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Emancipation of Women in the Select Novels of Shashi Deshpande

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Abstract---Shashi Deshpande has been the champion of the concerns and struggles of women. She, in her works, very realistically depicts the various roles a woman plays in course of her life as a wife, a mother, a sister, a daughter, a daughter-in-law and so on. Her works can't be called directly feminist since her works are not against man, in fact, her works portrays the dilemma of the new educated modern working women in the conventional Indian society. This research paper attempts to analyse the emancipating of women protagonist in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *That Long Silence* (1989), and *The Binding Vine* (2002), all depicts the women world in an authentic, realistic and credible manner. This article highlights the fact that it is not the circumstances that contribute to the negation of women's rights; but the fact is that it is their women folk who polarize their dig at the emancipation of women. It also attempts at highlighting the fact that women are denied rights not only because of the circumstances but also because women themselves suppress other women and use men as instruments.

Keywords---exploitation, women empowerment, subjugation, suppression.

Introduction

Woman's struggle to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and the most important of all as the human being forms the major concern of Shashi Deshpande's novels. Shashi Deshpande doesn't want her writing to be called feminist writing because she feels her novels are not a man versus woman issue at all. She portrayed the new Indian woman and her dilemma in the tradition-

bound, male-dominated Indian society. Being a woman herself, she sympathizes with women and her main apprehension is for human relationships. Women make half of humanity and, without any doubt, they are equally important to keep the universe moving. Men and women must be treated alike, nevertheless, the same hasn't been observed by humanity. The world has never been able to treat the two sexes alike. The creator has created the two sections equal in importance, differing only in the chores these two sections are supposed to perform. However, the male counterparts usurped the power on the basis of physical strength and relegated women to the secondary position. The only jobs assigned to women were child-rearing and household chores. The secondary position of women also led to their exploitation in the society.

Shashi Deshpande's debut novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* was published in 1980. The novel depicts the state of Indian women in a very realistic way. It studies the attitude and conduct of women in Indian middle-class families. The novel has been translated into various languages Spanish and other Russian languages. The author portrays modern, career oriented, middle-class women who are sensitive towards the rapidly changing world. These women are aware of the subjugation that they have to suffer at the hands of their male counterparts, and they are ready to protest against them in order to search for their identity, but ultimately, they find themselves inert against the well-trenched conducts of the society.

In *That Long Silence*, the protagonist Jaya journeys towards self-actualization. The novel embarks on with the receptive appearance of the solitude of a woman and the poignant question of the eventual purpose of her life in the milieu of her familial bond. The novel is an individual's journey in search of one's true self who confronts the gender-oriented tradition. It depicts the plight of a wife who suffers silently in the name of family. Marriage is still a social necessity, where women seek security and men respectability. In her early married life, Jaya had yielded her decisions to her husband. The forced isolated stay in Dadar flat facilitates her to reconsider her life built around the needs of a husband only. Jaya's creativity provides her an outlet for her dissatisfaction. The novel ends with a renewal of faith. Jaya's decision to wipe out the silence and have a balanced contented life is a decision in the right direction. Self-actualization is possible if a woman decides to be herself, to reveal the genuine value of her free and inborn individuality in its entirety.

Likewise in *The Binding Vine* the novelist shows women who are deprived of love and happiness in this male-dominated society. The novel gives the direct account of rape within and outside marriage; with Mira suffering under marital rape and Kalpana being rape by her uncle when she refuses to marry him. Economic deprivations and rape become the main instrument used to curb the spontaneous growth of women in the novel. It is here that Shashi Deshpande brings out the protagonist Urmila (Urmi) to fight against such oppressions; recreating the experiences of her dead mother-in-law, Mira. Therefore, the novel is an educated, career conscious women's search for the role changes in this strange world under the changing circumstances. It is the novelist's struggle to assert the issues of equality, freedom and equal rights against female oppression.

