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Unveiling Women's Struggles: An Analysis of Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine*

Author: A. Angelin Jayahar Beulah, Research Scholar (Reg No. 21111274012011), Department of English, St. John's College, Palayamkottai, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. Email ID – 007angelins@gmail.com

Co-author: Dr. K. Vijila, Associate Professor & Research Supervisor, Department of English, St. John's College, Palayamkottai, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. Email ID – kvijila44@gmail.com

Abstract

The motivation behind writing this research article is to highlight the issue of a woman's helplessness. Irrespective of a woman's function as a wife, mother, daughter, or sister, the community expects her to be submissive, timid, and gentle at all times. *The Binding Vine* by Shashi Deshpande seeks to highlight the transformations that the human race is going through. But it will take thousands of kilometers for these modifications to become evident. In addition, this study tries to critically analyze the feminist assertions made by modern Indian women novelists. The study examines how the novels' shift in general literary perception, paying particular attention to women's developing awareness. It also analyses their battle against a predominantly male, tradition-driven society.

Keywords: Woman, feminist, submissive, awareness, male, battle.

Introduction

Shashi Deshpande is one of the most innovative writers of contemporary times. Her depiction of the mental health issues faced by Indian career women has greatly benefited Indian writing in English. She talks about the centuries-long mistreatment of women, which caused them to suffer profoundly, silently, and submissively. In the harsh world of

gender discrimination, Deshpande's tales show how the protagonists struggle in opposition to it. They try to establish their own identities. Instead of protesting to revolt, she supports insurrection to the extent and in the essential sector. The focus of Shashi Deshpande's work has always been on Indian women and their problems concerning contemporary India. Her work addresses issues and ideas that arise from women's standing at the crossroads of a conventional and modernizing society. With a rare depth of empathy, she portrays the plight of the well-educated middle-class Indian women. They are torn between their private aspirations and the patriarchal restrictions that hold them back.

Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Binding Vine* explores the issue of middle-class female protagonists in an environment ruled by men. She has limited chances to voice her concerns, which is strikingly similar to her earlier works. Although the premise of this particular novel appears to be quite similar to that of her other works, a deeper study uncovers some intriguing variances. The protagonist's significance is emphasized in every other novel that is read. Each character serves to underscore her feelings and concerns.

The idea of how women are portrayed in *The Binding Vine* is the focus of this paper. Women have been the subject of patriarchal rule and submission since the earliest days of history. Women's total subjugation and self-awareness are continually taken for granted in the culture of patriarchy. She lacks a clear sense of self, and neither the family nor society values or recognizes the sacrifices she made to provide for the family. As a result, she struggles mightily to exist in a home that never values the ceaseless sacrifices women make to secure the well-being of the family. In his writings, Shashi Deshpande explores the issues and worries that modern Indian middle-class women experience. Her protagonists are perceptive, clever, and incredibly sensitive. Tears from her books depict the protagonists' amazing triumph over their melancholy and hopelessness in the patriarchal setting. In the 1993 book *The Binding Vine*, an educated working woman cultivates a feeling of belonging within her community.

The tale depicts the anguish of a married woman who is sexually assaulted. She also portrays the predicament of women who endure sexual assault outside of marriage. These women prefer to suffer in silence to respect their families. Shashi Deshpande creates empathetic characters. We cannot claim that she creates remarkable, long-lasting female heroines. Her protagonists are everyday women who face life's ups and downs, experience frustration and despair. But they ultimately learn to accept it. The eventual healing they can achieve after examining their life has value that strengthens them. Urmi's strength can be felt when she says, "I am not going to break," (Deshpande19). By the end of the narrative, Urmi has changed from the tearful, grieving Urmi to a stronger woman. Deshpande does not romanticize the protagonist. Her women are everyday individuals.

The universe of *The Binding Vine* is populated by three generations of women. Like Deshpande's earlier works, this one's plot goes beyond spotlighting the issues the one or two main characters face; rather, the author concentrates on the collection of women as a whole. She is adamant that the status of women has not altered throughout time. Along with Inni, the moms of Mira, Vanna, and Urmila are all descended from the first generation of women. Vanna, Urmila, Shakutai, and Sulu constitute the second generation. Third-generation characters include Mandira, Anu, Urmila's daughter, and Kalpana. Every one of these women is crucial to the narrative. Understanding each of these people in great detail is feasible. Because Urmila is the key figure who ties them all together. Urmila, the female protagonist of *The Binding Vine*, is the focal point of the story. She is a professor at a college and the wife of Kishore, an officer of the merchant navy. Through Urmila's character, the writer has hinted at the real liberty of women.

The main narrator of the story is Urmi. It is she who drives the plot. Shashi Deshpande gives her the freedom to voice her thoughts and grow. At the start of the narrative, we get to know a distraught and mourning Urmi, who by the conclusion discovers courage and a new

perspective on life. This is how her mind is evolving. The additional characters suffer and are not given the chance to grow, despite not being wooden. They advance the ideology and structure of the book. Urmila, the protagonist of the book, is in charge of combining the stories of Inni, Priti, Shakutai, Sulu, Vanaa, and Mira. Urmila can never truly get over her thoughts of her girl baby who passed away. She is aware that she owes her son, who is concerned about her. She cries out for her affection, a duty.

