

Autonomy and Patriarchal Resistance in Later Life: A Comparative Study of Ageing Women in the Selected Novels of Shashi Deshpande and Kerstin Ekman

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Abstract

A comparative analysis of representation of ageing women, autonomy and patriarchy resistance in Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time* and Kerstin Ekman's *The Angel House* is conducted. A qualitative, interpretive, and comparative literary analysis is performed using feminist literary criticism, feminist gerontology, and aging studies as methods of analysis. Ageing, patriarchal authority, silence and speech, memory, domestic and communal space, female solidarity, and relational autonomy were the themes explored during this analysis. The findings show that the writers resisted stereotypical representations of ageing women as passive, dependent and invisible. In particular, Deshpande mostly represented later life through family conflicts, marital relations, silences, memories and intergenerational relations, whereas Ekman paid more attention to community, friendship and companionship and social engagement. The study also demonstrate that resistance was not only expressed through open rebellions, but also manifested itself through memory, silences, communication, solidarity, and negotiation of social roles. Thus, the study has shown that later life can be associated with agency, self-recognition, social belonging and resistance. Hence, later life can also be represented as a period of active negotiation of patriarchal structures and definition of autonomy within familial and communal relationships.

Keywords: Ageing Women; Female Autonomy; Patriarchy; Feminist Literary Criticism; Female Resistance

1. INTRODUCTION

Ageing is a natural process that is determined by gender, culture, family, and society's attitudes. Women tend to face patriarchal perceptions about female identity connect with youth, beauty, marriage, motherhood, and caring. Therefore, ageing women might appear socially dependent or invisible rather than independent entities. To overcome such stereotypes, one can use feminist literary criticism and gerontology to explore ageing with regard to gender, power, identity, connections, and social recognition.

In literature, one can trace the ways in which patriarchy affects the lives of women, including marriage, family relations, domesticity, silence, memory, and social connections. At the same time, ageing can be a period of reflection, self-determination, and resistance in literature.

Two authors who provide significant representations of ageing women within particular cultural contexts are Shashi Deshpande and Kerstin Ekman. Shashi Deshpande focuses on family relations, marriage, silence, memory, and intergenerational communication in her book, *A Matter of Time*. As an ageing woman, Kalyani becomes an important representative of family experience and memory. The life of the character is not only the example of the continuing effect of patriarchal constructions but also an opportunity to show endurance and agency of women.

As well as Deshpande, Kerstin Ekman explores women's lives within the social and communal context in the novel, *The Angel House*. In the novel, one can see female relationships, friendship, community and social changes. Thus, it challenges the idea that later life leads to social isolation and lack of significance.

Such a comparative analysis of two novels is helpful to explore how women resist patriarchy and construct their independence. Deshpande focuses on family and intergenerational memory while Ekman pays attention to community and female solidarity. In any case, the authors' works demonstrate that resistance can have more subtle forms, including silence, memory, companionship, endurance, and selfhood.

Therefore, the current research aims to explore how ageing women are represented in the selected novels and analyse the relation between ageing, autonomy, patriarchy, memory, and resistance.

1.1 Research Objectives

To address the central focus of the study, the following research objectives have been formulate:

- To investigate how aging women are portrayed in A Matter of Time and The Angel House.
- To investigate the impact of patriarchy on the lives of women in later life stages.
- To explore the ways of resistance of aging women.
- To compare family, memories, community, and women solidarity in the selected novels.
- To draw parallels between Deshpande's and Ekman's portrayal of aging women.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on these objectives, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- In what ways is the ageing woman portrayed in the novels under discussion?
- How does patriarchy affect the identity of ageing women?
- How do the ageing women manage to resist patriarchy?
- How can resistance be facilitated through memory, silence, friendship, and intergenerational relationships?
- How are the two authors similar/different from each other?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature on ageing, feminism, female identity and literary portrayal was the basis from which the question of the position of elderly women in patriarchal societies can be studied. There were many researches that considered the issues of visibility, sexuality, care, dependence, identity and autonomy in connection with the theme of ageing, as well as studies of the experience of women in families and patriarchal society. These questions have not yet been combined into one comparative study of the autonomy and resistance of ageing women.

