
Real-Life Narratives of Women's Struggles and Their Success in Literary Works**B. Rajesh**

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Abstract

In post-independence India, Literature produced by women writers functioned as a repository of documenting challenges, lived experience, in different zones while also projecting vital views of achievement and identity. Present article intended to study the literary works of writers named Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Das, Arundhati Roy, and Sudha Murthy. The writings of these writers project how personal experiences of suppression, emotional conflict, and discrimination are converted into strong literary description. It is aimed to study the success not only in institutional terms but also in the form of women writers' success to raise voice against discrimination and their social contribution. Kamala Das tried to reclaim the female identity in the form of confessional poetics; Shashi Deshpande understood the oppression within the middle class, Sudha Murthy elucidates her views with ethical philanthropy, and Arundhati Roy connects fiction with resistance. With a comparative study present article assert that these writers transformed their private hardship into a meaningful form. These writers clearly expressed that literature would act as artistic production and moral involvement with real word. The works of these writers speak that pathetic background of women deserve a better recognition in cultural and intellectual arena.

Keywords: Women's narratives, feminist life-writing, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, resilience

Introduction

The women writings in Indian English literature changed the orientation of understanding the issues of women in male dominated Indian social system. Historically women's issues were projected in the patriarchal lenses. After independence many women writers arise to state the agony, suppression and sufferings facing by them. According to feminist literary scholars like Gilbert and Gubar (1979) and Showalter (1977), women's work frequently emerges from lived marginality, turning silence into conversation. In the Indian context, scholars like Tharu and Lalita (1993) have displayed the way how women's narratives destruct prominent age-old and cultural narratives.

Present article stress on four main writers such as Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, and Sudha Murthy. Though they are different in style and ideology, each of them dealt their works in real life encounters with resistance, gender bias, political defiance and domestic harassment. Their stories offer a compassionate record of women's lives, where success is set on not just by honours but also by having the courage to speak up and the enough capable to effect change.

Methodology

Present study followed qualitative textual analysis found in feminist literary criticism and life-writing theory. Primary texts of some of the authors were studied for scholarly conclusions. The study also focuses on resistance, voice, struggle, agony, suffering and success. Biography is not a major background in the present study but it was studied through the writings of these writers, which is quite visible in the characters of their works.

Kamala Das

Kamala Das is one of the writers who is dare and emotionally transparent voices in her works. After India's independence, she changed the way of writing in women's autobiographical and poetic expression in India. Her lives experiences such as an early marriage, emotional neglect, yearning for intimacy, and a lifetime search for identity are inextricably linked to her creative career. She made vulnerability a place of resistance by transforming private suffering into public conversation through confession.

Kamala Das is often known as India's foremost confessional poet. However, unlike merely psychological confession, Das's poetry contains a socio, political backdrop. She directly challenged the masculine ideals of silence and decorum by articulating female desire.

In her poem "An Introduction," she asserts linguistic and bodily autonomy; "I speak three languages, write in two, dream in one." Identity is portrayed in this statement as both flexible and self-claimed. Das wrote freely about female sexuality, emotional thirst, and marital disillusionment during a period when Indian women poets were obligated to stick to romantic or nationalist themes. Feminist writers projected this boldness as an act of regain subjectivity from male-dominated literary traditions (Showalter, 1977).

Kamala Das's autobiography, *My Story* (1976), contains a raw account of her early marriage and the loneliness that she faced. She discusses feelings of emotional desertion and unfulfilled desires after being married at a young age. She emphasises the suffocating possibilities of marriage rather than imagining it as a divine destiny. Das refused to allow the pain of women to go unaddressed by recounting personal details. Her story deals around the body, which is frequently taboo in public debate. She writes to testify rather than to stir up controversy. Writing in a confessional manner puts one at risk. Das encountered moral criticism by discussing her emotional life. Her compositions were branded immodest by conservative opponents. Her disclosure of herself operates as a political critique. She destroys the illusion of the happy, selfless Indian wife by addressing longing, want, and treachery. In several of her poems, the speaker searches for true love beyond the roles that

are accepted by society. This desire is existential, not just romantic. She wants to be seen as a complete individual.

