son, was denied her. All that she had was a daughter, Kalyani, who would get married and become part of another family." (Deshpande, 1996, pg.128).

Manorama who was distressed because of her husband felt the need for a male child, very much. The people imbibed in the minds of family members, the male child should be there to continue the family and also to take care of elders. This made Manorama miserable and had the fear that her husband will succumb to the wishes of the family and marry another woman for the sake of delivering a male child. This kind of notion makes the life of women, miserable and agony. "Manorama wanted a son; instead, there was Kalyani. Not an unloved child, no never that. But for Manorama, she became the visible symbol of their failure to have a son." (Deshpande 1996, Pg150-151). Vithalrao wanted his daughter Kalyani to be educated; Manorama turned it down and did not allow her daughter to pursue higher studies. She deprived Kalyani of care and affection she wanted her daughter to marry within the family member. Lest their family property and assets may go out of the family so she almost forced her daughter to marry Sripati to save her property.

The novel says Manorama constricted her daughter Kalyani. Thereafter she even rebuked and abused Kalyani. Manorama comes out to be an insensitive and insecure woman. She has never seen anything good in her daughter. This attitude is continued towards her granddaughter too. The portrayal of Manorama is a reflection of traditional conviction and she is a symbol of old traditions. She plunges into tradition. Through the main characters in *A Matter of Time*, in particular Kalyani, Deshpande shows how discrimination due to gender difference can influence and wound, and in some cases, even destroy the human life and mind. However, here is an argue, discrimination due to gender and culture can also be closely related to the question of individual personality, i.e., how the effect of traditional customs influences the individual mind differently. Therefore, there is also discussion how people who are victimized against react differently. The individual approach to how a woman feels about her situation is important as to how successfully as a part of daughter or a wife to settle in a new society.

Mothers are those who belong to this age group, felt their daughters should be settled at a young age to a man of the parent's choice and all the three female characters had their marriage fixed by their parents, especially mothers. When their daughters went against their wishes, they were very angry that they expressed of bringing disgrace to the family because their family was all pent up inside them, with no way to show their emotional stress. They look at it on their daughters, there is no love lost between the mothers and daughters. They never showed love and compassion, also they were not empathetic towards them instead they were very harsh in their expressions. Kalyani dispossessed her mother's care and love. Manorama wanted from her daughter was implicit obedience and expected their daughters like them to fall into the groove of tradition and force them to believe in the society's norms, where women after marriage were like puppets in the hands of their husbands and in-laws but here, she has to be even in her mother's hand. As a result, parental relationships were unstrained. They had their own mental, emotional and sociological strain, but could not express, all of

them suffered this mental agony. Manorama without a male child it was ridiculed and she was constantly worried about a second person coming in place. So, she decided to make her get married to her brother so that the assets will continue in the family. "And yet Kalyani was not allowed to complete her schooling. She was taken out of schooling and married off by Manorama to her own brother Shripati. Perhaps, after this, Manorama felt secure. The property would remain in the family now. Her family". (1996, pg.129). When her husband suffered from stroke after his daughter Kalyani's departure from her husband when she was blamed for the loss of her son, Manorama mistakenly thinks that Kalyani is responsible for her father's death and expressed with forceful words to Kalyani as "you are my enemy, you were born to make my life miserable". (1996, pg.153)