Materials and Methods

Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita, the protagonist, and her mother are at variance with each other. Sarita, from the very beginning, has a notion that she is an unwanted child. As a child, she writes in her notebook, "Nobody likes me. Nobody cares for me. Nobody wants me." This feeling becomes still deeper after the death of her young brother, Dhruva. Her mother indicts her for Dhruva's death and the father fails to rise to support her. She later gets married to a man of her own choice and makes herself alienated from her parents. The alienation is to such an extent that she is not even informed about her mother's death. When she returns, after fifteen years, to her father's house, she is afraid lest she should not be allowed to enter the house. She keeps the rickshaw puller waiting and asks her father, "Can I come in, Baba?" Later she complains to her father, "That's your way, isn't it, Baba? All these years I suppose it was...Let's forget about Saru. It was as if there was no Saru at all. No there was no Saru, you never had a daughter, because she was an inconvenience, a nuisance, and it suited you not to have her there."

While looking for something, Sarita accidentally opens up her mother's cupboard and finds some souvenirs which are presented to married women by their mothers on special occasions. She remembers that her friend was invited in the eighth month of pregnancy and several ceremonies were done and her mother gave many gifts to her. However, Sarita realizes that she hasn't been fortunate enough to get such tokens of love from her mother. She says to herself with tears in her eyes, "I never had this." She was after all an unforgiven daughter.

Sarita's mother, as portrayed by Deshpande, is an old-fashioned housewife. She remains in the kitchen for most of the time and would go to her bedroom like an overnight guest. She is utterly shocked and shaken on the death of her son. She, like any other illiterate and uneducated women, indicts her daughter for the death of her son. She alienates herself from her daughter forever. There is so much antagonism between the mother and the daughter that they never speak kindly about each other. Her mother vehemently opposes her idea of studying in Bombay. Her oft-repeated arguments are that a girl like Saru would not be able to live in Bombay alone and that they are not rich enough to find money for both, her education and marriage. She is a conservative and reactionary woman for whom marriage of the daughter is far more important than her education. She remains unsatisfied all her life. She even moans when her husband receives a 'tray' as a retirement gift. She thinks that the gift didn't correspond to the long service her husband had offered. Sarita's mother is in a way indifferent to women's cause. Once a neighbour tells her that a woman was tied to a peg in a stable for ten years. Instead of expressing anger against such a cruelty, she says that the woman might have deserved such a treatment. Perhaps, this lack of sensibility in her does not allow her to make up with her daughter.

On the other hand, Sudhir Dixit's mother, Sarita's Mavshi, presents a different picture of Indian women. She is an affectionate woman. She has full quota of five children of her own, yet she is very kind and loving to Sarita in her childhood - "A motherly-type with an overflow of motherliness from her own five children for Saru." After the death of Dhruva, she takes Sarita to her house lest she should

feel lonely and neglected. She combs Saru's hair and treats her like her own daughter. Saru becomes so fond of her that she is not willing to return to her own house even after several days' stay with Mavshi. However, Mavshi becomes an entirely different person post her husband's death. When Saru meets her Mavshi later, she finds her to be an entirely different personality. Her affection, concern, interest, curiosity – all seem to have disappeared. Sarita says, "Where had it all gone, the old affection, the concern, the interest, the curiosity? There was nothing left. She lived in her own world of querulous complaints, carrying on a perennial warfare against her son and daughter-in-law, seeing the world in black and white, she, the wronged, the others, the wrongdoers." She has transformed into a fat, old and unwanted woman, who is always complaining against the apathy of her son and daughter-in-law. She complains that Prema, her daughter-in-law wants to starve her. She has become diabetic and obese but would not listen to her son's advice to restrict her diet. She is angry because her son and his wife have marginalized her. She feels that she has been dethroned like all other old mothers and grandmothers in joint Indian families. She is forsaken, defeated and lonely. She represents those widowed women who become burden for their own children and are left to live and die like animals. Mavshi's character presents the sad reality of the society which leaves the widows to fend for themselves. Saru's Mavshi presents her discontentment with life as she says, "Why am I, a fat, old, unwanted woman left alive?"

