

Women Empowerment through Reformation of Characters in the Novel 'In the Country of Deceit'

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<p><i>Received: 27 Feb 2024;</i> <i>Received in revised form: 07 Apr 2024;</i> <i>Accepted: 15 Apr 2024;</i> <i>Available online: 23 Apr 2024</i></p> <p>©2024 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— <i>Women empowerment, Liberation of women, bodily pleasure</i></p>	<p>The novel "In the Country of Deceit" (2008) represents a notable divergence from Deshpande's previous literary endeavours. Within the preceding novels, female protagonists demonstrate a strong aversion towards physical gratification. However, in this particular instance, they engage in open and uninhibited discussions regarding their bodily desires, marking a significant departure from previous portrayals. The protagonist of the aforementioned novel exhibits traits of boldness, courage, and a greater sense of liberation compared to their predecessors. Notably, characters such as Baba, Manjari, Devi, and Sindhu engage in discussions regarding the physical needs of the body in a manner that is remarkably organic. The characters in the narrative exhibit a strong inclination towards attaining self-fulfilment by actively questioning and challenging the sociocultural norms that have been imposed upon them. Additionally, they demonstrate a resolute determination in making autonomous decisions regarding the trajectory of their lives. The individuals under study exhibit a strong sense of self-confidence and take full responsibility for their current circumstances, refraining from attributing blame to external factors. The current study endeavours to demonstrate the manner in which the male and female protagonists in the literary work titled "In The Country of Deceit" challenge established societal conventions and instil a sense of hopefulness in their existence, despite encountering numerous hardships.</p>

INTRODUCTION

The novel *In the Country of Deceit* can be characterized as a meticulous exploration of the concept of love within the context of adversity, dishonesty, and avoidance in the personal journey of its main character, Devyani Mudhol (Devi), who is an English teacher. Devi, having achieved her

independence through great effort, opts to assert her autonomy in a manner that is unique to her. Similar to Manjari from the film "Moving On," Devi also exhibits a free-spirited nature and possesses a liberated perspective on life. This is exemplified by her choice to reside independently in the quaint village of Rajnur, prior to becoming entangled in a relationship devoid of long-term prospects. The present novel

highlights the significance of physical desires in the lives of both male and female characters portrayed in the story. The novel portrays a multitude of female characters, namely Devi, Sindhu, Kusum, and Rani, who encounter numerous challenges and exhibit remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. These characters defy societal norms and conventions surrounding gender roles, marriage, and other cultural taboos, showcasing their capacity to overcome obstacles and thrive in the midst of difficult circumstances. The present analysis focuses on the comprehensive development of the female protagonist, as exemplified by Devyani's explicit disapproval of her family and friends, as well as her deliberate decision to enter into a marital union with an individual significantly older than herself and who is already bound by the institution of marriage. Deshpande has endeavoured to portray a diverse range of emotional states such as unhappiness, disappointment, tension, and the inherent clash between tradition and modernity. Additionally, the author has skilfully explored the convergence of negative forces within the narrative. The centrality of human relationships is a prominent theme in the novel. The novel *In the Country of Deceit* employs its title as a symbol to convey an overarching sense of treachery, evasions, and pessimism, juxtaposed against the backdrop of intense emotions such as love and faith within a relationship. The novel explores the theme of romantic love between two mature individuals, a man and a woman. While the author has explored the concept of love in previous literary works, it is worth noting that, with the exception of a few initial endeavours, she has yet to produce a narrative that is exclusively centred around this theme. In the novel *Moving On*, the governing factor is identified as the desire for body. However, in the present novel, the theme centred around the desire for love. The act of demolishing the old house subsequent to the demise of their parents, carried out by Devyani, the central character, alongside her sister Savitri, and the subsequent construction of a new dwelling in its stead, serves as a manifestation of the optimistic perspective held by both siblings. The individual's motivation to overcome the negative impact of their mother's illness and father's suicide can be seen as a conscious effort to break free from the emotional distress caused by these traumatic experiences. The