Shashi Deshpande clearly states her own opinion about gender inequality in her writing through this the character Surekha, advocate where she expresses as "For the desire for sons desire for wealth and the desire for the worlds. No, no, not my words, its from the 'Upanishads', he says in reply to her look of mute in inquiry. I've always thought that love for daughters is less tainted, more disinterested". (1996, pg.214) The rift created by Kalyani and her husband never healed. It has to be mentioned that Kalyani's silence was also a method of resistance, and it is highly effective because no one could delve deeply into her problems and no one could get a clear picture of her thought process. It is said, "The real miracle is Kalyani herself, Kalyani who has survived intact despite what Sripati did to her, Kalyani who survived Manorama's myriad acts of cruelty" (1996, pg.51). When Kalyani's husband died and the will which he left more material things it restored what she lost and she gained more strength. Kalyani was a strong person who suffered silently but never gave up on herself. She felt it gave what she wanted, her identity. On an occasion, she tells granddaughter Aru "my mother didn't care for me, not my children, Daughter's again she said, "I'm luckier than my mother. (226). Unlike her mother, Kalyani gives emotional support to her daughter. For her, it reveals Kalyani was more compassionate and considerate towards her daughter. Kalyani encounters a spiritual relationship which was not secret, and the communication with her husband shows contrast in behaviors. Kalyani in a nutshell is a subject of male domination. The patriarchal hegemony does not allow a woman to consider herself as an Individual who could make her own decisions and choices despite its. Kalyani tries to come out of her gender disparity whenever she has an opportunity and she has endured the anguish of reflection when her husband stopped talking to her for many years. For Kalyani, "It is enough to have a husband and never mind the fact that he has not looked at your face for years... but her Kumkum is intact and she can move in the company of women with the pride of a wife". (1996, pg.167)

Kalyani who belongs to second generation lost all her hopes with her husband and lived a miserable life and really felt heavy in her heart when she came to know that her daughter Sumi is deceived by her husband. When she finds Gopal entering her heart burst into words as

What have you done to my daughter Gopala, don't do this, don't let it happen to my daughter, what happened to me... When sumi married you, she was too young; but I was not anxious for her, you were older, you were sensible and you cared of her, yes, you did .....? Look at me Gopal, she says when she can speak. 'My father died worrying about me, my mother couldn't die in peace, she held on to life though she was suffering-she suffered terribly -because of me, she didn't want to leave me and go. (Deshpande,1996, pg.46-47)

First generation, it is found that there is no total acceptance of the traditional norms and the kind of lives, the first generation Manorama, accept total submissiveness to tradition, patriarchy, and child marriage and that too marrying a person not to their choice but by their parents irrespective of the groom's age, attitude, or character. They accept that women are more submissive than men and so that, early marriage took place before their puberty. But the second generation could not accept total submissiveness to tradition, patriarchy and they are like cat on the wall. The third generation had strong inner voices and had the thirst to choose a path where they could not get an identity of their own, in accordance Sumi and her daughter Aru had an inner psyche which made them first to educate themselves.

In this novel, the family gives a higher status to male children than girls, which in turn brings about the serious talk, and men are supposed to be the stronger but mentally weak. The novel depicts Sumi who suffers a lot like Kalyani, by losing their lives in hands of men, under the pretext of marriage, and Aru the third one struggles to bring about a change in the life of her elders and also hers. Her father left the family and shrunk his responsibilities in the family as a member and father. Aru after knowing all these are not interested in marrying anyone, and also feels very much for her mother Sumi. Aru has two siblings Charu and Seema, and mercilessly left them without taking any responsibility to care for them. The main reason for this attitude of their father was all of them were girl children. The father took this decision even before Sumi's marriage.

The love for Sumi by Gopal, who has undergone miseries in his own family through the novel and that Gopal is an inevitable character and Sumi too. Sumi was a symbol of silent suffering and passive resistance.

Even though Sumi's and Gopal's love marriage was conducted through a mutual agreement which said that they could separate at any time, with no valid reason and promised each other after their separation. This gives a clear picture of Sumi's character as an independent strong-willed person. Once after leaving her, he is so determined not to return even after requests from Sumi and Aru's very assertive expressions to him. The breakup of marriage leaves Sumi in an emptiness of the world. She finds it difficult to choose a path to lead her life. After the death of her mother, Aru does not argue with her father who comes to attend the funeral "she tells him "Yes papa you go, we" I'll be alright we "ill be quite all right don't worry about us...". (1996, pg.246).