Sarita, Smita and Nalu are very intimate school friends. Schoolmates call them "Three Musketeers". Sarita becomes a doctor, Nalu becomes a college lecturer but Smita becomes a typical housewife, 'a tag on her husband, a small boat towed by a larger ship.' She changes into a very pathetic figure after marriage. In her college days, she was a slim, frail looking girl, with large vulnerable eyes but after marriage she has become a fat woman, mother of three children. Her husband has changed her name from Smita to Gitanjali, and calls her 'Anju', to signify the change in her total identity. Smita, in college, would spend money, given to her by her mother for books, in the canteen but with time, things change, and her husband stops giving her any extra money anymore. She talks about her husband's audacity without compunction. She asks Sarita for one hundred rupees with the assurance that she would return the money after some time when she would be able to save from the household expenses. She further discloses to Sarita that she has purchased clothes for her daughters out of her savings without bringing to the knowledge of her husband. Smita is under so much restraint and pressure but she still retains her joviality, habit of nudging, punching, giggling and clutching, as if nothing has happened to her. She proudly refers to her husband as 'he' and does not pronounce his name. Nalu rightly says, "Marriage and men had degraded Smita."

Smita is representative of those women who have lost their identity as wives and are just a means to satisfy the sexual urge of their husbands. Sarita's case is an antithesis to Smita's. Here, the husband has been reduced to nullity and the broken fellow loses his equilibrium. Sarita, in the end, is afraid of her husband not because of what he had done to her but because of what she had done to him. Sarita never allows her husband to use her for the satisfaction of his sexual urge. She rather repulses his advances when she returns exhausted after a hectic day at work, though at times she forces him to make love to her, "If I ever had any

doubts, I had only to turn to him to prove his love for me. And he would...again and again and again.”

Nalu, the third friend, is typical of the middle-aged spinster. She is a lecturer in a college. She is financially sound but lacks somewhere in composure, perhaps because she is devoid of the love of husband and children, “There was a whole world of bitterness within her, ready to spring to the surface any moment. She complained about her brother and his family with whom she lived, her students and colleagues, the administration of the college, politicians, the government, everything. Remembering the Nalu of old with her endearing enthusiasm, she wondered at the bitterness.”

Results and Discussions

Women Suppression

All the women characters presented by Deshpande are unhappy and imbalanced. Deshpande, perhaps, wants to say that women irrespective of their class and caste are living a life of misery and suffering. Even mother in her novel is not mother-like in behaviour and conduct. The difference between Smita and Sarita is that while Smita and Nalu contended with their lives, Sarita is a broken woman. She feels that Dhruva would not have died: “If only I hadn’t gone there that day... If only he hadn’t come with me, If only I hadn’t left him alone.”

About the mother’s attitude, Saru comes to know that Prof. Kulkarni had lied to her when he reported her mother’s words that she didn’t think she had a daughter at all. Her father utters a foul word for Prof. Kulkarni for traducing a mother to her daughter. This revelation charges Saru for having deserted her parents. She thinks that she is suffering because she had wronged her mother. She exclaims, “Look what I did to Dhruva. And to my mother...It’s because I wronged her that I am suffering now... why... I... deserted her.” Saru is regretful and is not able to pardon herself. She feels that she is alive to live with the gnawing feeling of being disloyal and ungrateful to her mother.

She also feels guilty for the present condition of her husband. She knew that her husband had been suffering from a sense of being inferior to his wife but still she kept spurning his amorous attempts. She finally realizes that this had shocked her husband out of his senses. She knows, “perhaps, there is something in the male...that is whittled down and ultimately destroyed by female domination.” Though she has done nothing deliberately to her brother, mother and husband, yet she feels that she is responsible for whatever happened to each of them. She could get acquittal from any court of law but not from her delicate conscience. She has an innocent mind and delicate conscience which forces her to think, “Her cruelty to Dhruva, to her mother, to Manu...she would never be rid of it. She would carry this ugly, unbearable burden until she died. The façade of deception had cracked so completely she should never put it together again. Shafts of the truth pierced her, causing her unbearable pain. Atonement...? It was never possible. What had she imagined? What had she thought?”