In later years, Das's spiritual path sparked public debate. Although contentious, this change can also be interpreted as a component of her ongoing quest for self-worth and acceptance. Scholars suggest that her spiritual journey reflects an long-lasting dissatisfaction with rigid social categories (Riemenschneider, 2005). Her later work usually combines religious longing with sexual imagery, demonstrating that her search for love evolved into a more extensive metaphysical quest. Her identity's complexity is brought to light by the conflict between spiritual transcendence and physical yearning. Her story demonstrates the coexistence of hardship and achievement. Pain on an emotional level did not stop her; rather, it inspired her to create. Through her ability to transcend loneliness into poetic eloquence, she transformed personal traumas into resonance for the entire community. Her real-life difficulties—public criticism, identity issues, and marital discontent—form the basis of her poetic achievement. By displaying her vulnerability, she inspires others to face their own vulnerabilities.

Kamala Das's literary path serves as an example of how liberating confession may be. She defied centuries-old masculine conventions by attempting to describe her mental and physical sensations. Her narrative and poems serve as timeless examples of a woman's determination to keep quiet. Das redefined success as bravery and sincerity by turning personal suffering into lyrical expression. In addition to anthologies, her influence lives on in the greater autonomy she established for women's voices in Indian writing.

Shashi Deshpande

Shashi Deshpande is a key post-independence Indian author who addresses the internal problems of middle-class women navigating wedding, child rearing, and career. Deshpande's literary geography is household space, including the living space, sleeping area kitchen, and study. However, within these seemingly everyday spaces, she reveals the deeply rooted masculine rules that dominate women's expression, gender identity, goals, and passivity.

The idea that household life is naturally safe or peaceful is constantly questioned in Deshpande's novels. She tells the tale of Sarita, an accomplished doctor who returns to her parents' house after being subjected to sexual and emotional assault in her marriage, in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980). The idea that a successful career equates to happiness is undermined in the book. Sarita's financial independence does not shield her from harshness in her marriage; rather, her career success jeopardises her husband's brittle masculinity.

According to scholars, the fears of postcolonial middle-class households, where women's education increased but masculine standards persisted, are reflected in Deshpande's depiction of marital friction (Kumar, 2001). As an example of how gender roles are socially established and closely monitored, Sarita's husband views her success in medicine as diminishing.

In *That Long Silence* (1988), Deshpande explains the aspects of suppressed female. Jaya is a writer who has underlined her wishes to her husband's expectations. The novel unravels as an interior oration in which Jaya reflects to remain silent during marital disputes. In Deshpande's work, silence functions on several levels. Social training that values female obedience is used to enforce it outside. It is internalised as remorse and self-doubt. Silence, however, can also be a place of reflection. Jaya's self-examination gradually turns quiet into storytelling.

Instead of presenting women as supporting characters, Deshpande's works focus on female perspectives, in contrast to previous masculine-authored domestic narration. Shashi Deshpande's research into literary and domestic personalities is appropriately contextualised owing to her own history as an educated urban lady and a child of a popular Kannada writer. Deshpande's representation of struggle without spectacle is among her writing's most captivating features. Dramatic revolutions are uncommon among her protagonists. Rather, resistance manifests as an incessant awakening realizing injustice, challenging conventions, and expressing hidden realities. In the end, Jaya chooses to speak up in *That Long Silence*, symbolically taking back her literary and marital voices. Although its seeming modesty, the act signifies a significant metamorphosis. Rather than being material, success in Deshpande's fiction is moral. It is the willingness to assert narrative authority and the bravery to admit discontent. Through this reinterpretation, patriarchal measures that link social conformity to success are challenged.

The literary accomplishment of Shashi Deshpande is shedding light on the unseen conflicts that take place inside homes. She turns commonplace events into insightful meditations on gender and identity through psychological realism and restrained storytelling approach. The transitions of her heroes from quiet to voice represent larger feminist goals.

Deshpande stands in for the psychological resistance dimension in the context of this investigation, where conflict arises subtly but tenaciously.

Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy stands out among modern Indian authors as a novelist of remarkable artistic inventiveness and a public intellectual who is profoundly involved with ethical and political issues. Her work serves as an example of how historical violence, moral ambiguity, and societal antagonism may be adapted into literature that is both personal and thematically critique. In Roy's perspective, success is not only literary recognition but the persistent bravery to disagree; conflict is both individual as well as civilisational.

Roy's first book, *The God of Small Things* (1997), examines the entwined lives of twins Rahel and Estha against a background of postcolonial disillusionment, patriarchal power, and caste hierarchy. Despite the story's focus on family tragedy, institutional injustice particularly the violence ingrained in caste and gender relations is shown via its deeper structure. The twins' mother, Ammu, faces one of the most heartbreaking challenges in the novel. Her violation of loving over caste lines leads to disastrous outcomes and social exclusion. Roy portrays Ammu to illustrate how vulnerable women are under the overlapping

patriarchal and caste systems. Lived societal realities give rise to Roy's imaginary universe. Caste-based discrimination, Kerala's political past, and the effects of colonialism are all real-world events rather than theoretical concepts. Roy transforms these truths into stories, allowing readers to emotionally engage with systematic injustice.