2.1 Feminism, Ageing and Female Subjectivity

Intersection between Gender and Ageing emerges as a relevant topic in feminist studies because it was clear that women's experience of old age is determined by cultural ideas about femininity, attractiveness, sexuality, family, and dependency. According to Kumar (2022), in his study of aging women in Bollywood cinema, aging women are marginalised and made invisible. This scholar found out that social and cultural value attached to women was associated with youthfulness, which resulted in displacement of older women into peripheral zones.

Nair et al. (2021) looked at the gendered aspect of elderly care, proving that older women are placed in unequal social and structural circumstances. Review of Nair et al. (2021) paid attention to the impact of gender on access to healthcare, resources, family support, and decisions making. Pickard (2022) also studied double standard of ageing in connection with the gender and sexuality of women. This scholar pointed to specific standards associated with women's sexuality and attractiveness depending on their age.

Thus, these studies prove that female aging involved the issues of visibility, sexuality, dependency, recognition, and agency. Still, their focus remain more social and cultural than literary. The current research expands these issues to the portrayal of aging women in fiction.

2.2 Female Identity and Resistance in Shashi Deshpande

Deshpande's fiction attract extensive critical interest owing to her portrayal of female identity, domesticity, marriage, silence, and patriarchy. In their analysis of Shashi Deshpande's fiction, Sambharwal and Yadav (2022) bring to light the dynamics through which Deshpande's female characters negotiate restrictive social structures in their search for self-identity. Their analysis highlight female self-awareness and resistance as common themes in Deshpande's fictional works.

In analyzing the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Shukla and Agarwal (2023) investigate silence, selfhood, and patriarchal pressure. They discover that silence may be oppressive; it might also provide an opportunity for introspection and self-awareness. Ramasamy et al. (2024) conducted an analysis of *That Long Silence*, which was devoted to identity conflict, patriarchal family structures, resilience, and self-realization. These findings indicate the ways through which Deshpande's women negotiated social norms in an effort to reclaim their identity.

These researchers have identified the significance of identity, silence, and resistance in the works of Deshpande. However, the prevailing criticism concentrated on young and middle-aged females and novels like *That Long Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Comparatively few scholarly studies deal with aging women and late-life independence in the novel *A Matter of Time*. This study is dedicated to Kalyani and her connections with aging, memory, family, and female agency.

2.3 Kerstin Ekman and Women's Social History

Kerstin Ekman links women's lived experience to community life, social history, cultural change, and gender relations. Szewczyk (1996), in her book on Kerstin Ekman's novels, emphasizes the importance of female characters and portrayal of the world of women in societies dominated by men. Such an approach can be applied to *The Angel House* because women's experience is part of a larger picture of social history.

While Shukla (2024), in her discussion of the works of Deshpande and Bharati Mukherjee, analyzed the issues of identity crises, cultural expectations, gender roles, and women's struggle to balance tradition and modernity, her approach provides a valuable tool for exploring culturally constructed female identity. In addition, Wennerscheid (2025), while investigating another work of Kerstin Ekman – *Wolfslichter* (Löpa varg), discusses how the author challenged dominant structures and presented alternative viewpoints.

Such studies allowed establishing the place of Kerstin Ekman as an author concerned about women's life, social history, and power structures. However, relatively little attention was paid to the issue of interdependence between the process of aging, female autonomy, and patriarchal challenge in *The Angel House*. The current study, therefore, explored female agency at an older age via community, memory, companionship, and social interactions.

2.4 Patriarchy and Later-Life Autonomy

Patriarchy continued to play a role in determining women's freedom outside marriage, motherhood, and work contexts. In a qualitative study on aging and sexuality in India, Srivastava and Upadhya (2022) argued against the idea that intimacy becomes insignificant in old age. From their research, cultural stereotypes of aging could limit women's autonomy and identities.

The research of Sudhakar, Jose, and Cherayi (2021) into the availability of healthcare services for older women in South India emphasizes the role of autonomy and the social context. Autonomy can be determined from family, socioeconomic, and institutional situations. In a study on the social invisibility of older women, Westwood (2023) identified the way ageism and sexism worked together to limit visibility and participation. Visibility was identified as a major factor in social justice and autonomy.

These studies suggested that autonomy in old age was not merely about independence in physical matters. It entailed recognition, self-definition, social participation, and meaningful relationships. However, these aspects had never been explored using comparative literary analysis. The current study explored how Deshpande and Ekman depicted aging women struggling with autonomy in patriarchal societies.