The story of Sarita or Saru, the protagonist, is heart-rending. Social conditions and fate seem to have conspired against the innocent girl to agonize her. Her parents, like all the common parents, are suspicious and possessive about her. They do not allow her to go with her friend Smita to watch the movie, Rani Ki Jhansi. Smita, in their opinion is “careless, slapdash, believed in enjoyment and therefore suspect.” Saru is completely put off and feeling angry and sullen, she goes away from the house to pester her parents. Dhruva, her younger brother, catches her leaving and insists on going with her. In spite of her best efforts, she is not able to dissuade him from going. There, Dhruva gets drowned and dies. This incident changes the life of Saru completely. Her mother holds her responsible for the death of her son and doesn't forgive her the whole life. Bitterness is reflected in all the matters of the family. The home becomes a kind of prison for Saru, which she wants to escape from. Saru meets a doctor in an assemblage of women and decides to become a doctor. She decides to go to Bombay to study medicine. The mother is strictly against her going away from her home. She is more concerned with getting her married as soon as possible to fulfill the obligation as a mother. Saru's father helps her get out of the prison of the hometown. In Bombay she stays in a hostel, which is entirely a different place for her. She feels a sense of freedom in the hostel where she does not have to stay outside for “those three days, you are no longer an ‘untouchable’; you can even talk about it;”

The protagonist never gets any reconciliation from her mother's side, especially after the death of her brother which the mother blames Saru for. Moreover, Saru goes against the wishes of her mother – she studies medicine in Bombay which her mother was against; and she, later, even marries a man of her own choice and not the one selected by her mother. It is, like other novels of Deshpande, a tale of retrospection and introspection. Saru, a successful doctor marries Manohar or Manu, an English lecturer who once wanted to become a poet. She thinks that her husband's home would provide her the freedom she wants. However, she is utterly disappointed to find herself, once again, in a prison. She finds that her husband is a kind of split personality. Manu fails to fulfil his ambition to become a famous poet and his relationship suffers a lot because of the personal failure of Manu. Economically, Manu is a defeated man. His salary is much less than Saru's. She reflects, “Manu's salary, never very much, barely covered our expenses.” Saru, on the other hand, earns much more than her husband. With the help of Boozie, she gets work in research projects; she completes M.D. and becomes a Registrar. Later, she becomes Assistance Honorary at a suburban hospital, with a consulting room of her in the midst of other well-known consultants. In social life, Saru dominates Manu because of her doctor status. Manu is often spurned by Saru and his amative advances are obstructed. Saru is often tired when she returns from the hospital and doesn't approve of Manu's advances for lovemaking.

This further deepens Manu's feeling of inferiority and as a reaction he tries to dominate over her in private life. The result of the inferiority complex that Manu feels is disastrous. He becomes a psychopath – he turns into a beast in the bed and even inflicts injuries to her in bed with his nails, teeth and feet. However, he transforms back to a caring husband in the morning. He gets dual personalities. He is a loving father and caring husband during the day and proudly introduces

his doctor wife to his friends and colleagues while at night he is again the beast abusing her, bruising her and terrifying her to the extent that she is not even able to find voice to scream for help. In the day, the bruises are the only evidence of the night. In the meantime, she learns about the death of her mother and she wants to go to her father's home to mourn the death of her mother against the advice of her husband who asks her, "Why should she matter dead when she never mattered alive." But the fact is that she wants to escape the prison she is living in and that's why she wants to go to her father's house.

Sarita's inability to protest against her plight prevents her from doing anything about the problem until she comes to know of her mother's death by cancer. In spite of cold reception from her father she decides to stay on. Her father is living with Madhav, a student and her own room has been occupied by Madhav. She is asked to put up in the puja room signifying that there is no place left in the house for her and she is reduced to a mere guest, in fact, she becomes an unwelcome guest in her father's house. She observes, "He sat gingerly on the edge of his chair, like an unwilling host entertaining an unwelcome guest." She is also worried about her children – "Abhi refuses to go to bed until I cover him with his blanket. He will never let his father or Janakibai do that for him. If I'm late going home, I find him asleep, curled up in the middle of his bed, the blanket folded into a perfect square at the foot of it, staring me accusingly. And Renu...who will not go to school unless I am at the door at the moment of her leaving. I ask her.... Do you have everything? Your hanky? Water Bottle? Your crayons? You have art today, don't you? She says impatiently, brusquely, as if she finds me irritating with the sameness of my questions. And yet Janakibai tells me, if I'm not there, she lingers, looking back again and again."

