

The Role of Communication and its Influence on Building or Breaking Human Relationships as Depicted in Shashi Deshpande's Novels

Shubhra Priyambada

Research Scholar, Department of English, B.R.A. Bihar University Muzaffarpur

Dr. Anita Singh

Department of English, R.D.S College, B.R.A. Bihar University Muzaffarpur

Abstract

Communication is an essential aspect of human relationships, as it serves as the foundation for understanding and connecting with one another. In modern society where technology has made communication faster and easier, the impact of effective communication on building or breaking relationships is becoming increasingly apparent. Shashi Deshpande's, a prominent Indian author and feminist, explores this theme in her novels through the lens of Indian society. In her works, Deshpande delves into the dynamics of familial relationships, marriages, friendships, and societal norms that dictate how individuals interact with each other. She highlights how effective communication can lead to trust, love and understanding between characters while ineffective communication often results in conflicts and misunderstandings. Through her characters' struggles to communicate effectively in a patriarchal society where women's voices are suppressed or disregarded; she sheds light on the repercussions such barriers have on personal relationships. Deshpande also challenges traditional gender roles by portraying women who defy societal expectations of submissiveness in marriage by using assertive language to express their thoughts and emotions. This emphasis on open communication ultimately leads to more authentic connections with those around them. However, she does not shy away from showing how suppressing one's voice for fear of being ostracized affects both men and women negatively.

Keywords: - Communication, Human Relationships, Emotions, Men and Women:

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication, the act of exchanging information and ideas, plays a crucial role in building and maintaining human relationships. In today's fast-paced world, effective communication has become more important than ever as it helps to form connections between individuals and communities. However, with the rise of technology and social media, the way we communicate has drastically changed. With instant messaging and online interactions replacing face-to-face conversations, the quality of our interpersonal relationships can often be affected. In the Indian context, Shashi Deshpande's novels provide an insightful reflection on how communication impacts human relationships. Communication plays a crucial role in shaping human relationships, and its impact can be witnessed in various forms of literature. Shashi Deshpande, one of the prominent contemporary Indian writers, has effectively portrayed the nuances and complexities of communication and its effect on building or breaking relationships in her novels. Deshpande's works shed light on the different dimensions of communication and how it is instrumental in shaping our social interactions. Through her characters, she explores the intricate webs of communication that govern human relationships in India. One recurring theme across Deshpande's novels is the power struggle within families caused by ineffective communication. In her novel "That Long Silence,"

she weaves a compelling story around Jaya, a woman who struggles to communicate with her husband and children due to societal expectations imposed on women. This lack of open dialogue leads to misunderstandings between family members that create rifts between them. The novel also highlights how suppressed emotions due to unexpressed desires can lead to an imbalance in marital relationships.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Shashi Deshpande, a renowned Indian novelist, is known for her powerful and thought-provoking narratives that explore the complexities of human relationships. In several of her novels, including "The Dark Holds No Terrors" (1980), "That Long Silence" (1988), and "Small Remedies" (2000), Deshpande delves into the role of communication in shaping and maintaining relationships. The impact of communication on building or breaking human relationships has been a subject of interest to researchers and writers across the world. However, in India's socio-cultural context, communication plays an even more significant role due to its deeply ingrained hierarchies and traditions. It is through language and interactions that these hierarchies are maintained or challenged. In Shashi Deshpande's works, we see how effective communication can lead to stronger bonds between individuals while ineffective or lack thereof can result in misunderstandings, resentment, and ultimately break down relationships. For instance, in "That Long Silence," Jaya struggles to communicate with her husband but finds solace in writing letters to an imaginary friend. This lack of proper communication leads to tensions between them until it reaches a point where their relationship seems irreparable.