Empathy is central to Roy's work. Her writing is infused with compassion for individuals who experience prejudice, economic hardship, or relocation, even in political critique. The humanistic aspect of her writing is this harmony between rage and empathy. Her struggle against silence, against injustice, against complacency becomes a shared ethical call. Her success lies not merely in recognition but in awakening conscience. Arundhati Roy is the epitome of the union of ethical advocacy with literary artistry. From her public articles challenging governmental power to the personal tragedies of *The God of Small Things*, she skillfully turns seen and lived reality into gripping narrative interventions. Her life and work demonstrate how women's difficulties manifest in national and international spheres in addition to local ones.

Sudha Murthy

Sudha Murthy is a unique example of a modern Indian woman writer whose creative work is grounded on social responsibility and moral realism. In contrast to writers who are overtly personal or politically confrontational, Murthy's stories are the result of long-term, direct engagement with people throughout India, especially through her long-standing involvement in charitable and educational endeavours. Her life and collaborative efforts serve as an example of how the challenges faced by women in social and professional contexts may be turned into empathetic narratives and institutional change.

Being one of the first female engineering students at her university, Sudha Murthy's early years represented a challenge to long-standing gender inequality. Murthy's well-recorded application experience at a large engineering company that first turned away female employees serves as an example of institutionalised prejudice as opposed to individual bias. Murthy's subsequent publications consistently emphasise tenacity, skill, and silent reform rather than reacting furiously. In this way, her battle was a protracted negotiation inside systems that forbade women from participating, rather than a dramatic act of rebellion. This process of negotiation emerges as a significant subtext in her writing, especially in stories that show women striking a balance between their duties to their families and their career goals.

Murthy's works such as *Wise and Otherwise* (2002), *The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk* (2010), and *Three Thousand Stitches* (2017) are grounded in lived encounters. These texts blur the boundary between memoir and short-story realism. Her storytelling style is marked by simplicity, accessibility, and emotional clarity. Unlike the more symbolism of Arundhati Roy or the mental interiority of Shashi Deshpande, Murthy's prose seeks direct relation with a broad readership.

Murthy describes interactions with people from a variety of social and economic backgrounds in *Wise and Otherwise*, including orphans, elderly parents who have been

abandoned by their children, and rural women who are struggling with poverty. These narratives reveal systemic injustices without resorting to hyperbole. While avoiding superior morality, the author's voice is perceptive and empathetic. She documents experiences as acts of testimony, which adds a humanitarian element to her work.

The impact of Sudha Murthy on Indian women's literature goes beyond simple genre classification. She is a prime example of how real struggle—such as encountering societal injustices, gender inequality in the workplace, and ethical responsibility—can produce narratives that are restorative rather than bitter. Her writing humanises poverty rather than romanticising or sensationalising it.

Murthy serves as an example of success based on service within the larger comparative context of this essay. Whereas Arundhati Roy carries out political resistance, Shashi Deshpande stresses psychological enlightenment, and Kamala Das emphasises personal emancipation, Sudha Murthy represents caring institution-building. When taken as a whole, these aspects deepen our understanding of women's real-life stories not just as examples of perseverance, but also as models for compassionate change.

Conclusion

The main take away from this examination of actual accounts of women's hardships and achievements as they are represented in the writings of Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, and Sudha Murthy is the way literature serves as a compassionate, intensely relational art form that both records and alters lived realities. Each author demonstrates how personal hardship may serve as a catalyst for self-assertion, ethical engagement, and greater cultural impact, despite differences in style, ideology, and literary form.

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By reframing honesty as literary achievement, Kamala Das's candid voice removed the taboo around feminine desire and emotional isolation. Women's inner life are highlighted by Shashi Deshpande's psychological realism, which demonstrates how voice arises from thoughtful struggle in household settings. Arundhati Roy combined literary authority with steadfast public opposition in addition to reshaping the narrative form in fiction. Among these authors, literature takes the form of testimony rather than escape: a means of observing and documenting the ways in which women deal with systematic injustices, emotional turmoil, social exclusion, and hierarchical restrictions. Together, Kamala Das, Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, and Murthy's stories demonstrate that women's writing is a compassionate cultural intervention that turns pain into expressive language and that literary achievement can spur social transformation, resiliency, and support when it is based on lived truth and ethical engagement.

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