

STYLE AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

Dr.S. Hannah Evangeline, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Arumugam Pillai Seethai Ammal College, Tiruppattur, Tamil Nadu, India- 630 211.

Abstract

Shashi Deshpande comes from a middle class, Marathi-Cannadiga background, and was educated in English at a local school in Dharwar, Karnataka and Maharashtra. It is these influences that have played an important role in shaping her writing and use of the English language. Deshpande writes a variety of Indian English that is rooted in the ambience of regional cultures, those of the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka. The kind of English language she uses is simple. She does not indulge in showy, bombastic or rhetoric English. Shashi Deshpande employs this literary device to provide the readers with the first person accounts of the past. Deshpande makes comprehensive use of irony and satire in her novels. She deliberately uses such literary elements in all her novels.

Keywords: psychomachia, aposiopesis, turbulent, aposiopesis, indecisiveness

INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande does not write for foreign readers. She reproduces regional terms, kinship terms, and cultured-bound words referring to customs, caste, religion and food items in addition to the re-duplication of words. As these words are scattered in the pages of the novel *That Long Silence*, the relevant page numbers where they are found are not given. She is basically an Indian and she writes for Indians.” My English is as we use it.... If I make any changes, it is because a novel needs it, not because the readers need it”(Interview with Lakshmi Holm storm, Wasafari 26). In a sense, Shashi Deshpande can be called a polyglot. She is well-versed in five languages. To her father, she owes Kannada because he is from Kannada. To her mother she owes Marathy because her mother is from Maharashtra. Being a Brahmin lady, she knows Sanskrit. She knows Hindi because it is commonly spoken in Bangalore.

STYLE AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

Shashi Deshpande, in her choice of words and images, adheres to Indian ethos and Indian tradition. She uses short suggestive and simple expressions to strike similar vibrations in the readers to share identical sensibility. Indeed she has given English language vibrancy of the native expression. To quote her;

To those of us who write in English, it is neither a foreign language, nor the language of the colonizer but the language of creativity. Whether the writing is rootless, alienated or elitist should be judged from the writing not from the language. My writing comes out of myself, the society I lie in, it is shaped, as I am by my family, my ancestry, the place I was born in, the place I live in, the culture I am stepped in. The fact that the writing is in English changes none of these things (“*Language No Bar*”: 10).

Shashi Deshpande comes from a middle class, Marathi-Cannadiga background, and was educated in English at a local school in Dharwar, Karnataka and Maharashtra. It is these influences that have played an important role in shaping her writing and use of the English language. The kind of English language she uses is simple. She does not indulge in showy, bombastic or rhetoric English. It is so simple and straight that it

never hinders the reader in any way. Deshpande's concern has been the expression of the Indian middle-class ethos. And her simple, unassuming English reflects it. Deshpande writes a variety of Indian English that is rooted in the ambience of regional cultures, those of the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka. For example, her characters have names and pet names that 'place' them for Indian readers as being Maharashtrian or Cannadiga- Saru, Indu, Jaya, Chandu, Kama. She also uses Marathi or Kannada words to describe various characters and their relationships to each other, such as Chandu Mama (rather than uncle Chandu), and Ajji (rather than Grandmother). The culturally specific words and sentences sit easily and naturally in her body of works, so that the work reflects a contemporary, middle-class, Indian-English.

These words are so absorbed into the daily usage that now their origin hardly matters. Shashi Deshpande is highly allusive in her reference to religious epics *The Mahabharata*, *The Ramayana* and *The Upanishads*. The following are echoes from Indian Metaphysical tradition: *Pranayama*, *Nimitamatram*, *bhavasavyasachi*. (AMOT 188) and ".....*Sokamayatibahushyamprajayeyaiti...*" These speak of her Indian roots. Shashi Deshpande resorts to the Hindu mythology, to focus on the traditional concepts of women in Indian Society. Shashi Deshpande uses the first person point of view technique or the third person point of view technique or both in her novels. The first person narration makes the story appear more realistic and more credible.

The first person narration allows the author to probe into the mind of the protagonist, exposing her fears and anxieties. It provides a deep insight into the different aspects of female consciousness that cannot be presented through the traditional narrative method. She captures the intensity of emotions of her characters through the use of the first person narration. The entire novel *Roots and shadows* is written in the first person. The narrator is a participant in the novel. She is a young woman writer who returns to her childhood home and finds herself caught in a quagmire of family intrigues. In the technique of stream of consciousness, the conscience of the character gets stirred in a specific moment of time and a chain of subsequent events. As said by Agarwal, Beena:

Jaya in *That Long Silence* after listening / sic/ the song "*Jeena YahanMarnaYahan*" suddenly becomes aware of her own life conditions. Her consciousness shifts to seventeen year back and each event of her marital life was woven in the texture of her own role in close fisted social mechanism. Urmi in *The Binding Vine* looking at the diary of Mira recalls the history of silence and suppression of the three generations. In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu makes a conscious analysis of the role and responsibility of different women in her own family and later on, she defines her own role and responsibility in it (*Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande*, 226-227).

