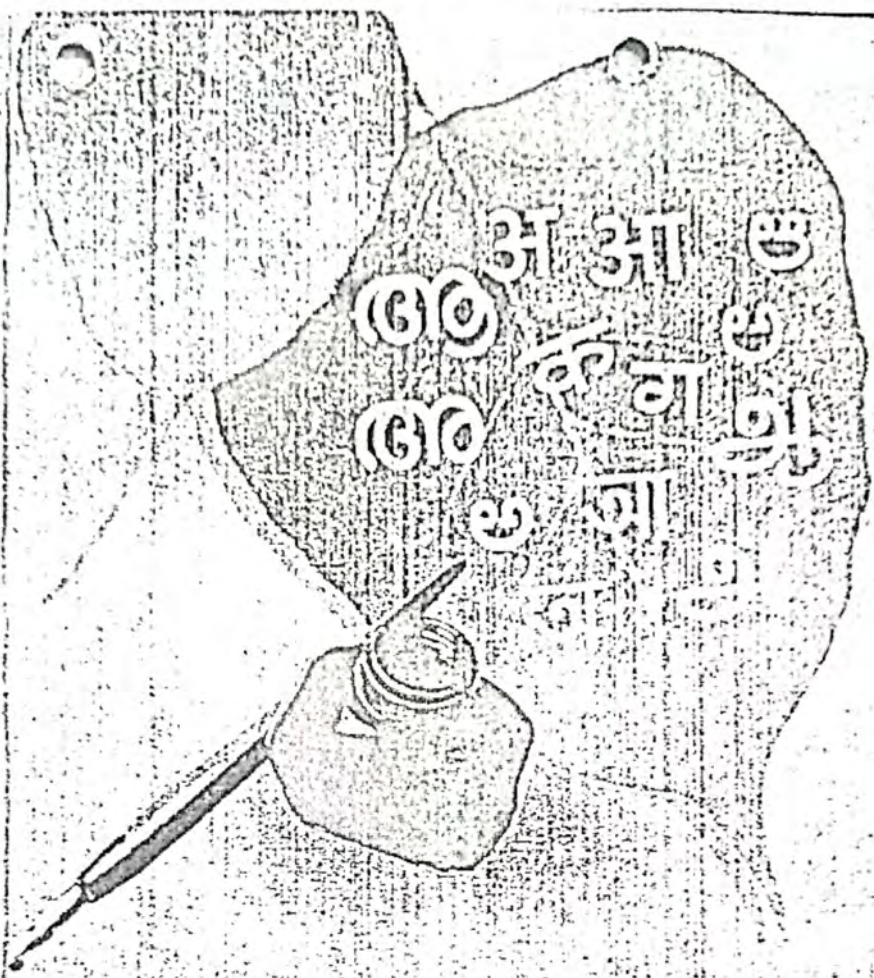


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"A Study of Social Realism in Manju Kapur's 'The Immigrant' and Shashi Deshpande's 'A Matter of Time'"

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Manju Kapur's 'The Immigrant' and Shashi Deshpande's 'A Matter of Time' deal with man-woman relationship, gender discrimination, human desires, rebellion and protest. Manju Kapur and Shashi Deshpande are considered as feminist writers. These novels deal with women's issues. Through their novels, they have given voice to neglected section of the society such as women in male dominated society. Quest for identity is one of the major themes of their novels.

This research paper studies social realism in Manju Kapur's novel 'The Immigrant', and Shashi Deshpande's novel 'A Matter of Time'

The emergence of new women in the realm of social, economic, cultural and racial aspects are also explored in the novels of Manju Kapur. Manju Kapur, being a novelist is primarily concerned with the problems of the newly emerging urban middle class.

Nina is a thirty-year-old English lecturer in New Delhi, living with her widowed mother and frustrated by how little life has to offer. Ananda has recently immigrated to Halifax, Canada, he searches for something to complete his new life. When an arranged marriage is proposed, Nina is uncertain: can she really give up her home and her country to build a new life with a husband. The consequences of change are far greater than she could have imagined.

'A Matter of Time', is one of Shashi Deshpande's novels, published in 1996. Women's problems have been consuming themes of most of Deshpande's work. The novel explores the intricate relationships encompassing three generations of men and women. In the novel, eighteen-years-old Aru is struggling to understand her father's desertion and her mother's 'indifference'. Sumi, the main character of the novel is different from the women protagonists of Shashi Deshpande's earlier novels. Sumi is emancipating herself as a new and independent woman with patriarchal pressure and family responsibilities. Gopal's desertion makes her experience the trauma of a deserted wife. When Gopal walks out for reasons, Sumi returns with her three daughters, Aru, Charu and Seema, to the shelter of the Big House, where her parents, Kalyani and Shripati live in a strange silence: they have not spoken to each other in the last thirty-five years. The lives of three generations of women living in their family home, 'The Big House.' Deshpande crafts a suspenseful story about why Kalyani

was forced into an arranged marriage with her maternal uncle Shripati, and about the tragedy that led Shripati to desert his wife.

Shashi Deshpande's novel 'A Matter of Time', explores a woman's psyche. In the novel, Sumi's husband Gopal walks out of her life, in quite unpredictable way, for reasons even he cannot express. Gopal unburdens himself from all family responsibilities. Sumi then realizes the situation and burden which is thrust on her by her husband, leaving everything and Sumi in a shocking stage.

Without any fault of Sumi, Gopal deserts her even without giving any reason. Sumi returns with her daughters Aru, Charu and Seema to the big house 'Vishwas' where her parents Kalyani and Shripati live in a strangely oppressive silence. They have not spoken to each other for thirty-five years because Shripati held her responsible for the loss of their four-year old mentally retarded son. Shripati also never openly explained his reasons for abandoning his wife Kalyani. On the other side for Sumi and her daughters, Gopal's desertion brings all disgrace, shame and humiliation. Both the male members shatter the life of their family.

Manju Kapur and Shashi Deshpande seem aware of the fact that the women of India have indeed achieved their success in sixty years of independence, but if there is to be a true female independence, too much remain to be done. We see the emergence of new women in Manju Kapur and Shashi Deshpande's protagonists, who do not want to be rubber dolls for others to move as they will. They want to shoulder responsibilities that go beyond a husband and children. They are not silent rebels but are bold, outspoken, determined and action oriented. All protagonists know they cannot depend on others to sort out the domestic situation. In spite of getting education and freedom the women protagonists of Manju Kapur and Shashi Deshpande's novels do not blossom into new woman in the real sense.

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