



**FORCED SEX IN MARRIAGE WITH REFERENCE TO SHASHI DESHPANDE'S  
*THE BINDING VINE***

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**ABSTRACT**

Indian institute of marriage system changes a chirpy girl to an anxious and nervous woman. Deshapnde is concerned with the middle class and lower middle class where male repression shows a repulsive phase especially within marriage. She also demonstrates marriage as a patriarchal institution to enslave women to a lifetime of male domination. Marriage and so called sacredness that is attached to it, is the strongest weapon in the hands of men to silence women. Marital rape is one form of sexual assault where a husband gets license to rape his wife night after night. Activists, far and wide have raised their voice against the patriarchal bent of mind to look down upon woman as an object or a possession of man. They are against the trends of denying the woman, her right as a free individual who can exercise her discretion and intellectual capabilities, make her own choices in life and play her role in decision-making. This paper tries to depict how the above factors are neatly woven in Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine*.

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Forced sex on wife is not identified as the crime of rape rather it is viewed as 'wifely duty'. It is a very violent method of man to show his power over woman. It is widespread problem for a woman that man wants to dominate woman is universal and our traditional marriage provides ample opportunities for this. Husband wants his wife to be patient, all suffering, ever faithful and ever-pure wife. In her essay, *Sisterhood* Bell Hooks writes,

Sexism is perpetrated by institutional and social structures, by the individuals who dominate, exploit or oppress and by the victim themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act in complicity with the status quo. (Hooks: 45)

Women who represent half of the world's population are ironically not treated equally to men in all areas of human activity. They are oppressed, suppressed

and marginalized in the matter of sharing the available opportunities for fulfilment of their lives. In this regard Shashi Deshpande says in her book *Writing from the Margin*:

... We are already burdened with a baggage that has given to us. The fact is that we don't start with a picture of ourselves on a clean slate. Inscribed on it already are things told to us by others that determine our behaviour, ideas, expectations and dreams. (Deshpande: 87)

Deshpande portrays the plight of young woman, Mira who is victim of marital rape in *The Binding Vine*. *The Binding Vine* is the narration of Urmila, who is grieving over the death of her baby daughter and surrounded by the loving care of her mother and her childhood friend and sister-in-law Vanna. