

# Stereotypes based on Gender in Media Three Female Indian Playwrights Writing in English

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**ABSTRACT:** Short story writers like Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, and Nirmala Joshi take aim at stereotypes about women and other long-held beliefs. Through an examination of several of Deshpande's short stories, this paper aims to demonstrate how Deshpande challenges traditional depictions of women in Indian literature. An Antidote to Boredom and The Window are the two short tales discussed in this paper.

**KEYWORDS :** Women, Stereotypical, Indian Society, attack.

## I. INTRODUCTION

There are still barriers to women's development in the workplace, despite the fact that many outdated stereotypes and prejudices have been dispelled throughout the years. Continued negative effects of gender stereotypes on women's access to career advancement opportunities can be traced back to how they shape managerial behaviour and professional outlooks in the workplace in accordance with patriarchal expectations. Only 29% of management positions are held by women around the world. A mean gap of 32.0% was observed by the World Economic Forum across the dimensions of economic inclusion and opportunity, educational achievement, health and survival, and political agency. The average gender gap was 31.7% last year, so this is an increase from that. Despite many efforts over the last several decades, discrimination based on gender stereotypes is still a problem in today's society. This research uses the literature on women in management, women in management, and the intersection of gender and management to argue for important theoretical advances in the discipline of management. Despite the name change, gender stereotypes are still being implemented in the workplace.

It's common known that discrimination based on a woman's gender is a key roadblock to her promotion to management. This research is based on the realisation that women are still grossly underrepresented in positions of power and authority. After looking at the research that have been done on the issue, it is evident that we still don't know much about why people tend to stereotype based on their sexuality. Until the underlying causes are addressed, the problem will continue. Therefore, it is vital to investigate the management literature thoroughly to identify the most significant aspects of gender stereotyping that affect women's career advancement.

There are several contexts in which stereotypical assumptions are useful. There are many different cognitive and motivational processes that are represented by stereotypical thinking, and all of them are useful. As a way to lessen the cognitive load of the perceiver by substituting previously stored knowledge for incoming information, stereotyping likely evolved in response to environmental circumstances such as shifting social roles, group disputes, and power imbalances. Stereotypes may also emerge in response to social identity politics or as an effort to justify the status quo. Remember, too, that bias isn't necessarily the result of deliberate thought. Gender prejudices persist even when there are equal opportunities for work. Nonetheless, progress has been made, and an increasing number of women now hold leadership positions in their fields.

Although women have made great strides in the workplace, they still face many obstacles. One such obstacle is an increased risk of mental health issues when employing an interpersonally focused leadership style in fields that have historically been dominated by men. Women's motivation and morale suffer when they face discrimination at work because of their gender. Perceptions about women's competence and ability in the office might be detrimental to their advancement in the business world. Women may not apply for leadership roles or positions of responsibility if they believe they have a low chance of being successful in such roles.

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Significant obstacles are posed to women by prevailing gender norms. Based on their study of the whole Indian state of Gujarat, Singh and Sebastian found that many women follow in the footsteps of their male cousins and fathers by entering the business sphere. Despite their exposure to business practises through their involvement in the family firm, these women are not considered business heirs due to their gender. Furthermore, the traditional worldview prevents women from advancing in their careers by preventing them from seeking out employment or social interaction outside the home. When women in management find themselves mirrored in the "men as managers, managers as men" idealisation that this culture promotes, they internalise the patriarchal standards of the workplace.

The impact of gender stereotypes on women are evident at every level of an organisation. This is crucial in any job search, but particularly when seeking a position of management or leadership.

Scholars from a broad range of disciplines and nations have spent the better part of four decades examining the connections between gender roles and the abilities necessary for success in management. These studies corroborate the findings of earlier studies showing pervasive stereotyping. Both sexes agree that men are more suited than women to positions of authority, however men are more inclined to believe this. The data also suggest that the Think Manager-Think Male mindset is a global phenomenon.

Literature chronicles the rise and fall of women's roles throughout history, yet until recently, the great majority of published writers were men, creating an unbalanced portrayal of female characters. The literary portrayal of women is often inconsistent. Several of these works featured female characters whose roles were secondary to those of the male protagonists. However, as a reaction to colonial rule and exposure to western ideologies and movements, some authors began to emphasise the strength of female characters in their works, challenging the traditional portrayal of literary damsels. As Anita Nair puts it, "literature's representation of women has always been ambivalent." Women who met societal expectations were rewarded happily. Even the most independent heroines, like Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* and Jane Eyre in *Jane Eyre*, find fulfilment and satisfaction in the company of a good man. Jane Austen's meek heroines gave way to Helen Fielding's sassy, outspoken Bridget Jones in a modern retelling of "Pride and Prejudice" (1), as highlighted by author Jaishree Mishra.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Examining the ways in which women are portrayed in short tales might provide light on the shifting representation and function of women in literature more generally. The current investigation focuses on two of Shashi Deshpande's short works. References to a book review and conversations with Amrita Bhalla and *The Hindu* bolster the textual interpretation. Both primary materials, including Shashi Deshpande's own writings, and secondary sources in the form of scholarly articles were consulted. Shashi Deshpande is a leading figure among Indian English fiction authors who are women. Deshpande's short stories were her first foray into literature, yet this fact may be unknown to many of her readers. Shashi Deshpande's dedication to subverting the concept of the "typical Indian woman" in a number of her short tales has earned her a unique niche. Deshpande's portrayal of women, she says, makes it difficult for certain Indian English literature readers to embrace her work since her female protagonists don't fit the narrow societal standards for what constitutes a nice ideal Indian lady. Amrita Bhalla discusses Deshpande in her article. She believes that our puranas, epics, and kathas have been authored by males and that women have not been included in the process of word creation. "To be as pure as Sita, as loyal as Draupadi, as beautiful as Laxmi, as plentiful a provider as Annapoorna, as dogged in devotion as Savitri, as strong as Durga- these are ultimately the role models we cannot entirely dismiss" ("The Indian Woman-Myths, Stereotypes, and the Reality," 1977, private papers). Deshpande believes that women's self-images are shaped by the hegemonic forces of myths, movies, and modern day soap operas, and that they never begin with a blank slate. Two, as pointed out by First Cry in their review of her second volume of collected stories, "Shashi picks up stereotypical characters like the self-effacing mother, the adulterous wife, the loving daughter and brings in many variations of their personalities, so that the very cast of the stereotype is wrecked to pieces." (3) Shashi Deshpande claims that she never used stereotypes in her work from the beginning of her career in an interview with *The Hindu*. An Antidote to Boredom, the first of our stories, is about a lady who is bored with her life as it is now structured. She tries to break free from the constraints of her marriage. Her marriage is a source of disappointment and unhappiness for her. When compared to her limitless capacity for love and giving, her husband is neither wicked nor cruel but rather unperceptive and dull. They've been together for a lifetime. One of the two kids who served as a link between them has passed away, and the other, just five years old, is already in school. The main character is bored with

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her life and wants to spice things up. A lonely lady meets a guy at the school where her kid attends. "He had said nothing, had followed us silently, then got me an ice cream with a smile," she recalled him saying. That was the first step" That had been the start of a beautiful relationship, one in which the wife delights despite her husband's ignorance. Perhaps this is a first step towards fulfilment, but it's important not to lose sight of the fact that we live in a traditionalist culture where men and women are still treated differently when it comes to romantic relationships. Women are to be as pure and faithful as Sita and Draupadi, and they are to accept in silence the destinies that are inscribed on their foreheads. However, the wife's experience with her new partner has been quite the opposite. She is aware of the man's reciprocal feelings for her. So, "without any words, we found ourselves going to the school twice a week, at the same time, on the same day, knowing full well that our children didn't really need us any more," the author writes. As time passes, they become more close while sharing a common feeling of regret and humiliation. She has put her son out of her mind and is instead focusing on the new experiences she can have with the man every day: "with a kind of guilt and shame at making use of him, I would rush up to him, rumple his hair, stay with him for a while, and then, with a throbbing heart and pulsating excitement, go to the courtyard where I would find him waiting for me under the large clock." Mothers have a soft heart when it comes to their offspring. Because of their devotion to their children, they are unable to always let their dreams take flight and act on their instincts. However, the protagonist makes the decision to put her own happiness ahead of everyone else's, including her own son. When her kid discovered her with that guy, she felt bad at first, but the remorse quickly faded. Their contentment has not been disturbed by this newfound knowledge or their feelings of morality and shame. But that was unusual for the two of us. Disheartening or sad. Instead, it was often happy and thrilling. And the anticipation of finally seeing him kept me revved up to an even higher level of life. The lady likes it when the male makes subtle, sweet comments about how beautiful she is. Her spouse disregarded her wishes for such compliments. They have moments when they question their own morals and wonder whether they are treating their partners fairly, but the notion of their future children or grandchildren always wins out. There was a tenderness to our connection that prevented me from wishing it away. I had no doubt that he was the same way."

