

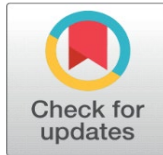


THE SUBJECTIVITY AND OTHERNESS: NEGOTIATING THE DIFFERENCE IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the themes of subjectivity and otherness in Shashi Deshpande's novels, specifically examining the negotiation of difference in his works. By analyzing Deshpande's novels, including "The Dark Holds No Terrors," "That Long Silence," "The Binding Wine," "Small Remedies," and "A Matter of Time," this research examines how his characters struggle. Issues of identity, social expectations, and cultural norms. The objectives of this study are to explore the struggles individuals face in navigating differences, analyze the gap between tradition and modernity, gender roles and generational gaps, and emphasize the importance of embracing diverse perspectives and challenging social norms. By exploring the protagonists' journeys, this research aims to provide insights into the transformative power of self-discovery and the importance of embracing one's unique subjectivity despite social constraints.

Keywords: Subjectivity, Otherness, Negotiation of Difference, Societal Expectations, Generational Gaps, Diverse Perspectives, Self-Discovery, Societal Constraints

1. INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande is a renowned Indian author known for his insightful exploration of themes related to identity, difference, and the negotiation of social expectations in his novels. With a keen focus on the complexities of subjectivity and otherness, Deshpande's works explore the struggles individuals face as they navigate the intersections of cultural, gender, and generational gaps. Her novels offer nuanced portrayals of characters negotiating the differences that shape their lives, embracing diverse perspectives and inviting readers to reflect on the importance of challenging social norms.

In Deshpande's novels, the negotiation of difference takes center stage. She expertly weaves complex narratives that explore the tensions that arise within families and wider society, exploring the interplay between tradition and modernity. The characters in his works find themselves caught between the expectations of their cultural heritage and their own desires for freedom and self-expression. Through their journeys, Deshpande illustrates the conflicts, transitions and personal growth that occur as they navigate the complex landscape of difference.

An important aspect of Deshpande's exploration of difference is her examination of gender roles and social expectations. Her female protagonists confront the constraints placed on them by patriarchal institutions, challenging and redefining traditional gender norms. They negotiate the difference between social expectations and their own aspirations, trying to assert their agency and gain power within the confines of a controlled environment.

Also, Deshpande's novels explore the negotiation of difference within interpersonal relationships. Characters encounter cultural, religious, or socioeconomic differences as they interact with others, leading to moments of tension and growth. Through these encounters, they confront their own biases and preconceptions, and learn to empathize and appreciate the perspectives of those who differ from them. This negotiation of difference within relationships allows for personal transformation and expanded understanding.

At the heart of Deshpande's exploration of difference is the negotiation of subjectivity and otherness within the self. His characters deal with internal conflicts, questioning their beliefs, desires, and sense of identity. They navigate the tension between conformity and individuality, trying to reconcile different aspects of their complex selves. Deshpande's novels depict a transformative journey of self-discovery and the need to embrace one's unique subjectivity in a world that often imposes strict norms and expectations.

Through her deep storytelling and nuanced character development, Shashi Deshpande challenges readers to examine difference and the importance of embracing diverse perspectives. Her novels offer compelling explorations of subjectivity, otherness, and the negotiation of difference, reminding us of the importance of empathy, understanding, and personal growth in confronting social constraints.

2. THE CONCEPT OF "OTHERNESS"

The concept of "otherness" in literature refers to the representation of individuals or groups who are considered different, alien, or outside the dominant social or cultural norms [Blanchot \(1955\)](#). The term has its roots in various disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, and philosophy, and has been widely explored in literary theory and criticism [Simmel \(1950\)](#).

One of the earliest influential thinkers to discuss the notion of otherness was Georg Simmel, a German sociologist, who explored the dynamics of social interaction and the construction of social identities [Simmel \(1950\)](#). Simmel argued that individuals define themselves in relation to others and that the "other" represents a distinct category against which individuals define their own identity.

In the realm of literature, the concept of otherness gained significant attention through the works of French philosopher and literary critic Maurice Blanchot [Blanchot \(1955\)](#). Blanchot examined the relationship between the self and the other in his influential book "The Space of Literature" [Blanchot \(1955\)](#). He argued that

literature has the power to evoke and represent the experience of encountering the other, creating a space where the boundaries of self and other blur.

The concept of otherness also found resonance in postcolonial theory, which emerged in the latter half of the 20th century [Said \(1978\)](#). Postcolonial scholars like Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explored the representation of the colonized "other" in literature and the power dynamics involved in the process of colonization [Said \(1978\)](#), [Bhabha \(1994\)](#), [Spivak \(1988\)](#). They highlighted how literature can challenge dominant narratives and expose the marginalization and subjugation of certain groups.

Over time, the notion of otherness expanded to encompass a range of identities and experiences beyond the colonial context [Butler \(1990\)](#), [Hooks \(1984\)](#). It has been applied to the representation of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and various forms of social difference [Butler \(1990\)](#), [Hooks \(1984\)](#). Scholars such as Judith Butler and bell hooks have examined the intersections of otherness and identity, emphasizing how literature can challenge and deconstruct the binary categories that reinforce hierarchies [Butler \(1990\)](#), [Hooks \(1984\)](#).

In contemporary literary theory, the exploration of otherness has become central to understanding the complexities of representation, identity, and power dynamics in literature [Blanchot \(1955\)](#). It provides a framework for analyzing how authors depict and negotiate the experiences of those who are marginalized or excluded from dominant social structures.