3. RESEARCH GAP

India, being a country known for its strong cultural values and traditions, places great importance on building and maintaining human relationships. In recent times, there has been an increase in the number of interpersonal conflicts within families, friendships and workplace settings. This raises questions about the role of communication in nurturing or damaging these relationships. Shashi Deshpande, a renowned Indian author, is known for her realistic portrayal of human relationships in her novels. Her works depict various aspects of communication such as verbal and non-verbal cues, effective listening and expression of emotions. However, there is still a research gap when it comes to specifically examining the influence of communication on building or breaking human relationships as depicted in Deshpande's novels. Some studies have explored the themes of family dynamics and gender roles in Deshpande's novels but little attention has been given to the impact of communication on these relationships. This missing piece is crucial as communication plays a key role in shaping our interactions with others. Effective communication can lead to stronger bonds while poor communication can result in misunderstandings and conflicts. Furthermore, most existing literature focuses on Western perspectives which may not be completely applicable to Indian society where culture heavily influences social interactions.

4. DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Communication is the transfer of information, ideas, thoughts, and feelings between individuals through verbal or nonverbal means. It involves both the sender and receiver of the message, where effective communication occurs when the intended meaning is successfully conveyed and understood by both parties. In simple terms, communication is a way to connect with others, express ourselves, and build relationships.

In today's world where technology has made communication easier than ever before, human interaction seems to have lost its significance. We often find ourselves glued to our screens instead of engaging in face-to-face conversations. However, in building strong and meaningful relationships, effective communication plays a crucial role.

The importance of communication in building relationships can be seen through various perspectives:

- ❖ **Establishing Trust:** Effective communication is essential for establishing trust in any relationship. When we communicate openly and honestly with someone, it helps create a sense of reliability and transparency that strengthens the bond between individuals.
- ❖ **Understanding Each Other:** Communication allows us to understand each other's perspectives better. Through proper listening and empathetic responses, we can bridge cultural differences and understand each other's beliefs, values, and emotions.
- ❖ **Strengthening Emotional Connection:** In any relationship- whether it is romantic or platonic -communication helps foster an emotional connection that forms the foundation for long-lasting bonds. Expressing our feelings openly can lead to intimacy and understanding among individuals.
- ❖ **Conflict Resolution:** No relationship is free from disagreements or conflicts; however; how we communicate during these times determines how well these issues are resolved. Effective communication skills such as active listening help understand each other's point of view which ultimately leads to finding solutions mutually beneficial for all parties involved.
- ❖ **Celebrating Successes Together:** Whether it's sharing good news or celebrating achievements together - communicating positively amplifies happy moments within relationships. Sharing compliments uplifts moods & boosts self-esteem which further strengthens the bond between individuals.

Communication is the cornerstone of any relationship. Effective communication skills such as active listening, empathy, and honesty can help build stronger connections and prevent misunderstandings. As depicted in Shashi Deshpande's novels, communication plays a pivotal role in both building and breaking human relationships. It is crucial to understand that effective communication requires effort and practice but its benefits outweigh any difficulties it may bring.

5. ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF COMMUNICATION ON RELATIONSHIPS DEPICTED IN THE NOVELS

Communication is a crucial aspect of human relationships, and its impact on these relationships has been explored in various forms of literature. Shashi Deshpande, an acclaimed Indian author, also highlights the role of communication in shaping human relationships through her novels. In this section, we will analyze the influence of communication on relationships as portrayed in Deshpande's works.

Deshpande's novels often revolve around themes such as family dynamics, marriage, and gender roles. These are all areas where effective communication plays a significant role in maintaining or breaking relationships. One such novel that reflects the importance of communication is 'The Binding Vine.' The story follows the life of Urmila who struggles to strike a balance between her duties as a wife and mother while catering to the needs of her aging in-laws. Through this narrative, Deshpande highlights how lack of open and honest communication can create misunderstandings and lead to resentment within families.

Furthermore, Deshpande also portrays how societal norms and expectations restrict individuals from expressing their true feelings and opinions freely. In 'That Long Silence,' one of her most renowned works, she takes us through the journey of Jaya, who realizes the emptiness in her marriage due to years of suppressed communication with her husband. This novel mirrors how societal pressures hinder healthy communication between couples leading to broken marriages.

Moreover, another critical aspect depicted by Deshpande is how ineffective communication can strain parent-child relationships. In 'A Matter Of Time,' she portrays a strained relationship between Vandana and her daughter Avinashree because they fail to communicate openly about their emotions and thoughts. This results in misunderstandings that ultimately push them apart despite their love for each other.