To lend force and realism into the novel, Shashi Deshpande uses a combination of the first person and the third person narrative coupled with flashback technique. The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* presents a realistic portrayal of the psychological problems encountered by Saritha. The novel achieves a rare combination of authenticity and reality because of shifting of the narrative from the first person to the third person in every alternative chapter. Shashi Deshpande alternates skillfully between third person and first person narration. The story of Saru unfolds itself through the flashback technique. Like Jaya she too recollects her own experiences as girl as well as her relationships with her parents and with Manu, her husband. *The Binding Vine* uses flashback technique. The novel opens with the present moving quickly into past through a simple conversation between Urmi and Vanna and then lapses into the past. Urmi moves from Mira's past to the present when she gets involved in the rape incident of Kalpana and in the role of the woman organization and the media.

In *A Matter of Time* Shashi Deshpande moves away largely from the first person narration. The opening chapter in *A matter of Time* THE HOUSE is called "Vishwas". The opening capital letters seem to proclaim rather boldly moving away from a largely first -person to the third - person narration, besides giving the house an identity of its own. And the third - person narration continues with each chapter opening with bold letters. It is not so when Gopal turns into the narrator." Nothing can touch me, I had thought, I'm wearing a bulletproof vest" (50). In *Small Remedies* the novelist manages to beautifully intertwine the stories of three lives: those of Madhu, Savitribai, and Leela. All the three strands are at one level a separate story and at another level all

achieve converge at the center as they help the writer to overcome her own grief, to understand life better, and to find her own identity. In *The Binding Vine* the levels keep shifting. The novel opens with Urmi's conversation with Vanaa followed by a flashback into the past and then showing her grieving over the death of her baby daughter and being surrounded by the members of her family. In the next chapter, however, she is seen engrossed in exploring her mother-in-law's poetry. Later, Shakuthai becomes the focus of the story who unravels Kalpana's, Sulu's and her own life to Urmila. It is Urmila who in her own way reveals the life of the characters.

Shashi Deshpande uses the technique of interior monologue to convey the inner life of the characters. The deployment of this device is a vehicle to deliver memories. Shashi Deshpande employs this literary device to provide the readers with the first person accounts of the past. In *A Matter of Time* the conflict and indecisiveness in Gopal's mind is presented by Shashi Deshpande through the use of interior monologue. The eddies and currents of thoughts passing through Gopal's mind make him pose this question to himself. "Why did I marry Sumi?" (*AMOT*, 65). The interior monologue takes the form of psychomachia. To reveal the conflict in the characters such a psychomachia occurs within Gopal when he returns to the memory of his marriage.

A similar psychomachia occurs in the case of Sumi when she wants justice to her daughter, Seema. If she is doing justice to her daughter, interior monologue takes the form of aposiopesis in times of turbulent emotions. This aposiopesis occurs quite often in *A Matter of Time*, when Gopal recalls his father in his dream and suddenly breaks off. That Sumi is at war within herself about her daughter's wedding is an example of the aposiopetic interior monologue.

The narrative structure in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* with its slow unburdening of memories and unravelling of the soul reads like an interior monologue similar to a stream of consciousness technique, besides using the flashback technique. The novelist uses the stream of consciousness technique to explore the inner psyche of the protagonist sensitively.

Shashi Deshpande uses the technique of the double voice in *Moving On*. The first voice is that of the woman protagonist Manjari (Jiji) and the second voice is that of her father's speaking through his diary which the protagonist reads after his death. The writer, once again, adopts the stream of consciousness technique. The flashback technique is used in such a subtle manner that sometimes the reader has to literally search for the identification of these two voices whether it is male or female and past or present. The first person single voice narration is replaced by the double voice narration. Deshpande makes comprehensive use of irony and satire in her novels. She deliberately uses such literary elements in all her novels. Irony is the chief figure of speech used in the novel *That Long Silence* to show that in knowing, her characters seem not to know themselves. The most ironical situation in the novel is when Mohan gets the job of his choice; Jaya never questions the means by which he gets it. She says:

Mohan had managed to get the job. I never asked him how he did it. If Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband, could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too. I bandaged my eye tightly; I did not want to know anything. It was enough for me that we moved to Bombay, that we could send Rahul and Rati to good schools that I could have the things we needed... (*TLS*, 61-62).

Another most striking example of irony from the same novel is the event in which Jaya's husband, Mohan, accuses her of avoiding him in his most adverse situation. Jaya herself is undergoing great mental anguish, and such an allegation throws her off her balance. She, however, tries to control herself. She says: "*I must not laugh, I must not laugh...even in the midst of my rising hysteria, a warning bell sounded loud and clear, I had to control myself, I had to cork in this laughter. But it was too late. I could not hold it any longer. Laughter bursts out of me, spilled over, and Mohan started at me in horror as I rocked helplessly*" (*TLS*, 122). Later, she breaks her silence by recording her story, and thus regains her sanity by relieving herself of her pent-up frustration.

CONCLUSION

To Shashi Deshpande the fact that art lies not saying a thing but rather in displaying a thing. Hence, she is very careful in developing the plot and characters. She offers them proper interaction and her narration is enriched with psychological analyses of characters, as well as symbolism, imagery and rhythm. All these are woven into a living whole. Shashi Deshpande has established herself as one of the most established Indian novelists writing in English.

REFERENCE

- [1] Agarwal, Beena. Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande. Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2009.
- [2] Deshpande, Shashi. Language No Bar, The Sunday Times of India Ahmadabad, 1995.
- [3] Deshpande, Shashi. A Matter of Time. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1996.
- [4] Deshpande, Shashi. That Long Silence. London: Virago Press, 1988.
- [5] Interview with Lakshmi Holmstron, Wasafari Spring, 1993.