If not this guy, then another, she says, since all this is doing is relieving her despondency. It's a fun and exciting way for her to get out of her mundane routine. But when she is with him, she forgets all about those things, because the two of them have built their own little world where they can both be the centre of attention. At long last, she resolves to grant herself her desire. She felt both thrilled and anxious. For the first time in their marriage, she found herself appreciating her husband's apathy, lack of insight, and stubbornness. She had been counting down the days till her husband leaves, but she was taken aback when he asked her to accompany him. The wonderful life she had established with the guy started to crumble as she realised that her husband felt for her and cared for her, too. She gave up her own happy little world, but it had been one of the best times of her life. It was an assault on the conventional wisdom that a married woman has no right to pursue her own interests or pleasure beyond the confines of her husband, children, and extended family. The protagonist's rejection of the archetype of the perfect Indian housewife is emblematic of Shashi Deshpande's innovative spirit and the evolving representation of Indian women in popular culture. Two stories later, "The Window" tells the tale of a lesbian woman who has chosen to remain in a heterosexual marriage. Being a lesbian wasn't easy back when this novel was written, when even bringing up the subject of sex in polite company was frowned upon. Because people assumed it was a mental disorder, acceptance was virtually nonexistent. This short novella is the first of its kind in India, and it deals with the topic of women's sexuality and gender identification. It took a lot of guts to write on this topic, and Deshpande wasn't even sure whether her Indian authors would accept it, so she did it in English to protect herself from societal criticism. Therefore, nobody paid any attention to or commented on this story. Characters in "The Window" who identify as female defy Indian cultural conventions that call for women to keep their sexuality under wraps.

The protagonist of "The Window" is a lesbian whose marriage ends shortly after she and her spouse move into a new home in Bombay. The sight of flowers in the home stuns the lady. In this context, "roses" symbolise the sexuality of women. And the sight of roses causes the woman to lose all composure and exclaim, "My God! Roses! My gasp was audible. The landlady makes her feel quite uncomfortable. It's as if the home has triggered an irrational terror in her. She doesn't know what to do and is frightened of the landlady finding out. The woman hated her landlord so much that she began to feel her presence even when she was not around. "She was dressed in a stiffly starched sari that added inches to her bulk," she says of her physical appearance. Her little ponytail, which seemed out of place on her huge frame, bobbed up and down with every stride. The woman and her husband speculate about the landlord's single status and the factors that may have contributed to her choice. Perhaps she assumed the landlady had no desire to settle down and start a family. She recalls the moments in her own life when she had no interest in getting married. There isn't a

male alive who can fathom a woman who doesn't want to get married. But I could do it. Sometimes I'd feel an intense revulsion to his maleness, but it would quickly dissipate, leaving me accepting of his demands out of boredom. Once, as she was enjoying her flowers, the landlady saw her. The landlord pays little attention to the tenant and instead abruptly confesses her sexual attraction to her.

### III. CONCLUSION

The female characters portrayed by Deshpande, Roy, and Joshi are shown as being antithetical to the stereotype of the perfect Indian lady. She paints a realistic portrait of some of the women in our society whose representation many authors overlook because they don't conform to the standard of what it is to be a "woman." The protagonists of her chosen short tales are all ordinary women doing extraordinary things to pursue their own happiness, despite the fact that they face opposition from inside or outside. It's safe to say that Shashi Deshpande's portrayal of these strong female characters was a contributing factor in the early demise of her writing career. However, it is undeniable that such women exist, and that they are welcomed into every household in a society where they are viewed as a curse by both their parents and their husbands' and in-laws' families. Deshpande appears to be arguing that women should be treated with respect and allowed to pursue their own goals rather than having their goals stifled or ignored. These facets of being a woman should not be overlooked even in works of fiction.

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