3. SUBJECTIVITY AND OTHERNESS

Sashi Deshpande's novels explore themes of subjectivity and otherness in various ways, shedding light on issues of identity, social expectations and challenges faced by women within patriarchal structures.

In "The Dark Holds No Terrors," [Deshpande \(1980\)](#) explores the protagonist's subjectivity as he struggles with his own identity and societal expectations. The novel depicts the alienation the heroine experiences as she confronts the patriarchal norms and restrictions imposed on her. Through a journey of self-discovery, she challenges the traditional roles assigned to women and seeks to assert her individuality.

"That Long Silence" explores themes of subjectivity and otherness by exploring a woman's silence and her struggle to find her voice within a patriarchal society. The heroine's journey involves questioning social norms, breaking free from the constraints of traditional gender roles, and asserting her own identity. Deshpande portrays the difference experienced by women who do not conform to societal expectations and emphasizes the importance of self-expression and individuality [Deshpande \(1989\)](#).

"The Binding Wine" explores subjectivity and otherness through the experiences of female characters who face various forms of oppression and discrimination. The novel explores domestic violence, women's agency, and the quest for self-empowerment as themes. Depicting their struggles to break free from the shackles of patriarchal control and find their own voice, Deshpande highlights the difference these women experience in their own homes and society [Deshpande \(2000\)](#).

In "Small Remedies," Deshpande presents interconnected stories that explore the lives of different women, each struggling with their own subjectivity and otherness. The novel delves deeply into themes of identity, longing, and the search for personal fulfillment. Deshpande portrays the complexities of the female

experience, highlighting the individuality of each character and their unique struggles with societal expectations and gender roles [Deshpande \(2001\)](#).

"A Matter of Time" focuses on the subjectivity and otherness of the protagonist, caught between tradition and modernity. The novel explores themes of self-identity, cultural conflicts and challenges faced by women in a changing society. Deshpande depicts the contrast the protagonist experiences as he navigates the expectations of his family and society, highlighting the tension between personal desires and societal norms [Deshpande \(1996\)](#).

Thus, Shashi Deshpande's novels depict the struggles faced by women within patriarchal societies, emphasize the importance of asserting one's individuality and break free from societal expectations, and offer nuanced explorations of subjectivity and otherness. These themes are interwoven with complex narratives and rich character development that invite readers to reflect on the divergent experiences and search for self-identity within a complex socio-cultural context.

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5. NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCE IN DESHPANDE'S NOVELS

One aspect of negotiating difference in Deshpande's novels is the exploration of intergenerational gaps and the clash between traditional and modern values. The characters are often caught between the expectations of their parents' generation and their own desires for freedom and self-expression. The negotiation of this difference is depicted through the tensions that arise within families and the protagonist's struggle to maintain their individuality while respecting their cultural heritage.

Additionally, Deshpande explores the negotiation of gender roles and societal expectations. Her female characters struggle with the constraints placed on them by patriarchal institutions, seeking to challenge and redefine traditional gender norms. They negotiate the difference between societal expectations and their own aspirations, striving for agency and empowerment in the face of social constraints.

Deshpadeshpande also explores the negotiation of difference within interpersonal relationships. Characters often encounter cultural, religious, or socioeconomic differences when interacting with others. Through these interactions, they confront their own biases and preconceptions and learn to empathize with and appreciate the perspectives of others. This negotiation of difference allows for personal growth and expanded understanding.

Also, Deshpande's novels highlight the negotiation of difference within himself. The characters grapple with their own inner conflicts, questioning their beliefs, desires, and sense of identity. They navigate the tension between conformity and individuality, trying to reconcile different aspects of their own complex selves.

Quotations from specific novels by Shashi Deshpande will provide a detailed and precise analysis of the negotiation of difference. However, without access to the text, providing direct quotations is challenging. To further explore this theme, it is recommended to read Deshpande's novels directly and look for scholarly analysis and critical interpretations that provide in-depth discussions and provide specific examples from his works.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande's novels offer nuanced depictions of the negotiation of differences, exploring issues of generational gaps, gender roles, societal expectations, and internal conflicts. Through her rich character development and compelling narratives, Deshpande invites readers to reflect on the challenges and transitions individuals face as they face and negotiate the differences that shape their lives.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Shashi Deshpande's novels offer profound explorations of subjectivity and otherness, focusing on the differences within individuals and their interactions with society. Through rich storytelling and complex character portrayals, Deshpande explores the struggles his protagonists face as they navigate issues of identity, social expectations, and cultural norms. His works highlight the tension between tradition and modernity, as characters find themselves torn between the expectations of their cultural heritage and their own desires for self-expression. Deshpande examines the negotiation of gender roles and challenges faced by women within patriarchal systems, emphasizing the importance of agency and individuality. Also, her novels explore the negotiation of difference within interpersonal relationships as the characters confront inequalities in cultural, religious, and socioeconomic background, leading to moments of tension and growth. Additionally, Deshpande explores the negotiation of difference within herself, capturing characters' internal conflicts and search for personal identity. Through these explorations, Deshpande's novels offer a profound reflection on the transformative power of self-discovery and the importance of embracing diverse perspectives. They serve as reminders of the complexities of human existence and the journey of negotiating difference for personal growth and social change.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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