

**SOCIETY'S INNATE AND INDUCED INHIBITIONS INFEST
WOMEN'S LIFE: A STUDY OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S
THE BINDING VINE**



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ABSTRACT:

Women, the foundation source of beauty and bravery, have proved their mettle in all walks of life. Indian English Literature is not untouched. Women novelists in English occupy a prestigious position. Shashi Deshpande is one of the prominent names in this area. She has sensitively treated typical Indian themes and has portrayed the problems and plights of contemporary middle-class women with rare competence. Shashi Deshpande's The Binding Vine how Urmī, the protagonist of the novel a lecturer in a college by profession, resolves to carry the burdens of the pains and sufferings of other women along with

her own. Her anxieties and anguishes are manifold when she comes across the society's distorted viewpoints regarding many sensitive and serious issues related to women including rape.

KEYWORDS: Male counterparts, Middle-class Women, Motif, Motivation, Ambitious, Perpetrator.

INTRODUCTION :

Nowadays, Indian women novelists constitute a major segment in Indian English Literature and stand out the women's deteriorated condition due to certain hard-and-fast norms and conventions of the society. They have "made their in the English fiction"¹. They are determined to raise the position of women at par with their male counterparts since they are "highly conscious of the women's liberation movement."²

They try to demonstrate, with all their disinterested endeavour and altruism, the victimization of women under various contexts and situations. Their focus is on the trauma and tribulations inflicted on women which are neither palpable nor palatable to a civilized society. Evaluating the themes of women writers, K. Sandhya remarks, "Their main revolt is against male-chauvinism, patriarchy and their hue and cry is for identity, equality and a democratic way of life where they are treated like human beings on par with men."³ They have projected woman as an "individual challenging her existential survival."⁴

Undoubtedly, the Indian woman has already started her journey to establish herself as a full-fledged individual equipped with self-identity and economic freedom. Viewing on the place and position of contemporary Indian women, Veena Singh says, "She wants to bestir herself to shake off the sloth of centuries which thwarts her personality."⁵

Being a sailor of the same boat Shashi Deshpande incorporates the problems of Indian middle-class educated into her novels. To her, literature is a serious activity. Her writings contain

her moralities as she reveals in her essay titled 'Literature and Morality', "I can raise questions and doubts about things, I can communicate certain ideas to the world about the world we live in, I can offer my meaning of life."⁶ She, in an interview with S. PrasannaSree, also proclaims, "There are struggles of being woman, in this patriarchal society, it is hard. So this is the picture I present in my novels."⁷

The canvas of *The Binding Vine* is larger and more appealing than that of the other novels. Urmila, the protagonist and lecturer by profession, has not confined herself to the matters of her family but involved her in the endeavour to help other women. Revealing her motif and motivation behind this novel, Shashi Deshpande asserts:

For the first and perhaps the only time in my life, a novel came out of a real incident, a real woman. This was a rape of a young nurse that had taken place in the hospital in which my husband had worked in Bombay....The girl,...had gone into a coma and was still, over ten years later, in hospital, almost a vegetable. But this horrifying act was only the seed of the novel, which went on to burgeon into a large tree with many branches. And again I knew I needed a narrator to tell the story of this girl; I could not do it directly. Even while this character—who became Urmieventually—was taking shape in my mind, Mira entered the scene, Mira, a poet who died young, Mira, who became for me the most important person in the novel, holding the different characters, the different strands together.⁸

Three stories are interwoven imperceptibly by keeping Urmila at the centre. Firstly, Urmila's grief caused by the death of her one year old daughter Anu is heart-rending. She becomes dull and dumb as Vanna urges her, "Anything. Just speak. Don't keep it bottled within you. Why don't you cry, Urmi? It's unnatural not to cry."⁹

Secondly, Mira, Urmila's mother-in-law who died after giving birth to a son in the prime age of her youth, stands as a classic example of the multitude of unfortunate women who are forced into loveless marriage and finally succumb to the lust of their husbands. Her diary and poems discovered decades later reveal to Urmila that her mother-in-law was subjected to rape in marriage.

Thirdly, Kalpana, a young and ambitious girl, is doomed to be a victim of a horrific act of violence and rape. The perpetrator is no other than her *mousaji* who proposed her with the consent of Shakutai, her mother and Sulu, her *mausiji*. But when Kalpana takes her decision not to marry him, she is not only oppressed by the two women but also raped by the man who was rejected. Shakutai, being afraid of the consequences of proclaiming rape on her daughter, gives an analysis of society's attitude towards victims of rape. She says to the doctor:

If a girl's honor is lost, what's left? The girl does not have to do anything wrong, people will always point a finger at her...even if it is true, keep it to yourself, don't let anyone know of it, I have another daughter, what will become of her...? (BV 59)

Urmila provides moral support to Shakutai and makes her realize the inevitability of raising women's voice against such inhuman and inimical male-chauvinistic acts.

The women in this novel are thrust into a state of disorientation and helplessness. They know that they cannot achieve anything by open rebellion—"laws can't change people's lives" (BV 38). Life seems to be a "*Chakravyuha*" (BV 202). What is more, the novel of Shashi Deshpande studied here exposes victimization of Indian women under different situations and contexts. The social and cultural disabilities are, in many cases, considered as the code of values of our country. In this system, woman is treated second to man. So man assumes that he has got the prerogative to dominate the opposite sex. Preoccupied with this illogical doctrine, man finds opportunities to inflict his superiority on his female-counterpart.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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