

# A comparative study of the select novels of Jaishree Misra and Shashi Deshpande

<sup>1</sup>Minumol M S, <sup>2</sup>Dr.Bhuvana Ramachandran

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Research Professor  
School of Social Science and Humanities,  
Srinivas University, Mangalore, Karnataka, India.

## *Abstract-*

**Purpose:** A systematic thorough learning of certain women characters in the selected novels of Jaishree Misra and Shashi Deshpande. The strong emancipated and weak sectors of female roles brought out in the novels stand to outshine themselves and tries to pass on a message to the entire society. Whether women herself is the enemy of the other women? Or who designs the barriers for a woman?

**Design:** The review of literature is carried out with the secondary data gathered from Educational Websites and Written publications. The research will be conducted using Research Journals, Doctoral Thesis and Websites. The qualitative research is carried out by examining and interpreting existing knowledge on the subject utilising the keywords found in online articles, peer-viewed journals, publications and a range of related portals.

**Findings/ Result:** The status of women in the society over the years goes on for an alteration at different perspectives. Some female characters take on for a reformation, building up themselves from the shattered pieces to uplift themselves as phoenix bird.

**Originality / Value:** This paper makes a sincere study on the challenges and sacrifices made by the women characters in order to survive among the toughest and gravest situations the society offers. The role a woman plays in different scenario benefitting or crushing her solitude. The bold steps taken by women to uplift her in the society paves the way for her success or failure.

**Paper type - Exploratory research paper**

**Keywords:** self-love, society, identity, marriage, womanhood.

## 1. Introduction

The term “existential” receives a lot of criticism and appreciation, as it is the most painful problem that a man confronts today. It happens when life seems futile and results in identity crisis. The term gains currency when the inner conflicts put on its exertion on the outer self and leads to feelings of confusion about an individual’s sense of identity. It is a complex phenomenon, when one overthinks about the insecurities of life and how life will end for you one day. The women characters in Shashi Deshpande’s and Jaishree Misra’s novels adopt a similar approach to life and how they overcome the tyranny with a sense of realization that ‘self-love’, which should be considered as the ‘real love’.

## 2. Objectives

1. To review the contributions of various author on the selected works, with a focus on women characters.
2. To determine the Research Gap after studying the literature.
3. To develop a research agenda and provide proposal for research progress.
4. To propose an area of research study.

## 3. An Overview

India, being a patriarchal society has always given women a secondary status. Women in India have been subjugated over the ages. Even in many ancient texts, women have been portrayed as a creature being oppressed, tortured and silenced by the society [1]. In traditional concept, women are supposed to be silent, passive very much obedient and faithful to the people around her. A free and autonomous being like all creatures (a woman) finds herself living a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other (2). The women novelist of the present period concentrates on the complex problems of battle of women namely the career, motherhood, marriage, sexual and economic freedom. Misra’s women characters are liberated women, they are educated and able to live individually they do not depend on men. The issues which have been treated largely in her novels are love, marriage, divorce and problem of rehabilitation after divorce, extent of liberty and freedom to the female desire for bondage, recognition to

the quest for bondage and crisis of conscience and values. (3). Shashi Deshpande's novels depict the current Indian Women's search for the definitions of themselves and society, as well as the fundamental relationships that women have. Her novel arrangements are based on the theme of a female identity's journey.

#### 4. Summary of Findings by several writers

Table 1 summarises the contributions of various authors on the women characters of Misra and Deshpande in their selected novels.

**Table 1: Summary of Findings**

Sl. No.	Author	Date	Findings
1.	Rilika (4) Kumari	2022	Myth and Reality in Jaishree Misra's Ancient Promises
2.	K.V. Dominic (5)	2010	D.C. Chambial's Review of Critical Studies on contemporary Indian English Women Writers
3.	Mr. B. Hari Kumar (6)	2019	Status of women in the Modern Era with special reference to Janaki in Ancient Promises
4.	Dr. Laisell akpam Romabati Devi (7)	2020	Women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande
5.	Richa Pandey and Aprajith Sharma (8)	2015	Struggling women for their own identity in Jaishree Misra's Ancient Promises and Anita Desai's Clear light of the day.
6.	Jagadis N (9)	2016	A study on Shashi Deshpande's views on feminism

#### 5. Correlated Works

Ritika Kumari (2022) (4) has attempted to revisit and re-analyze the enigma of the prominent female character 'Sita' as a woman of physical and mental suffering has taken a new relevance. It intends to focus on the transformation of the women characters from docile and dependent to bold and independent. The paper explores the myth and reality in Jaishree Misra's 'Ancient Promises'. Mythology has undoubtedly an indispensable role in the study of literature down the ages. It helps in building up the relation between the past and the present. The mythical characters are the true representation of the traditional values and culture of the society. The idea behind the writing is to secure a female's position in society by highlighting their pitiable condition in the ancient time. Misra's Janaki or Janu raises her voice against the situation forced upon her and does not believe in surrendering to the situation she is trapped in.