Urmila has clear opinions about women's rights. She does not flaunt her feminism, but she feels that everyone should be aware of Kalpana's predicament. She informs the media and hopes to publish Mira's poetry to give women a voice. In theory, she is right, but in practice, this kind of settlement is untenable. She believed that women struggle because they cannot be themselves. Anger can be expressed orally, in writing, or through the media. Urmila is keen about publishing Mira's poems, even though the writer conceals details concerning Mira's success or failure in doing so. Because Kishore and Vanaa are members of the family and the community, Urmila must show them the respect they deserve. This illustrates her connections to her community and family.

Now on shifting the focus to Mira, Urmila's mother-in-law is Mira, Kishore's mother. She died giving birth, abandoning her little boy alone. The only ways Mira's character can be observed are through her notebooks, poetry, and other writings, as well as her opinions on them. By employing this technique, Mira is rendered as a smart, intelligent young woman who was far ahead of her time. She was a vibrant, attractive young woman wedded to a handsome young man who was so smitten with her that he could seek her family for approval to wed her. It might be considered a happy marriage if Mira had consented to it on masculine terms, which she did not want to do.

She held her views about existence and was dissatisfied with her husband's obsessive devotion. Despite her love of writing, Mira was afraid of being laughed at when she shared her poems with others. Mira's diary entry conveys her urge to write, her fear of ridicule, and her uncertainty about what is right and wrong. She says thus, "Will I be able to write like this in the future? I'm positive that this is what I want to be able to write after hearing him speak today. However, I doubt I ever will be able to. Fortunately, I never say this aloud. They're going to laugh at me" (Deshpande 65–66). Mira was captivated by Venu's poetry. The poet's response was not encouraging. The poet's response was not encouraging. Men's response was typical: women are not needed to be writers. Their poetry is aimed at "birth to children" (Deshpande 127).

Mira finds it annoying that males think of women as producers. She is so certain that she does not want to have her mother's characteristics. She even considers her modesty unpleasant. Mira was a very feminine woman despite all of her anger, despair, and fears. She loved life and wanted to live a full one. Her constant worry, as she wrote, was that she may become less of herself. It seems to be a kind of foresight. Mira's pregnancy ignited her zest for life. The "spring of life" stirred inside her, and she felt satisfied. It was the thrill of being on the verge of motherhood. Mira was happy as a mother, even if she was never happy as a wife. Nevertheless, the author prevents us from finding out because Akka replaces Mira after she dies during delivery.

Among the group, Shakutai is the most dissatisfied. Soon after they were married, despite his promises to give her a happier life, her husband deserts her and leaves her in her father's residence. But she quickly comes to terms with reality and realizes that he is a meek, inconsequential man. After delivering her three children in the interval, she decides to seek employment for the well-being of her children. Despite her best attempts to keep the relationship going, her spouse dumps her for another lady. Since her partner left, she is to

be responsible for every issue that arises in the home. This is because, in our society, a failing marriage is typically attributed to the woman.

Shakutai's sister Sulu has experienced trauma of her own. She is very compassionate, kind, encouraging, and supportive toward her miserable sister. She was even ready to assume responsibility for rearing Kalpana, but it did not seem possible considering how much her husband Prabhakar wanted Kalpana. Kalpana's marriage to Prabhakar was advised by Sulu, who was under tremendous pressure to marry her spouse. Kalpana would face hardships for the rest of her life if she did not marry her mousaji, which is why Shakutai and Sulu themselves wanted her to do so. Kalpana chose not to marry him, contrary to what these women thought, and as a result, the man she abandoned violently attacked her. After discovering her husband's terrible deed, Sulu, who personifies both love and obedience, takes her own life.

The audience does not get to meet Kalpana until her damaged body has been taken to the hospital. The writer's mother, Shakutai, is assigned to play her daughter. Kalpana's personality is eventually influenced by Shakutai's outbursts. The only person who can confirm Kalpana's independence, stubbornness, style, and self-awareness is her. She is portrayed by the police officer and the doctors as a crooked young woman. Urmi, though, has some uplifting remarks. It depicts Kalpana as a vibrant, impressionable girl who loved life. Thus, Kalpana becomes an immovable reality. Kalpana had her life ambitions and objectives. She showed courage by shooing away Prabhakar's advances, declining his marriage request, and declaring her decision to marry the boy of her choice. She suffers for using her free will, having aspirations, and defining herself as more than just a woman. Kalpana gives contradictory messages to young girls, even if she is still unconscious: she might be a role inspiration for some and a cautionary tale to others.

Deshpande does not make the female characters in her stories appear more powerful than they truly are. The woman that she presents is an intangible being, an unfinished self. Whether it is her father, sibling, or spouse, her female character needs someone to provide for her. The female characters created by Shashi Deshpande are meek, docile, and accommodating. They are depicted as typical middle-class Indian women, no doubt, but they also exhibit clear signs of feminism's awakening and rebellion in their attitudes and behaviors. They are not belligerent, violent rebels; rather, they are quiet, humble, confident, and in no way subjugated. Even in quiet, Indian women, as portrayed by Shashi Deshpande, speak out on themes that are critical to women's emancipation, including sovereignty over their sexuality, education, and ethical decision-making. Women across the globe have been in a contradictory position, and newly educated Indian women in particular.

Despite being the family's pivotal figure and leader, she endured a life of enslavement, subordination, misery, and repression. But as of late, she has begun to recognize her goal, her anguish, and her rights and obligations. The predicament of Indian women, who are unable to even pursue justice, is reflected in the fact that women are targets of male lust and are reluctant to report the crime solely because other sisters in the family are probably married. Whether those who are conformists, unconventional people, introverts, or extroverts, the characters show the struggles faced by Indian women, thoroughly reveal societal ills and call awareness to the injustices and atrocities levied out to women.

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