architectural design of the new residence is characterized by the presence of generously proportioned, well-lit and well-ventilated rooms, which stands in stark contrast to the cramped and dimly lit room of their previous dwelling. This architectural choice may be indicative of their inclination to progress and advance in their life journey. The individuals in question exhibit a strong aversion towards any form of negativity within their current existence. The initial chapters of the novel exhibit indications of the protagonists' deliberate choice to suppress the memories of their parents' lives characterized by illness, disappointment, and hardship. The concept of the new house is intricately linked to the dismantling of the conventional system and the reconfiguration of contemporary ethical principles. The acquisition of the new house symbolizes a fresh start for the two sisters, instilling a sense of hope and optimism. Their jubilant reaction to this milestone is reminiscent of seasoned individuals who have experienced similar triumphs in the past: "Savi and I engaged in a toast, raising our glasses with the composure and confidence of seasoned veterans." The statement highlights the intention of the individuals involved to transform their living space into a source of joy and contentment. By actively seeking to create a positive environment, they aimed to overcome the lingering emotions of sorrow and suffering associated with past experiences. Both sisters expressed a shared desire to eliminate any remnants of their parent's frustration, pain, and negativity from their lives, as evidenced by Devi's statement in the novel: "Ground zero'." According to the available evidence, it can be concluded that the individual who uttered the aforementioned words was none other than the speaker themselves. Furthermore, despite the ominous connotation of the phrase, despite its link to devastation... From our perspective, this event marked the initiation of a new phase rather than a conclusion. The concept of a fresh start is a widely recognized phenomenon that has been studied extensively in various fields of research. It refers to the idea of beginning anew, often after a period of stagnation or difficulty. The concept of a "clean slate" refers to starting anew or beginning with a fresh start. It implies the absence of any pre-existing conditions or influences that could potentially impact the situation at hand. This notion is often associated

with the idea of wiping away. Within the literary work entitled "In the Country of Deceit," the author adeptly explores the theme of betrayal and its profound impact on both genders. While the suffering of women due to their husbands' acts of betrayal is evident, the writer also skilfully depicts the detrimental effects on the male protagonist, Prem, highlighting the psychological toll inflicted upon him. Prem, the initial spouse of Rani, experiences a profound psychological distress as a result of her lack of loyalty. The protagonist in the narrative decides to end her relationship with the male character due to her strong emotional attachment to Mahesh Tiwari, who consistently exhibits aggressive and harsh behavior towards her. Rani's deceptive behavior significantly impacts his self-esteem, leading him to adopt a promiscuous lifestyle characterized by frequent changes in romantic partners, akin to his tendency to switch shirts. As a result of his diminished trust in the romantic partnership, the individual elects to derive pleasure from his companionships with multiple female partners, while concurrently making the conscious decision to abstain from entering into the institution of marriage in the future. According to Roshni, the daughter of the individual in question, he was experiencing a significant amount of enjoyment, thoroughly relishing in his widespread appeal and the manner in which women were attracted to him. The subject in question refers to her paternal figure as both a cheater and a liar. The ramifications of betrayal within the context of marital relationships extend beyond the primary individuals involved, encompassing the psychological and behavioural dimensions of their offspring. Both KN and Roshni exhibit a noticeable absence of affection and emotional connection in their interpersonal relationships. According to Devyani, Rani and KN share a relationship that can be described as a union formed for the sake of mutual convenience. KN attempts to mitigate the erosion of his family's reputation by entering into matrimony with Rani, an aesthetically pleasing spouse: "an additional acquisition that would bolster his sense of pride." The protagonist's transformation into a reticent individual is a direct consequence of his father's dishonourable behavior. In an attempt to alleviate the burden of his troubled past, he immerses himself in the realm of business affairs. The individual's formative years have been

significantly impacted, resulting in a profound animosity towards their paternal figure. This emotional response has led them to renounce their inherited family name and instead embrace the appellation associated with their maternal ancestral community, Navilur. The individual's childhood, characterized by deprivation and a lack of affection, appears to have had a profound impact on his psychological development. As a result, he has seemingly transformed into a mechanized entity, devoid of any inclination towards experiencing or expressing love and emotions. Rani and KN are portrayed as two individuals who experience a sense of alienation. KN's ability to form a robust emotional connection with his children, Neha and Rohan, appears to be lacking, resulting in the creation of a peculiar atmosphere of silence around him. The emotional void in his heart remains unfulfilled by the presence of his mother, Rani, and his children. While KN exhibits a tendency to withdraw from the tangible world, Roshni undergoes a transformation into a vengeful persona in response to her relationship with her mother. The individual in question experiences a significant level of emotional detachment from her maternal figure, resulting in a consistent inclination to diminish her worth. She expresses her sentiments by stating, "She left me behind and chose to associate with that individual of questionable character."

The individual in question characterizes her maternal figure as self-centred due to the perceived absence of maternal care and emotional support. The impact of Rani's neglect on her daughter is evident in the manifestation of aggressive behavior, as the young girl struggles to control her anger. Reflecting on this phenomenon, one cannot help but question the underlying reasons behind Rani's actions... The individual expresses a commitment to refrain from repeating the action in question. However, it is important to note that I possess the knowledge or understanding of the subject matter in question. Repeatedly, the phrase "again and again" has been observed. Both KN and Roshni have experienced instances of betrayal and wrongdoing perpetrated by their respective parents. Shashi Deshpande explores the concept of purpose and self-fulfilment in women through the character of Rani. Deshpande suggests that engaging in work can be a means for women to find a sense of purpose and fulfilment. Rani possesses

a multitude of material possessions, including a luxurious bungalow, a car, and a substantial amount of money. Additionally, she is blessed with delightful children and a seemingly flawless family. However, despite her abundance of worldly possessions, Rani experiences a persistent sense of emptiness in her life. The individual's occupation served as the sole provider of satisfaction within her existence, and the absence of employment not only induced a state of tedium, but also resulted in her transformation into an irritable and passive individual. The individual in question has expressed a perceived loss of purpose and significance in her life. The individual in question appears to experience a lack of comfort or consolation, even when in the presence of her offspring. The participant expressed her limited willingness to disclose her emotions, confiding solely in Devyani, stating: "I desire for this to be etched in memory." Upon entering into a marital union with KN, I initially held the belief that my involvement in the realm of cinematography would be non-existent. The individual expressed a belief that their situation had reached a definitive conclusion. Upon arriving at this location and engaging in a conversation with you, and subsequently having a period of contemplation, an idea emerged within me. It occurred to me that it might be worthwhile to undertake the production of a particular film. The experience of frustration and loneliness elicited a state of stress in the individual. The subject of our study reported that she found Rajnur to be less accommodating compared to her previous experiences in Mumbai, where she had felt a greater sense of comfort. The observed individual does not exhibit the same level of maternal care and affection as Savi, displaying a more relaxed approach towards her offspring. The individual in question frequently travels to Mumbai, making the journey no less than two times per month. During these trips, she entrusts the care of her children to her sister-in-law, Uma. Shashi Deshpande exhibits a remarkable aptitude for portraying the intricate workings of her characters' inner psychology. The presence of love in Rani's life also leads to significant disruption and chaos. The decision to leave her husband and daughter in favour of Mahesh Tiwari has resulted in a significant rift between Rani and Roshni, leading to a state of estrangement between the two individuals. Roshni expresses concern regarding Rani's choice to

resume her involvement in the film industry. According to her statement, she expressed that she was abandoned by the individual in question and they subsequently chose to associate with an individual whom she referred to as a derogatory term. Upon completion of her current film project, it is anticipated that she will proceed to engage in similar professional collaborations with Neha and Rohan. The individual in question is expected to resume her involvement in the film industry and depart from her current location. The endeavour to achieve equilibrium between familial responsibilities and professional commitments presents a formidable undertaking for women. The simultaneous management of family and children, alongside the pursuit of a purposeful existence, places individuals in a state of limbo, as they find themselves suspended between two distinct realms. Despite encountering numerous challenges, Rani maintains a resilient attitude and emerges victorious. The protagonist experiences a significant emotional response when the producers decline to cast her in the leading role. However, Devyani employs persuasive tactics to convince them that Rani would be the ideal candidate for the role in the film. Once again, we observe the presence of female solidarity, which serves as a catalyst for individuals to pursue and accomplish their aspirations. In the literary works of Deshpande, it is evident that a prominent theme revolves around the portrayal of discontented female characters. This is exemplified through the depiction of Jaya in *That Long Silence*, Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, and Vanaa in *The Binding Vine*. The individuals in question consistently exhibit a tendency to oscillate in order to uphold equilibrium and concordance between their personal and professional spheres. Rani, much like her counterparts, has experienced a lack of success in both fields and continues to express regret over her past choices and outcomes. However, it is noteworthy that she refrains from attributing her failures to external factors such as others or societal influences. The individual in question displays a high level of confidence in her abilities and a strong sense of determination to establish her professional trajectory in a timely manner. The character of Sindhu presents a notable juxtaposition to that of Rani. Sindhu, the central character of the novel, exhibits a remarkable level of positivity and determination in the face of

adversity. Her life serves as a testament to her unwavering resolve to overcome various challenges and emerge victorious. Despite being afflicted with breast cancer, the individual exhibits a remarkable vitality and enthusiasm for life. The individual expresses a desire to fully experience and derive pleasure from all aspects of existence. The individual in question exhibits a harmonious amalgamation of conventional values and contemporary elements. The individual in question holds the belief that marriage holds significant value within the context of one's life and possesses a strong conviction regarding the sacred nature of this societal institution. The individual in question consistently provides recommendations of male individuals to Devi, with the intention of influencing Devi's decision to pursue marriage. The individual in question refrains from exerting pressure on her counterpart to make decisions, as she holds the belief that a solid marital union should be built upon the foundation of genuine affection. The individual expresses their scepticism towards the idea of entering into marriage solely for the purpose of being married, as they wish to avoid the potential negative outcome of going through divorce proceedings.

Sindhu, an educated woman, holds a strong belief in the importance of love and companionship. As a result, the individual in question enters into matrimony with Keshav subsequent to the demise of her initial spouse. The individual in question exhibits a lack of inclination towards concealing her sexual desires. The author, by means of the character Sindhu, endeavours to propose that individuals should embrace their bodily urges without hesitation, as they are inherent aspects of human nature. The individual in question consistently demonstrates a propensity for adhering to her own personal convictions and desires. Sindhu exhibits a remarkable capacity for love and compassion towards others, as evidenced by her unwavering spirit to embrace life despite the presence of a formidable illness such as cancer. Devi's inherent goodness can also be attributed to her aunt, Sindhu. The vivacious nature of the individual in question serves as a catalyst for the sustenance of vitality and well-being among her close acquaintances. Despite her awareness of the constraints imposed by a patriarchal society, she manages to attain her objectives according to her own terms and conditions.