R.V. Dominic (2010) (5) tries to throw light on to Shashi Deshpande's female characters and explores how childhood experiences go a long way in determining or influencing their adult lives. She believes that childhood experiences are lasting and that they have a crucial role to play in the formation of a healthy personality. But "Protagonists of Deshpande have deprived childhood, in one way or another. These deprivations in childhood, equip them with the power to fight and survive till the end". The aspirations of almost all the young girls of Deshpande's stories go unfulfilled because of the difference in the mental make-up between persons of different generations. This causes a heavy blow to the parent-daughter relationship precipitating alienation. "Each of the marriages is marked by silence". In the evolution of their character, their decision to break the silence is the first sigh of liberation. From a state of passive acceptance they move to active assertion. By refusing to succumb to societal pressures and by creating space within the matrix, Deshpande's women succeed in establishing their identity by expressing themselves.

Mr. B. Harikumar (6) focuses on the status of woman in the modern era with special reference to Janaki in "Ancient Promises". Ever since the dawn of civilization, literature has been pivotal in illuminating young minds with thought-provoking ideas to pave way for equal society. If men and women coexist in harmony as Tagore envisions the world life of every individual, would be devoid of stress and strain. Jaishree Misra has manifested the idea into a fiction called 'Ancient Promises' signifying the pain and pressure of woman suffering from divergent views like physical, mental and psychological facts: Indeed no woman is an exception be it married or unmarried. She presents the modern society in true colours and Janaki is a representation of every woman in one aspect or the other uttering most emotional words of every broken heart of a woman.

Dr. Laisellakpam Romabati Devi (7) brings in the silent suffering of women in a marginalised society. Generally speaking, women's silent suffering becomes real rather than metaphysical in a patriarchal society. They survive under the impositions of men and are still treated as a second sex. The long oppression of men makes them weak and they

refrain themselves from coming out in open conflict with the society. The case is more complicated in modern India where women have been caught between tradition and nature. Indian women are treated as a class of oppressed people, a separate section who are marginalized and subjugated under gender discrimination and patriarchal construct. Shashi Deshpande created female characters of flesh and blood but not harsh enough as compared to other female characters created by other writers on woman. Her women are characters with their own strength, challenging hostilities under the male-dominated culture and society.

Richa Pandey and Aprajita Sharma (8) disclose the discrimination faced by women in every sector of our society. Women are discriminated in pay, jobs, education and welfare. Most women are financially dependent on a man and without assistance carry the burden of looking after children and caring for the sick and old. Women have to be able to fight back for themselves and for the future of all women. Only feminists can discover the power of womanhood and establish the importance of them in the male dominated society, that's why women choose to rebel and struggle against the age old traditional values of the society. Gender is more or less a cultural construct. Domestic violence is very well portrayed in one of the novels of Jaishree Misra that is 'After words', where Maya with some of her dialogues explicit that how much she is afraid with her husband and arguments with him.

Jagadesh. N (9) attempts to study Shashi Deshpande's women characters, her portrayal of women needs to be studied from a feminist angle. As an author of the 70's and 80's, she mirrors a realistic picture of the contemporary middle class educated, Urban Indian Woman. Shashi Deshpande has made bold attempts at giving a voice to the disappointments and frustrations of women despite her vehement denial of being a feminist. Shashi Deshpande has minutely dealt with the phenomenon, arriving at the conclusion that women, after attaining all types of rights, are now struggling to adjust rather than to get free from the traditional world. Women in her novels are initially an unconventional one. She willingly submits herself to the tradition, perhaps realizing the wisdom of the traditional ways at this stirring moment of the transitional phase of society. Ultimately, she is an appendage to man or family. Though economically independent, she is emotionally dependent on her husband.

## 6. Research Gap:

It is Indian women authors who have continuously tried to present the complicated world of women from different perspectives and points of view. Twentieth - century writing has ushered a new area with the writing of many famous Indian Woman writers who have depicted women's sufferings, the discrimination they faced in the society and their pain in family life.

A significant number of scholarly works about the sacrifices of the female protagonist was abundantly shown in the works of Jaishree Misra and Shashi Deshpande. Following a review of a large number of online and print resources, it was discovered that a significant amount of work has not been undertaken on the female protagonists of the selected novels of both the abovesaid female writers. This work focuses on the coinage 'second soul', where a tug of war goes on between the self, and the other self. Here second soul plays a vital role in the creation and destruction of an individual (especially a woman). This study tries to throw light on the second soul of women, which is less exposed and holds on a significant phase in a woman's life.

## 7. Research Agenda

Suppression on the women over the ages has caused them to stop responding to the atrocities that they face in their life. The norms of the patriarchal society have kept its clutches wide open to entangle women from the very beginning. They have been fettered within the four walls and are expected to shut themselves from the live world. They were denied opportunity to present or express themselves in the open arena. The society regarded it as unethical - the role of women in the society. Women were supposed to run the household, bear and rear the children. As swami Vivekananda stated "The best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women. There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved".

The proposed research will investigate the struggles of many women characters of Misra and Deshpande who wanted to express themselves but never did it because they were restricted or been denied of it. The investigation tries to give voice to the women characters who were deprived of that. The familial bonding the patriarchal society, perspectives of third persons all these were the reasons turned her from voices to voiceless. Required data will be gathered from peer reviewed journals, edited books indexed in Google scholar, and other online sources for this exploratory research. The voice of the suppressed community will be integrated into research paper that will be published in peer reviewed journals as the research progresses.

## 8. Research Proposal

The proposed research will explore the issues with regard to the sufferings of the female characters in the selected novels of Misra and Deshpande. Here the women are in the continuous search of their self-identity. An insignificant amount of study has been conducted over the past years on the area, but a few researches are available on

self-identity and Queer theory. The main tell - of this research is to reconnoitre the self-identity aspects and focus on the application, of queer theory on the women characters through the select novels.

The proposed study is embarked on with the following objectives:-

- To understand the status of women over the ages
- To have a deep insight into the patriarchal systems followed in the society, with respect to the freedom of women.
- To throw light on the filial bonding in the select novels of Misra and Deshpande which focuses into the demolition of women idols, which in the ancient times stood for tolerance and patience.
- It is the exposure of the strong women who are ready to accept challenges and beholds strong vision to overcome barriers.
- It also focuses on the social issues like intercaste marriages, class differences and the hypocritical society we live in where superficial appearances matter more than the innermost happiness of any given person.

### Conclusion

The majority of the women characters suffered in the entanglement of an unanswered question about their self-identity. The characters while they realize their power and strength in the long run. Most women are at the end days of her struggle. Some of the women at an early stage itself tries to break the bondage and manages in the realm of their freedom. But some are still captivated and torn apart in their journey of life. A new look into the women characters of the selected novels will reflect that the self-defence mechanism will shift them from a low status to high status, namely a valued one. The proposed study will also move for a deep analysis of the society of the times highlighting issues like caste system, patriarchal system, moral values deemed to women, physical appearances etc.

### REFERENCES:

1. Deshpande, Shashi, *The Dark Holds no Terrors*, New Delhi, Penguin books
2. Simon de Beauvoir
3. Women's painful journey of self-discovery in Jaishree Ulsra's *Ancient promises* – G. Venkatalakshmi *Notions* vol. No. 6 No. 3, 2015.
4. Kumari Eitika *Myth and Reality in Jaishree Misra's Ancient Promises*
5. Dominic K.V. D.C. *Chambial's Review of critical studies on contemporary Indian English Women Writers* Sarup Book Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2010.
6. Kumar Hari B *Status of woman in the Modern era with special reference to Janaki in Ancient Promises*.
7. Misra, Jaishree *Ancient promises*, Penguin Random House, India, 2000.
8. Misra, J. 2001 *Ancient like love and marriage*, New Delhi, Penguin books
9. Misra J. 2007 *Rani*, New Delhi, Penguin Books
10. Devi Romabati *Lairellakpam. Women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande*, Vol. 8, September, 2020
11. Pandey Richa and Sharma Aparajitha *struggling women for their own identify in Misra's Ancient promise" and Anita Desai's 'Clear of the day'*.
12. N. Jagadeesh : *A study on Shashi Deshpande's views on feminism*, 2016 vol. 2, Issue I, Jan 2016.
13. Prasanna Sree. S, "In conversation with Shashi Deshpande". *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande : A study*, New Delhi, Sarup & Sons, 2003, Print
14. Deshpande, Shashi, *Roots and Shadows*, New Delhi, Penguin books
15. Deshpande, Shashi, *The Binding Vine*, New Delhi.
16. Deshpande, Shashi, *That Long Silence*, New Delhi.