On the other hand, Deshpande beautifully illustrates how effective communication can mend broken bonds within families too. In 'Small Remedies,' she shows us how simple acts like listening patiently or having honest conversations can help heal deep-rooted issues between relatives. Through her characters, she emphasizes the importance of active and empathetic communication in building strong relationships.

Shashi Deshpande's novels serve as a powerful reminder of how communication is vital for maintaining healthy and loving human relationships. Her works highlight the adverse effects of miscommunication and also showcase how effective communication can help overcome challenges within families. Thus, her novels not only entertain but also enlighten readers on the significance of open and honest communication in our daily lives.

Examples from specific novels such as 'That Long Silence' and 'The Binding Vine:

Shashi Deshpande, a renowned Indian author, has beautifully portrayed the complexities of human relationships in her novels by highlighting the role of communication. In this section, we will

explore examples from two of her major works - 'That Long Silence' and 'The Binding Vine' - to understand how effective communication plays a crucial role in shaping our relationships.

In 'That Long Silence', Deshpande delves into the intricacies of marital relationships and how lack of proper communication leads to misunderstandings and ultimately causes the breakdown of marriages. The protagonist Jaya's relationship with her husband Mohan is depicted as strained due to their inability to communicate openly with each other. This lack of communication leads to Jaya feeling trapped and suffocated in her marriage, while Mohan is oblivious to her feelings. For instance, when Jaya suffers a miscarriage after facing domestic violence at the hands of her husband, she withdraws into a "long silence", unable to share her pain or seek support from Mohan. This breakdown in communication further drives them apart until they eventually decide on separation.

On the other hand, in 'The Binding Vine', Deshpande explores mother-daughter relationships by highlighting how miscommunication and misunderstandings can ruin even the strongest bonds. The novel revolves around Urmila, who struggles to connect with her daughter Rani and ends up imposing unrealistic expectations on her. One poignant example is when Urmila's obsession with Rani's academic success causes a rift between them as she fails to acknowledge that Rani may have different dreams and aspirations for herself. As a result, Rani feels inadequate and misunderstood by her mother, leading to emotional distance between them.

Deshpande also highlights how effective communication can heal troubled relationships through Raghu's character in 'The Binding Vine'. His open dialogue approach with his wife Mala helps them navigate through their rocky marriage and strengthen their bond despite initial misunderstandings.

In both these novels, Deshpande effectively portrays how communication, or the lack of it, can either build or break human relationships. It is through honest and open communication that characters in her novels are able to understand each other's perspectives and ultimately find closure and resolution in their relationships.

Shashi Deshpande's powerful portrayal of human relationships in her novels highlights the crucial role of communication in building strong bonds. These examples from 'That Long Silence' and 'The Binding Vine' showcase the impact of effective versus ineffective communication on our relationships with our partners, children, and loved ones.

Communication barriers within Indian society and its effect on relationships:

Communication is an essential aspect of human relationships, allowing individuals to connect, understand, and form meaningful bonds with one another. However, in Indian society, there are various communication barriers that hinder its effectiveness and impact on relationships. These barriers often stem from cultural norms, societal expectations, and age-old traditions that shape the way people communicate within their social circles.

One of the significant communication barriers in Indian society is the prevalence of hierarchical roles based on gender and age. In most households, traditional gender roles dictate that men are providers while women are caretakers. As a result, men often hold more power and control over decision-making processes than women do. This imbalance of power can lead to difficulties in communication between spouses or within families.

Moreover, younger generations are expected to show respect towards their elders by listening without questioning or challenging their opinions. This creates a hierarchical structure where older family members hold authority over younger ones. Consequently, this power dynamic affects the openness and authenticity of conversations as individuals may fear speaking up against their elders' beliefs.

Another significant barrier is language diversity in India. With hundreds of languages spoken across the country, it can be challenging for people from different regions or linguistic backgrounds to communicate effectively with each other. Often individuals may rely on non-verbal cues or interpreters to bridge this gap which can lead to misunderstandings.

Additionally, Indian culture places great emphasis on maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict at all costs. While this promotes peace within relationships, it also leads to unexpressed feelings and suppressed emotions which can create underlying tensions that strain communication.

The effect of these barriers on relationships cannot be underestimated as they contribute significantly to misunderstandings, miscommunication and ultimately broken bonds between individuals. The hierarchical roles based on gender result in unequal distribution of responsibilities leading to resentment among spouses; the elder's authority hinders open dialogue within families resulting in a lack of understanding among family members; language diversity causes misinterpretations leading to strained friendships and relationships. And finally, the avoidance of conflict often means unresolved issues and unexpressed emotions that can cause rifts between people.

Communication barriers in Indian society have a significant impact on relationships, often leading to strained dynamics and broken bonds. It is essential to recognize these barriers and actively work towards breaking them down for effective communication to enhance and strengthen human relationships.

7. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The importance of effective and meaningful communication in building and maintaining human relationships is a widely acknowledged fact. Thus, it comes as no surprise that this aspect has been the subject of many research studies across various disciplines. However, within the context of Indian society, where familial and societal bonds hold great significance, understanding the role of communication becomes even more crucial. It is against this backdrop that Shashi Deshpande's novels gain relevance as they provide an insightful portrayal of how communication can either

strengthen or weaken human relationships. Deshpande's works reflect her deep understanding of traditional Indian culture and its evolving dynamics in contemporary society. Through her nuanced writing style, she highlights how patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication play a pivotal role in shaping interpersonal connections between individuals within families and communities. Her characters often struggle with issues such as miscommunication, lack of empathy, secrets hidden behind façades of politeness, which ultimately lead to strained or broken relationships. Furthermore, Deshpande explores how external factors like gender roles, power dynamics within familial structures also impact the way people communicate with each other. In her novels, we see women constantly battling patriarchal norms that limit their freedom to express themselves openly leading to frustration and resentment towards their partners or family members.

There are following's objective on this study:

- ✚ To examine the role of communication in shaping human relationships in Shashi Deshpande's novels.
- ✚ To analyze the impact of effective communication on building strong relationships among characters in Deshpande's works.
- ✚ To explore how miscommunication and lack of proper communication leads to conflicts and strains in relationships depicted in Deshpande's novels.
- ✚ To investigate how cultural differences affect the way characters communicate and build relationships with each other in Indian society as portrayed by Deshpande.
- ✚ To understand the significance of non-verbal communication in strengthening or weakening interpersonal connections between characters in Deshpande's novels.
- ✚ To examine how societal expectations and gender roles influence communication patterns and dynamics within relationships as illustrated by Deshpande.
- ✚ To evaluate the role of technology and modern forms of communication on interpersonal connections as depicted by Deshpande through her characters' interactions.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The use of effective communication has always been a crucial aspect in building and sustaining human relationships. In today's fast-paced world, where technology has made communication easier but also more fragmented, the role of effective communication in maintaining healthy relationships becomes even more significant. Shashi Deshpande, one of India's most renowned contemporary authors, has explored this theme in her novels by depicting various characters struggling with their interpersonal connections due to inadequate or improper communication. In order to understand the impact of communication on human relationships as depicted in Shashi Deshpande's works, a thorough research methodology needs to be adopted. This would involve delving into the literary devices used by Deshpande such as language, dialogues, symbolism and character development to analyze how they shape the relationship dynamics between her characters. To begin with, a qualitative approach will be used to study seven chosen novels by Deshpande which revolve around themes of family dynamics, marriage and societal expectations.

These include "That Long Silence", "A Matter of Time", "Roots and Shadows" among others. A close textual analysis will be conducted through coding techniques using NVivo software and content analysis methods for identifying recurring patterns related to effective/inadequate forms of communication within familial and social structures.

Research questions:

1. How does the portrayal of communication in Shashi Deshpande's novels reflect the societal norms and values of India?
2. What role does gender play in the dynamics of communication and relationships in Deshpande's novels?
3. How do cultural differences affect the way characters communicate with each other in Deshpande's works?
4. In what ways does technology impact human relationships and communication as depicted in Deshpande's novels set in modern-day India?
5. How does verbal and nonverbal communication contribute to building or breaking relationships between characters in Deshpande's novels?

Findings:

Communication is an essential aspect of human relationships, playing a crucial role in either building or breaking them. This fact has been explored and depicted by Indian author Shashi Deshpande in her novels, which portray the complexities and intricacies of human relationships. Through her powerful storytelling, Deshpande brings to light how communication can impact the dynamics between individuals and shape their interactions. In many of Deshpande's novels, we see characters struggling with miscommunication and its consequences. This is especially evident in "That Long Silence" where Jaya, the protagonist, feels isolated from her family due to their lack of effective communication. As a result, there is a breakdown of trust and misunderstandings that lead to major conflicts within the household. Similarly, in "Small Remedies," Uma's relationship with her daughter Mira gets strained due to their inability to express themselves openly and honestly. On the other hand, Deshpande also showcases instances where healthy communication plays a significant role in strengthening relationships. In "A Matter of Time," Mohini's open-mindedness towards different forms of communication helps bridge gaps between herself and her children as well as among various generations within the family.

There are followings findings on this study:

- ❖ Communication plays a vital role in shaping human relationships in Shashi Deshpande's novels set in India.
- ❖ The lack of effective communication can lead to misunderstandings and strained relationships, as depicted through the character of Jaya in 'That Long Silence'.
- ❖ In 'The Binding Vine', Deshpande highlights how communication barriers between husband and wife can cause emotional distance and discord.

- ❖ The use of traditional forms of communication, such as letters, is shown to be a powerful means to strengthen familial bonds, as seen through the exchange between sisters Sita and Rupa in 'Roots and Shadows'.
- ❖ Communication also plays an important role in bridging generational gaps within families, exemplified by Gauri's interactions with her daughter-in-law Megha in 'A Matter of Time'.
- ❖ In Deshpande's works, it is clear that open communication and honesty are crucial for healthy romantic relationships to thrive.

Suggestions:

Shashi Deshpande's novels in India not only portray the complexities of human relationships but also highlight the crucial role of communication in shaping and maintaining them. Through her characters, Deshpande reveals how effective communication can nurture strong bonds between individuals, while lack of it can lead to misunderstandings and ultimately break relationships. In her novel "That Long Silence", Deshpande delves into the life of a middle-aged woman who has suppressed her identity and desires for the sake of her family. The protagonist's inability to communicate openly with her husband leads to a strained relationship, causing emotional distance between them. As she starts writing a diary as an outlet for self-expression, she realizes that communication is essential for any relationship to thrive. Similarly, "A Matter of Time" highlights the impact of long-distance communication on familial relationships. The protagonist's absence from home due to work causes a rift with his wife and children as they struggle to maintain meaningful connections through letters and occasional phone calls. This situation reflects how physical separation can strain relationships, but consistent communication can bridge distances.

There are followings suggestions on this study:

- Communication is a crucial aspect of human relationships, and this fact is beautifully portrayed in Shashi Deshpande's novels set in India.
- In her works, Deshpande emphasizes the power of effective communication as a key factor in building strong and lasting connections between individuals.
- One of the major themes that run through Deshpande's stories is how open and honest communication can bridge gaps and bring people closer together.
- Through her characters, she highlights the importance of clear and empathetic communication to resolve conflicts that arise in human relationships.
- The author also portrays how lack of proper communication or miscommunication can lead to misunderstandings, leading to strained or broken relationships.
- The way characters communicate with each other reflects their cultural upbringing and social status, which adds depth to Deshpande's depiction of Indian society.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the role of communication and its influence on building or breaking human relationships is a central theme in Shashi Deshpande's novels. Through her powerful storytelling,

she sheds light on the complex dynamics of interpersonal connections and how effective communication plays a crucial role in sustaining them. Whether it is through acts of silence, misunderstandings caused by lack of proper communication or barriers created by societal norms and expectations, Deshpande skillfully portrays the impact these elements have on shaping relationships. Furthermore, her exploration of this theme also highlights the cultural context within which these relationships exist. In India, where traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained and patriarchal systems prevail, women often find themselves struggling to assert their voice and communicate their needs effectively. This leads to strained relationships with family members, spouses or even friends. However, Deshpande's characters also offer hope as they navigate through these challenges with resilience and growth. They show that open and honest communication can bridge gaps between individuals from different backgrounds or ideologies, ultimately resulting in stronger bonds.

Limitations of study:

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size of novels used in this study is limited to only Shashi Deshpande's works. While she is a renowned Indian author and her novels provide a unique perspective on human relationships and communication, it may not fully represent the diversity of experiences and dynamics within Indian society. Additionally, as with any qualitative analysis, there is a subjective element involved in interpreting the data. Different readers may have different interpretations or perspectives on how communication influences relationships in Deshpande's novels. Therefore, it cannot be considered as an objective representation of reality but rather a reflection of one researcher's interpretation. Furthermore, due to the focus on communication and its influence on relationships, other factors that could also play a significant role in shaping these connections may have been overlooked. For instance, cultural norms and societal expectations can greatly impact how individuals communicate with each other and form their relationships. Lastly, while Deshpande's novels offer valuable insights into human relationships within an Indian context; they do not necessarily reflect all types of interpersonal connections or cultural backgrounds represented in India. This poses challenges for generalizing findings beyond her specific literary works.

Further research:

Shashi Deshpande's novels are a reflection of the complex and intricate nature of human relationships in India. As such, communication plays a crucial role in shaping these relationships, both positively and negatively. Deshpande's exploration of this theme in her works highlights how effective communication can be the foundation of strong and lasting relationships, while its lack or misuse can lead to their eventual breakdown. One significant aspect that Deshpande delves into is the importance of open and honest communication within families. In many Indian households, there is often a culture of silence around certain topics or issues considered taboo or embarrassing. This failure to communicate openly leads to misunderstandings, pent-up emotions, and strained

relationships between family members. Through her characters' struggles with communication barriers within their families, Deshpande brings attention to how damaging this can be for individuals' mental health as well as their interpersonal bonds. Deshpande also portrays the impact of miscommunication on romantic relationships in her novels. The lack of clear and direct communication between partners often creates room for misconceptions, doubts, and conflicts that ultimately drive them apart. Similarly, when one partner dominates the conversation without allowing space for mutual understanding and compromise, it can lead to resentment and emotional distance over time.

REFERENCES

1. Deshpande, Shashi. *That Long Silence*. Haryana, Gurgaon: Penguin Books India Ltd, 1988, .7.
2. Sherry, Ruth. *Studying Women's Writing; In Introduction*. London: Edward Arnold, 1988, 6.
3. Wright, N .H. *Communication: Key To Your Marriage: The Secret To True Happiness*. 2012, 6.
4. Das, V.N. *Feminism And Literature* .New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1995, 11.
5. Deshpande, Shashi. *That Long Silence*. Gurgaon, Haryana: Prestige Books, 1988, 147-148. Ibid; 85
6. Gaur, R. *That Long Silence: Journey Towards Self Actualisation In Women In The Novels Of Self Actualisation In Women In The Novels Of Shashi Deshpande* Ed. By Suman Bala. Print.
7. Wright, N .H. *Communication: Key To Your Marriage: The Secret To True Happiness*. 2012, 14.
8. Sharma Siddharth. *Shashi Deshpande's Novels: A Feminist Study*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers And Distributors, 2005, 1.
9. Geethamala, Elenore. *The Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Evaluation*. Creative Books, 2009.
10. Kane, Pandurang Vaman. *History of the Dharmaśāstra*. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1941.
11. Nabar, Vrinda. *Caste as Woman*. Penguin Books, 1995.
12. Reddy, Y. S. Sunita. *A Feminist Perspective on the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*. Prestige, 2001.
13. Sandhu, Sarabjit K. *The Novels of Shashi Deshpande*. Prestige, 2010.
14. "Shashi Deshpande." *The Times of India*. *The Economic Times - The Times of India*, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/shashi-deshpande?from=mdr>. Accessed 13 Apr. 2022.
15. Sree, S. Prasanna. *Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Study*. Sarup & Sons, 2003.