2.5 Research Gap

The literature review reveals the connection between the process of ageing and such notions as gender inequality, visibility, sexuality, care, identity, and autonomy. Such research as Kumar (2022), Nair et al. (2021), and Pickard (2022) indicates the gendered aspect of ageing. At the same time, the studies about Deshpande by Sambharwal and Yadav (2022), Shukla and Agarwal (2023), and Ramasamy et al. (2024) reveal female identity, the silencing, and the resistance. The scholarly researches about Ekman were dedicated to her female social experiences, history and the structure of power. However, the gap in the comparative research about the interrelation of ageing, female autonomy, and the resistance to patriarchy in Deshpande and Ekman should be mentioned. Previously the critical analyses focus either on the issue of female identity or on the issue of patriarchy but not on the issues of the elderly women. In addition, the ageing studies were conducted using

sociological, psychological, healthcare, or cultural approaches rather than the literary comparative approach. Thus, the current research fills the existing gap in the literature as it is based on the comparative analysis of *A Matter of Time* and *The Angel House*. It focuses on the issues of ageing, autonomy, the resistance to patriarchy, memory, family, community, and the female solidarity.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the current study is formulated in such a way that it would allow the study of literary representations of aging women from different cultures and patriarchal societies. As the research was based on issues related to identity, autonomy, memory, family, social relations, and resistance, it became evident that the use of qualitative literary methods would be the most suitable one. The methodology consisted of literary analysis and comparative methodology, as it would allow the novels to be studied according to their specific narrative and cultural context and then compared according to some common criteria.

3.1 Research Design

The current study utilise an interpretive, comparative, and literary qualitative research method. The study focus on the depiction of ageing women, patriarchal structure, autonomy, and resistance in Shashi Deshpande's novel *A Matter of Time* and Kerstin Ekman's *The Angel House*. A qualitative research method was appropriate in the current study because the research focus on meanings, experiences, relationships, narratives, and various forms of resistance and not variables that can be measured.

Textual analysis was utilise in the study in order to focus on characterization, narrative voice, dialogue, silence, memory, spaces, and the relationship among characters. Emphasis was put on the way in which the ageing women were depicted within family and society and the ways through which they navigated through the expectations attached to their gender and age.

It is important to note that the research only depended on texts and not interviews, survey, questionnaires, or any other type of human participation. The main source of evidence for the study was selected novels and the secondary sources were scholarly articles on the issue of feminism, aging, and gender within the works of the two authors.

3.2 Primary Texts

The two novels that have been carefully chosen as the main texts for the analysis include *A Matter of Time* by Shashi Deshpande and *The Angel House* by Kerstin Ekman. This choice was made owing to the relevance of the issues discuss in these books to the main themes of the study.

Table 1: *Selected Primary Texts*

Author	Selected Novel	Major Analytical Focus
Shashi Deshpande	<i>A Matter of Time</i>	Kalyani, ageing, marital silence, family authority, memory, and intergenerational relationships
Kerstin Ekman	<i>The Angel House</i>	Older women, women's community, friendship, social history, ageing, and solidarity

These novels being chosen for purposive sampling facilitated cross-cultural comparison without the presupposition that aging in both India and Sweden was the same phenomenon. Rather, the study looked at how the differing social and cultural contexts affect the literary construction of women's identity and independence in later life.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

Three theoretical perspectives, which were compatible, formed the basis for this analysis: feminist literary criticism, feminist gerontology, and ageing studies.

Feminist literary criticism was used as the main theory of analyzing patriarchal order, gender power relations, subjectivity of women, domestic hegemony, and resistance. This theory was helpful for revealing the process of construction of identity of women as determined by social norms and for analyzing how female characters were dealing with patriarchal constraints.

Feminist gerontology was a gender-specific view of aging. The use of this perspective made it possible to take into account the influence of such aspects of life of the elderly as gender, dependence, family role, recognition by society, and structural inequalities.

The theory of ageing studies contributed to analyzing memory, embodiment, social visibility, dependence, interpersonal relations, and cultural representation of aging. All the perspectives mentioned above made it possible to analyze aging as a social and cultural phenomenon rather than a biological one.

3.4 Analytical Categories

The selected novels were analyzed according to six primary analysis criteria:

1. Ageing and Social Visibility – the portrayal of the identities, status, visibility and recognition of the elderly women within their families and in society.
2. Patriarchal Family and Social Authority – the impact of family structure, gender, tradition and established authorities on the lives of women.
3. Silence and Speech – the value of silence, communication, expression, and refusal as potential manifestations of submission, negotiation, or resistance.
4. Memory and Intergenerational Identity – the contribution of personal and family memory to the formation of identity and intergenerational relations.
5. Domestic and Communal Space – the influence of homes, families, neighbourhoods, and communities on women's autonomy and social status.
6. Female Solidarity and Resistance – the significance of female companionship and relationship between women as the means of establishing the space of solidarity and resistance.

Such analysis criteria enabled a consistent approach to analyzing both novels, taking into account the differences in the chosen narrative technique.

3.5 Comparative Method

Each novel was individually analysed with regards to the way ageing women, female autonomy, family systems, and patriarchy are portrayed. Then, the observations were classified according to the six criteria and compared in the two novels. The comparison was concerned with both similarities and differences with regard to the portrayal of family, memory, community, female relations, and resistance.

The method of comparison used was interpretive and not statistical. It aimed not at formulating any numerical relationship but rather concentrated on the recurrent themes, characterization, patterns of narration, symbolism and culturally define representations. Such an approach allowed for the discovery of the common features of the representation of female autonomy by Deshpande and Ekman and also those unique to one of the authors.

3.6 Limitations

This research was based on two novels chosen specifically and thus could not claim to represent all of the literary works of Shashi Deshpande and Kerstin Ekman. Moreover, because of the interpretative character of the analysis of literary texts, some meanings of particular texts can be interpreted in various ways. Furthermore, literary representations cannot be considered direct sociological evidence of the reality of the experiences of older women in India and Sweden.

For this reason, in this study, the novels were primarily used as literary and cultural texts which enabled posing a number of questions related to ageing, patriarchy, independence, identity, memory and resistance. Nevertheless, such a comparison prove to be quite helpful in this context.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A comparative study of the two novels suggested that the depiction of aging women was more focus on their significance as social and emotional beings than as passive entities. It is found out that both novels could illustrate how the patriarchal

conventions continued to influence the lives of women in their adult age, although these influences varied based on the specific cultural and narrative setting of the two books. While Deshpande highlight family, marriage, silence, and the memories shared through generations, Ekman paid more attention to community, female friendships, social history, and company. In spite of all these differences, both authors offered the depiction of an age during which women were able to maintain their identities and resist.

4.1 Representation of Ageing Women

One of the important discoveries of the research was the idea that both Deshpande and Ekman opposed the cultural invisibility usually attributed to old women. The authors refused from depicting old age either as a loss of vitality, dependency or social value and instead depicted older women as emotionally, socially and relationally significant.

In *A Matter of Time*, Kalyani is the figure of an aging woman whose identity is constructed through her long-term experiences of being married and raising her family. The significance of Kalyani goes beyond her status of a senior member of the household. She is a storage of memories and personal experience that precedes the new generation. The novel thus connects the present with previous generations' experiences of love, suffering, responsibility and survival.

Thus, the age of Kalyani does not make her irrelevant. On the contrary, her life experience gives her a unique kind of authority. She occupies the position where knowledge gained during her whole life can be considered a kind of power. So, Deshpande questions the notion that the social value of women diminishes with age.

Ekman's work is closer to the community level. In *The Angel House*, the old women continue to be the part of a network of social relations instead of representing only isolated or dependent individuals.

Table 2: *Comparative Representation of Ageing Women*

Dimension	Shashi Deshpande	Kerstin Ekman
Primary context	Family	Community
Major ageing figure	Kalyani	Older women within the community
Source of authority	Experience and memory	Experience and collective relationships
Major patriarchal pressure	Marriage and family	Social and gendered structures
Major form of agency	Endurance, silence, familial authority	Friendship, conversation, communal participation
Role of memory	Intergenerational family memory	Collective and social memory
Representation of old age	Experience and survival	Continuity and companionship

This comparison reveal that both authors rejected equating ageing with vanishing. Deshpande define the significance of older women using their family background and experiences, whereas Ekman stressed their continued involvement in society and interactions.

4.2 Patriarchy and the Experience of Later Life

The analysis indicate that patriarchal constructions still played a role even after the women involved went through all the traditional stages of marriage, motherhood, and domestic work.

A Matter of Time show Kalyani's relationships with her husband, Shripati, as an example of the impact of patriarchal structures even in the later years of women's lives. The extended period of silence between the couple was more than just an argument. It was a manifestation of the emotional effects of the relations that were full of difficulties concerning communications and power. That shows how patriarchal structures can have such long-term effects on people's lives.

Kalyani remain part of the family structure because of her experience and involvement. She could not be considered an absolutely marginal person because of that. That means that the woman in question was a good example of the problem – a woman of advanced age could stay under patriarchal structures while still having some authority in family relations.

Similarly, Ekman take this matter from the family sphere to the broader social environment. In *The Angel House*, women's lives were connect with society, its institutions, traditions, and gender constructions, but they did not give them any power formally. Still, the relationships between these women give them other sources of belongingness and support.

The analysis helped to differentiate between patriarchy in the family and society described by Ekman. Nonetheless, both of the works presented the same connection between autonomy in later years and the previous inequalities in women's lives.

4.3 Silence as a Form of Resistance

The element of silence was one that was used to denote another aspect of agency especially through Deshpande's portrayal of Kalyani. The fact that Kalyani's silence was sustained for a long time made her seem submissive at first but later this element of silence take on another meaning in the narration.

Silence can be bring about by oppressive circumstances and is hence a manifestation of oppression in society. On the other hand, conscious silence can be considered as another method of exercising some sort of control. This means that silence in Kalyani's case was a matter of both oppression and agency.

Deshpande does not portray silence as an empowering concept. It is rather shown to be a negotiated reaction to difficult conditions in marriage and society. The significance of this concept therefore depended on the situation under which it arose and the level of control of the woman.

The treatment in Ekman is an example of the opposite case whereby communication in the novel '*The Angel House*' led to sharing of experiences.

The contrast can be summarised as:

- Deshpande — silence as negotiated agency.
- Ekman — conversation and companionship as collective agency.

Although their narrative strategies differed, both writers challenged the isolation of women and presented alternative ways through which female experience could acquire significance.

4.4 Domestic Space and Female Authority

Domestic and communal spaces were an essential factor in the formation of representations of female independence. Traditionally, under patriarchy, women were confined to the domestic sphere; however, this sphere could become at once the place of limitation and power.

The home in *A Matter of Time* was a place of memory, conflict, responsibility, and emotional background. Kalyani's relation to the domestic space show how women were able to gain power in spaces to which they were traditionally restricted. In fact, the woman's independence did not imply her physical separation from the family. On the contrary, it was achieved through her relationships and status within the family.

Ekman approached the issue of space much more broadly. The community became the setting for female socialization. Relationships between women helped to create the spaces of affinity and belonging in a patriarchal world.

Table 3: *Space and Autonomy*

Spatial Dimension	Deshpande	Ekman
Primary space	Home and family	Community and social environment
Nature of restriction	Domestic and marital	Social and institutional
Female agency	Negotiation within family	Collective participation
Alternative space	Intergenerational relationships	Women's friendships
Meaning of space	Memory and family identity	Social belonging and solidarity

The analysis reveal that the places which were earlier used to signify limitations of women could now be turned into negotiation of their agency. While Deshpande focus on the domestic domain, Ekman talked about women's agency in public space.

4.5 Memory and Intergenerational Identity

Memory is found to be an especially important element in the representation of aging since aging itself entailed an intimate relation between past and present. Memory, therefore, endowed older women's experience with enduring relevance.

As seen in *A Matter of Time*, Kalyani's experiences link her generation to that of Sumi and Aru. The younger generation did not only inherit familial relations but also unresolved emotional issues from the previous generation. Thus, the life experience of Kalyani becomes a means of intergenerational learning.

The novel implies the continued influence of the past on the present. At the same time, memory of past experiences helps younger women to recognize patterns of patriarchal behavior and question its recurrence. Memory thus becomes a means of both personal and intergenerational learning.

Ekman's depiction of memory transcended to a more social level since the experiences of women enabled them to understand community history in ways which were not possible through official or political representations of history. Domestic and social experiences of survival, friendship, and social change were thus forms of historical memory. Memory was thus a form of resistance in both novels inasmuch as it helped to preserve women's experiences from forgetting.

4.6 Female Solidarity and Intergenerational Relationships

Female solidarity became an important source of agency as well. Through the story of Deshpande, it became evident that the relationship between different generations of women played a crucial role in the transfer of experiences and knowledge from one generation to another.

The importance of the experiences of Kalyani gained meaning when it come to her relationship with Sumi and Aru. The inter-generational link provide evidence that the patriarchy can be transferred from one generation to another but awareness of it can be transferred as well. Experiences of older women could help younger women understand different types of inequalities.

Through women's friendships and communal relationship, Ekman provide a different model altogether. Women in the older generation could create networks of friendship and companionship that were not entirely based on patriarchy.

Table 4: Female Solidarity in the Selected Novels

Dimension	<i>A Matter of Time</i>	<i>The Angel House</i>
Primary relationship	Intergenerational women	Women within the community
Main function	Transmission of experience	Companionship and belonging
Source of strength	Memory	Collective interaction
Resistance mechanism	Shared knowledge	Social solidarity
Relationship to patriarchy	Negotiates family structures	Creates alternative communal space

4.7 Autonomy as a Relational Concept

Another important finding was that the autonomy of the selected novels was not merely about independence. In both novels, there is a sense of relational autonomy, where individual agency was define within the context of relations such as those in the family, among friends, or within the community.

Kalyani's agency was based on the family relations she had. She demonstrate her autonomy through having a feeling of being herself even amidst the constraints imposed by her married status. Therefore, her agency was not only shaped by her husband's actions but also by the norms for an ageing woman.

Similarly, the elderly women in Ekman's novel found support from other women within the community. Participating in the community does not take away from the individuality of the woman involved. On the contrary, having companions allows them to have a sense of belonging.

Thus, the analysis show several aspects of relational autonomy including sustaining oneself, making choices in relationships, keeping one's experience, refusing to be dependent on patriarchy, and redefining socially constructed roles.

This concept is particularly useful when talking about ageing women, as in the course of their lives, women become more dependent. However, the novels provide examples of how dependence in certain fields does not preclude autonomy in others.

4.8 Resistance Beyond Open Rebellion

The final main result of analysis was that resistance in both novels was largely built into the everyday routine. None of the writers relied on rebellious struggle or confrontation solely. Resistance come through the practices of self-protection, remembering, communicating, relationship building, and social engagement.

Resistance might consist in keeping one's identity, managing speech and silence, remembering, forming meaningful relationships, helping other women, being in charge of domestic or interpersonal relationships, and refusing social invisibility completely.

It was especially significant for ageing women. Traditional interpretations of female freedom considered resistance as a practice of young women who were mobile, sexual, independent physically, and separated from their constraining environment. Such interpretation of resistance might overlook women's agency which worked differently.

Deshpande and Ekman provide a wider definition of resistance. Through their ageing characters, they show that resistance was possible within limitations rather than escaping from them.

Table 5: *Comparative Forms of Resistance*

Form of Resistance	Deshpande	Ekman
Silence	Significant	Less central
Speech	Intergenerational communication	Collective conversation
Memory	Family history	Social history
Domestic authority	Strong	Secondary
Female solidarity	Intergenerational	Communal
Resistance to invisibility	Experience and familial significance	Social participation
Autonomy	Relational and family-centred	Relational and community-centred

The results illustrated that the concept of resistance did not constitute a unified and monolithic experience. Resistance was contingent upon cultural background, social position, relationships and narrative form. While Deshpande focus mainly on family, memory, silence and intergenerational relations as spaces where women's resistance to patriarchy can occur, Ekman highlight the importance of community, talking, friendship and social belonging in women's lives. However, regardless of their different perspectives, both authors presented later life as an important period when women have a chance to maintain their identity and resist oppression.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research shows that *A Matter of Time* and *The Angel House* subvert the traditional portrayal of aging women who are perceived as passive, dependent, and invisible. In *A Matter of Time*, Deshpande has portrayed the life of Kalyani with the help of her family, marital problems, silence, memories, and generation gaps. On the other hand, Ekman's *The Angel House* emphasize the importance of community, friendship, company, and participation in society. Both the authors prove that patriarchal structures affect the lives of women even when they became elderly after their marriages and motherhood years,

but at the same time, they portrayed that the old women could negotiate within those structures through their agency. Silence, memories, camaraderie among females, conversations, and relational power were seen as the ways of resistance by these two authors. Hence, autonomy is not seen as the absolute freedom of women but their relational autonomy wherein they preserve their identity while negotiating with familial and societal relationships.

- Focus on ageing women: In future research in literary studies, aging women need to be considered as identity agents who resist patriarchal structures.
- Cross-cultural comparisons: Comparative analysis of the issues of aging and patriarchy can be conducted in literary and cultural studies.
- Interdisciplinarity: Future studies need to integrate feminist literary studies, aging studies, and feminist gerontology.

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