Finally, she has her sexual urges, which remain unsatisfied. For a moment, an idea flashes in her mind of using Madhav for this purpose, "But now she thought, looking at Madhav, if I imagined that by sleeping with you, I could cure myself, would I not try to seduce in you?" However, she soon dismisses the idea because that would not "bring back grace to my tired, shamed one."

Saru is passing through a labyrinth of all such ideas, when one day she decides to remove all the barriers between her and her father, the barriers between a man and a woman, to discuss her private life with him. There always was a conversation gap between them. Saru wants to share her fears, her story with somebody. She asks her father if she could talk about such things as the relationship between man and woman with him, he says, "Why not? Do you know, Saru, I often feel sorry that we left so many things unsaid, your mother and me. When she lay dying there, I wanted to ask her . . . Would you like to meet Saru? Sometimes I think she might have said 'Yes.' But I never did. Silence had become a habit for us. Now, . . . go on, tell me. Tell me everything."

Saru opens up her heart to her father and tells him her predicament. She is a one-woman character who stands acquitted of all the charges that her mother had levelled against her. She presents her case before her father and succeeds in getting his word that he never blamed her for Dhruva's death. She also tells her father about the split personality of her husband. The father feels that Manu needs treatment. Saru feels that she needs treatment for she has nightmares for

several other reasons also, the most dreadful of them is that she considers herself guilty of her younger brother Dhruva's death. Then, one day she gets a letter from Abhi informing her that Manu is coming to meet her. Now that she has deserted Manu, she does not want to meet him, and she packs her bags to leave the place. But she has no idea where she should go; she has no home – “No, she could not call it home. It was not home. Nor was this home. How odd to live for so long and discover that you have no home at all.”

Saru's Father asks her if she is afraid of Manu and she explains that she is, indeed, scared of him, not because of what he has done to her but because of what she has done to him. She feels that she has broken her husband and she herself is broken completely. She says to her father, “Baba, you don't know. I'm tired, so very tired. I really don't know how I can go on. If only I could end it all.” Saru feels that she cannot seek pardon, as she herself is responsible for the tragedies that have happened in the family – “My brother dies because I heedlessly turned my back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood.” The protagonist has childhood scars and also hates her mother to the extreme that she says, “If you're a woman, I don't want to be one.” The mother shows a sexist attitude in dealing with her children, Saru and Dhruva. Her attitude shows a gender difference in her treatment of her son and daughter. In one of the recapitulations, Saru records her conversation with her mother:

“Don't go out in the sun. You'll get darker.”

“Who cares?”

“We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married.”

“I don't want to get married.”

“Will you live with us all your life?”

“Why not?”

You can't.”

“And Dhruva?”

“He is different. He's a boy.”

The conversation establishes a traditional Indian mother against whom the protagonist has to rebel. The novel depicts the sad predicament of a girl who suffers bullying by her own mother. Her freedom is curtailed by her own mother and she grows up to be a victim of her mother's gender-based bias. The treatment that this girl receives at the hands of her own mother reduces her life to a mere struggle to survive in the sexist world. In her later life, she keeps struggling to prove that her decisions were not wrong. However, her mother doesn't acknowledge Saru to be her daughter anymore. Saru is seen struggling throughout her life to bring about balance in her varied roles as a mother, a wife, a daughter and a professional. One of the most appealing aspects of the novel is the strange relationship between the mother and the daughter. There are of course many other problems faced by women in this male-chauvinistic world, but problems created by women for women are equally serious. The mother, representative of a closed-minded conservative society, has inculcated a moral bound to prefer a son while the daughter, irrespective of whether she is younger or older to the son, has to be satisfied with the secondary position in the family. Saru's mother never forgives her daughter Saru for being alive even after her

brother has drowned. Saru had seen her younger brother sink into water and die. This childhood experience gives her a feeling of guilt that she is responsible for the death of her brother and that she could not do anything to save him. The guilt that Saru feels is further enhanced by her mother's words "You did it, you did this, you killed him... you killed him. Why didn't you die? Why are you alive, when he's dead?" Similarly, Shashi Deshpande's major apprehension in *That Long Silence* is to search deeply into the psyche of a woman who is made to face all kinds of mental tortures. The question what a woman does is never asked, but "who she belongs to" is always considered important. She never has an identity of her own. Her name changes as per the wishes of others. In *That Long Silence*, the writer has presented this fact through the character Jaya, who is recognized by two names: Jaya and Suhasini. Jaya is the name given by her father when she was born which has the meaning "victory"; and Suhasini is the name given after her marriage which means a "soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman". Both the names stand for the persona of her individuality. The earlier one symbolizes revolt whereas the final one symbolizes submission.

To make the story a reliable one, Shashi Deshpande has made use of first-person narrative to represent the psyche of the modern middle-class learned woman. To appeal to the readers, she uses flashback technique. The first chapter deals with the present, but the remaining chapters are more in reminiscence with the final chapter ending in the present. The narrator in this novel is Jaya, the protagonist herself. While narrating her heartbreaking experiences, her mind wavers and she unfurls her whole life – from her childhood days to her father's death. She is a typical modern woman who has her roots in tradition, while her husband Mohan, a traditionalist has his roots in customs. Their outlook is different and they fail to understand each other. Due to differences in their attitude, their marital life grows shaky and gloomy. It becomes more of a compromise than love based on social fear rather than mutual need of each other. The choice may be rooted in their choice of a partner. For example, from the very beginning, Mohan wanted a wife who was well-educated and cultured and never a loving one.

To Mohan, a woman sitting before fire, waiting for her husband to come home and eat her food is the real strength of a woman, but to Jaya it is nothing more than despair. "He wanted his rice fresh and hot, from a vessel that was untouched. She had just finished cooking this second cooking and was waiting, hoping, perhaps that he would not be too late, for it wouldn't do to allow and as for lighting the fire again, that was unthinkable" (P.15-16). "Her Ajji along with silence had taught her to "wait" the waiting game" (30). For a man waiting brings in restlessness but for woman the game of waiting starts quite early in her childhood "wait until you get married, wait until your husband comes, wait until you go to your in law's home, wait until you have kids. Yes, ever since I got married, I had done nothing but wait" (30) Women are blamed unfeminine and unnatural if they break the social system and so they are enforced to adhere to be termed feminine.

Shashi Deshpande reveals the consciousness of Jaya through an account of her mind in the process of thinking, feeling and reacting to the stimuli of the moment and situation. In doing so, she goes on to assert the feminine psyche of the protagonist, to break away from the strong hold of a social framework rooted in patriarchy which repels as it attracts. Jaya is a modern predicament and the flood

of consciousness that ensure out of it is a silent stream of thoughts and feelings. She knows pretty well that in order to get by in a relationship one has to learn a lot of tricks and silence is one of them. Jaya surrenders Mohan without revolting. She never refuses or complains about anything. Her identity, personality is totally crushed which leads her to total confusion along with loss of self-identity. We get a glimpse of Hinduism in the numerous fasts observed by women for the well-being of husbands, sons or brothers. "Generally, a woman's identity is defined in terms of her relationship with man as a daughter, a wife and a mother. It means virtually a woman doesn't have an identity of her own" says Indira Kulkshreshtha (3).

The narrator Jaya, an upper-middle-class housewife with two teenage children, is forced to take care of her life when her husband is suspected of fraud. They shift to a small flat in a poorer locality of Bombay, leaving their luxurious house. The narrative reveals the futility of modern Indian life, where success is considered only with the upwardly mobile husband along with their children studying in "good" schools. The daily chores of normal life of a woman with material comforts is significantly represented in the following lines, "the glassware that had to sparkle, the furniture and curious that had to be kept spotless and dust-free, and those clothes, God, all those never-ending piles of clothes that had to be washed and ironed, so that they could be worn and washed and ironed once again" (57). Jaya's creativity is muted by strong social and family pressures and holds all creative activities in submission to her role as a homemaker. Therefore, in *That Long Silence*, the novelist is protesting against the treatment of women in our culture through her protagonist 'Jaya'. Hers is a futile search of a woman's true self inside the bonds and purview of the middle-class respectability. She is a self-conscious, sensitive and creative. She is undergoing an introspective psychological journey towards self-actualization. But due to the devastating effects and long suppression of her personality makes her psychologically ill and, nervous and schizophrenic. It is thus a protest in the form of questions pertaining to gender issues and Indian women's position. Besides it is the character's attempt to give another version of history from the women's point of view.