The same situation as her mother Kalyani continues for Sumi that the main cause for husband to leave this is, not having a boy child. This is shown through Aru's recollection of Gopal's expression,

Father, mother, son, and daughter, the complete family. They had been that: yes, in spite of the lack of a son (lack? It had never felt that way) they had been complete. Aru had seen this unit as something that was intact and forever. She had never imagined a time when it would no longer be in existence .... (Deshpande, 1996, pg.184)

Sumi does not get love from the father because she is a daughter and Sumi's husband disregards her because she could not give birth to a son. We cannot find in the novel, Sumi asking questions like her mother. Sumi is also brought back to her parents' house. Although Sumi manages to hold her feelings, very firmly neither herself, it is Aru who is not able to bear the situation. Even when Sumi tells Aru it is all ok, she cannot accept anything when her father decides to leave the house. Here we see Aru realizes they are not able to do anything and fears that they are inactive. The novel focuses on Sumi who is helpless, unhappy clinging to her past but forced to live in the present situations which are mainly created by society. Sumi many times tried to please her inner self by engaging in pleasurable activities like gardening, learning to ride a scooter, trying to be economically independent, and also concentrating on writing plays. After the death of Kalyani Aru takes over charge of all affairs like household duties. She has the willpower to hold on without showing any grief or tension. Sumi once expresses "we want love to last" (1996, pg.142) On an occasion, Aru exclaims very depressingly "what a middle, God is 'heaven, What a middle (1996, pg.143)

In this novel Deshpande portrays the lady Sumi, who is exploited by her husband accept her fate by expressing We can never be together again. All these days I have thinking of him as if he has been suspended in space, in nothingness, since he left us. But he has gone on living; his life has moved on, it will go on without me. So has mine. Our lives have diverged; they now move separately, two different streams... I must go she says. He does not speak, he does nothing to stop her. (Deshpande, 1996, pg.85)

It is an exceptionally unfortunate story of Indian lady trapped in the snare of male overwhelmed society. Marriage assumes a fundamental part in the existence of ladies. After marriage ladies dedicate their life entirely heartedly to their spouses. They keep their marital home cheerful and tranquil one. Ladies are considered as just the rearing machine.

Female desolation in conjugal causes discordancy has been a significant subject from the beginning of time. The origin of the word Tradition coordinates to the interaction of transmission, conveyance and upkeep of qualities, properties, customs and standards as well as structures, which mark the social personality of individual gatherings, countries and humanity. In a word custom is a significant and amazing focus of social experience. Tradition components can Inco-operate and conform to request and needs of current turn of events. The purposes behind marital disappointment have fluctuated, yet stereotypic job of women factors have been significant. When all is said in done, the basic point of accepted practices has been to improve women's approaching expectations to getting them yet it causes anxious for them. The issues are, there is no dignity for her truly and intellectually, so persecution and underestimation become the significant factors in this association.

The clarifications behind intimate dissatisfaction have varied, anyway stereotypic piece of women factors have been huge. At the point when everything is said in done, the ordinary place of acknowledged practices has been to improve women's moving towards estimate to getting them yet it causes on edge for them. The issues are there is no feeling of pride for her really and mentally, so abuse and minimization become the critical factors in this affiliation. In Shashi Deshpande's novels, the women characters can face the problems by gaining some sense of importance by wielding power within their lives. All these women are confined with their traditional dogmas and beliefs. The novelist have impregnated the three women with a

role of submissiveness and acceptance without showering any rebellious attitude but on the contrary, accepted the patriarchal norms.

Here one can see the women rebel, accepting the universal and eternal laws that governed their life as brave Indian women, they did not question their loss for a long time, instead of blaming destructions they calmly accepted it. They thought God himself weeps for all those who suffer on Earth. Marriage and family are the key structure in most societies. The distortions of marriage cannot be defined in one way but for understanding; it is a bond between matured male and female, unlike past years. It is also a legal bondage a traditional contract between two individuals belonging to the opposite sex.

### Conclusion:

Indian society has gone through several evolutions over years, but this war of gender inequality has seen never an end. There are lakhs who voiced out for this inequality yet, society being not able to step out of the stereotypical framework gives no space for gender equality. Men and women, brought up in a misogynistic society never in a mind to step out of the societal framework. Men and women complaining society about discrimination is never going to bring about changes in the practices. The society which taught to marry a woman of all good, is the same society that criticizes the woman not being able to bear the male child.

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### II. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This paper is my part of Doctoral thesis at Nirmala College for Women, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. I place my thanks to my guide Dr. Manju Kumari, Assistant Professor in Department of English, for the help she has rendered for this journal.

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