The current literary work demonstrates the evolution of its characters, previously portrayed as reticent, conflicting, and oppressive, into individuals such as Savi, Shree, Keshav, and Sindhu, who have found happiness and contentment in their own lives and are actively engaged in assisting other characters as well. The inherent beauty of the novel is manifested through the unwavering courage and resolute determination exhibited by characters such as Devi, Rani, Kusum, and Kshama. Despite their unfortunate circumstances that deprive them of happiness, these characters persistently refuse to surrender. Rani's unwavering dedication to establishing her identity as a triumphant heroine exemplifies her resilient spirit, indicating her refusal to acquiesce to her mundane and lacklustre existence any longer. The individual expresses a desire to restore and re-establish a state of former grandeur that is deeply rooted in antiquity. The current literary work demonstrates a noteworthy progression in that both its primary and secondary characters display a notable vitality and possess the ability to make autonomous choices. The individuals under investigation do not exhibit any signs of apprehension regarding their future prospects. According to their beliefs, they adhere to a lifestyle that is defined by their own set of terms and conditions. The novel exhibits a noteworthy degree of eloquence and expression among women belonging to the lower socioeconomic class. Within the earlier novels, the portrayal of characters from impoverished backgrounds, such as Jeeja, Shakutai, and Sulu, exhibited a tendency towards meekness and passivity. These individuals possessed an awareness of their oppressive circumstances, yet refrained from challenging the prevailing patriarchal norms. Devyani, as created by the renowned author Shashi Deshpande, can be regarded as a highly ambitious literary creation. The individual in question exhibits a remarkable ability to discern and comprehend the intricacies of existence, having observed the actualities of life with great attention to detail. As the individual articulates, "Indeed, I have witnessed the phenomena of birth, death, despair, and suffering. It is perplexing as to why I am referred to as innocent." Upon careful analysis, it can be concluded that if Ashok was engaged in inappropriate behavior, then I, too, must have been involved in similar actions. The individual in question expressed a lack of willingness

to exculpate themselves. Similar to the protagonist in Shakespeare's Hamlet, the individual in question finds herself embroiled in a state of internal turmoil regarding her connection with Ashok. According to S. Parveen Sulthana, Devayani is currently entangled in a complex web of cultural and psychological suppression, which prevents her from maintaining her relationship with the individual in question.

CONCLUSION

In the literary work entitled "In the Country of Deceit," a notable endeavour is made to establish a novel world that accommodates both genders. This stands in contrast to preceding literary works where the narrative primarily revolved around the realm of abstract ideas. It can be observed that the characters depicted in the novel exhibit a notable degree of agency and control over the course of their respective destinies. The individuals exhibit a notable level of self-assurance, enabling them to lead independent lives. Notably, they display a lack of remorse regarding the choices they have made. The individuals under consideration exhibit a strong sense of determination and vitality, and they actively question and defy established societal conventions across multiple domains. The individuals in question exhibit dynamic character traits and possess a strong belief in embracing life to its utmost potential. The presence of a resilient spirit is evident in both major and minor characters, as observed through their actions, demonstrating their readiness to confront life's challenges with courage and determination. The characters of Kusum, Devyani, and Sindhu are notable for their exceptional qualities of intellect and compassion. The individuals in question demonstrate a remarkable willingness to take responsibility for their shortcomings. Despite encountering obstacles, they exhibit resilience and determination in confronting the adversities that life presents. The character of Devyani exhibits a remarkable inclination towards maintaining a positive perspective on life, surpassing the portrayal of other characters in previous novels. The individual in question demonstrates a notable level of independence and assertiveness, as they exhibit the capacity to make autonomous decisions and exert considerable effort in the pursuit of personal freedom and individuality. One notable characteristic that distinguishes her is her

propensity to take ownership of her mistakes and reject the inclination to attribute blame to others. Simultaneously, the individual in question demonstrates a cognizance of her decision-making process and possesses an understanding that she will be held accountable for the outcomes resulting from said decisions. Thus, she emerges as the victor in the most authentic and genuine manner. The novel depicts a fictional reality in which individuals possess a heightened awareness of their personal limitations and past disappointments. However, rather than succumbing to despair or resignation, these characters choose to derive valuable insights from their previous errors and subsequently endeavour to construct a novel societal framework characterized by positive affirmation. The individuals in question demonstrate a propensity for comprehending phenomena through a lens that is more attuned to the human experience. Instead of engaging in a futile exercise of assigning blame, they endeavour to cultivate a novel framework rooted in affection and empathy. The fluctuations of the ego in the characters are delineated by the writer, who explores the impact of regressive tradition and culture on them. However, it is evident that there is a discernible evolution in both the male and female characters as portrayed in the writer's subsequent novels. Individuals who possess these qualities exhibit a heightened ability to effectively express themselves and demonstrate a heightened awareness of their emotions. As a result, they are empowered to overcome various obstacles and assert their autonomy.

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