Likewise in Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine*, the story revolves around a female protagonist name Urmi. The story begins with the scene of mourning as Urmi is benumbed with the pain of losing her young daughter Anu. Even though she should wail and cry she finds it hard to shed tears and to let others help her share the grief. She is consoled by her best friend Vanna and her mother Inni. Urmi believes she deserved such suffering as she had never appreciated the luxuries and opportunities that she had received all her life. She struggles with the thought of losing her daughter forever and letting go of her memory. The first woman she remembers is her mother on law, Mira. She discovers her old journals, notebooks, etc. and realizes the unrewarded genius of Mira's writing. Mira never got recognition as she was regarded as just a woman, a wife, a daughter, a mother, etc and not a writer. Her loveless marriage and a marital ordeal are palpable for Urmi. Her book named 'The Binding Vine' refers to the umbilicus or the physical connect a mother share with her child. Urmi naturally is overwhelmed with such content.

The study is interpreting Shashi Deshpande's recent novel *The Binding Vine* from the female point of view. The first section of the study introduces, in brief, the basic features of feminism both occidental and oriental. Traditionally, the Indian woman has been represented as a pathetic, wooden creature, subjected to male domination. Shashi Deshpande is a feminist excellence. Her distinctiveness is that her protagonists are not rebels but they should be trained in the course of their meet with the unsympathetic truth of life to create in themselves the authority to manage with the male-domination. The second section is devoted to a formal analysis of the novel. This section will foreground the dimensional depth of the feminine self of Deshpande's protagonists. Whereas, the earlier protagonists like Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Indu in *Roots and Shadows* and Jaya in the Sahitya Akademi Award winning novel *That Long Silence* think primarily about themselves and seek their own redemption, the protagonist Urmi in *The Binding Vine* is preoccupied with the suffering of her elongated dead mother-in-law focussed to rape in marriage and the unmarried girl Kalpana-also the victim of rape. It is also pointed out that love has the capacity to redeem human values. The last section brings about the findings and makes necessary generalizations.

Women subjection

Admittedly, Shashi Deshpande moves towards the theory of feminism but is unlike the hard-core feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir or Kate Millette while solving the women's problems under the Indian context. Probably, feminist heroin is recognized to move from Jane Austen, through Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir to Kate Millette and Elaine Showalter. But there is no exact definition of feminism as it is according to different culture and society. In the western countries it is settled issue but in the third world countries it is confliction and discussion. This made Chaman Nahal express that feminism is the mode of existence in which the women are free of dependence syndrome of the father, husband, community, religions community and political community. Once people are free from the dependence syndrome, all will be equal. Feminism beside is a doctrine of equal rights and equal opportunities, sexism and sexual autonomy. It is a political movement to throw away sexual suppression. Because of patriarchy women are suffering and are thus related to the conscious raising group. This makes Feminism a literary theory. It is in this manner that the novelist, Shashi Deshpande exposes the lives of women, mainly Indian women in general, who are suffering under the harsh rules of patriarchy. Thus, in her novels, the novelist created her female protagonists reconstructs women's experience to voice for their oppressive living. She is struggling to free the women from their trapped female psyche, and transcend her boundaries.

Hers is the projection of female domination and their resistance from the patriarchal ideologies. The projection of the predicaments of the middle-class women, their conflicts and quest for identity marks the feminist ideology of Shashi Deshpande. She could make her protagonists such as Urmito speak up and help Kalpana at the end encompassing the strategy of womanhood through love and women emancipation. It has been made in such a way that shows the craving of the new women to assert her individual-self and the realization of her sexual demands. With Shashi Deshpande's protagonists there is the shift from the earlier observation of sex to have sustain the man- woman relationship to

woman sexual emancipation of the modern time. Indeed all her novels deal with women issue. The change is an explication of the multiple difference and desires of women; an exploration of border in the history of women. In fact, it is an achievement of Shashi Deshpande's struggle for women sexual emancipation, freedom in the various stages of politics, social, education and in economics, which becomes true in the modern Indian society. Shashi Deshpande juxtaposes her educated, strong-willed, questioning and career-oriented protagonists with the whole lot of self-negative 'feminine' characters and achieves the desired effect. The main protagonists' personal experience with the accumulated knowledge leads to self-analysis and here we see the progression of the female psyche through the phases of limitation, protest and self-discovering.

Shashi Deshpande brings out the Indian women of our time who are neither demi-goddess nor strongminded super-heroines. She portrayed a world of evil dealing with death, mystery and mischief with the characters enduring and interesting. They are educated middle-class women, but vulnerable consequently because of an inalienable bond of tradition. They continue their life, returning to the society but with an achieved personhood, self-realization and a voice of their own. It is with a strong motive and desire to create an ordered society out of the perplexity in the surroundings. Her novels are the proof of her comprehensive understanding of the woman's reality and plight in India from the grass root level. Besides she even questions the gender issues and woman's position within the bounds of the middle-class respectability. Her protagonists adopt the life of a middle path (ie) let themselves live on their own and allow others to live. She does not resist women to dream of their own to assert their own ways and voices. Beyond the numberless anguish, pain and sufferings she allows their women to overcome their own sense of loss and despair and rise above all sense of misunderstandings. Unhesitatingly, Deshpande's highlighting of the modern educated young woman through her novels against the centuries of slavery, sufferings and suppressions brings about a great revolution in the history of woman. This changed new woman has become conscious their destination. She realized her dreams of liberating herself from the clutches of unjust taboos and customs forced on her by the male dominance. She has been able to shake off the old aged fear- fear of unloved, misjudged, misunderstood and failure that had been haunting her throughout ages. Shashi Deshpande thus fruitfully makes the woman conscious of her own rights and responsibilities, distress and destination.

Conclusion

Shashi Deshpande presents the fact that the crisis of identity is the root of all problems in human life and the main cause of the crisis of identity is darkness of one's mind. The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* depicts the quest of an educated middle-class ambitious and self-assertive woman to search her identity. Her efforts led her to discover the strength that is needed to lead a joyous life. The protagonist, in the beginning, is a prisoner of her own fear and confusion but gradually, with her mental growth, she attains self-realization. She finally realizes that freedom cannot be gained just by changing places. It can be achieved only through self-realization. Men, in Deshpande's works, do not have a very significant role. Manohar falls in love with an educated woman Sarita. He addresses her in his poems. However, after marriage, Manu behaves in a

stereotypical manner expected of Indian men. His own career comes to a drastic end very soon and he does not mind her wife earning money for the family but just like a stereotypical Indian husband, he also expects her wife to be inferior to him. Saru's professional success is not acceptable to Manohar. As Saru succeeds in her professional life, her married life suffers. Manohar gets into the clutches of inferiority complex that turns him into a psychopath. He tries to prove his dominance over his wife in bed. He hurts her and bruises her. He starts torturing her sexually.

A woman should be aware, self-controlled, strong willed, self-reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense. Though independent to some extent, Shashi Deshpande's women characters are firmly bound by the shackles of tradition and seek fulfillment only within the orbit of family and tradition. The *Binding Vine* presents a female world in which women come together in a feeling of fellowship. All human civilisations in the world have set certain norms for the women to follow including the way of conduct, decorum etc. and any digression from the conventions would mar the ideal image of a woman. The deviations from the set traditional conventions would make the women unruly and obstinate, and according to the societal norms, liable for condemnation by the society. Women have constantly been compelled to assume the secondary role in the society. Women are compelled to struggle against the male-chauvinistic society and the male-oriented ideology. In order to gain equality and to realize their human potential, women must become autonomous. They must make their position strong in the society by attaining education and at the same time they must raise their voice against any kind of exploitation. Unfortunately, women have lived in the dark for so long that darkness doesn't hold any terror for them.

Significantly, today's gender roles have been reversed. Instead of challenging and discarding sexist stereotypes of male aggression and destruction, it is reversing and justifying them as expression of our social behaviour. Generations have changes, resulting to the drastic and immediate changes socially, politically, economically and psychologically. It is a symbol of protest against the male oppressions. It is not only to liberate woman but to establish a just man-woman relationship.

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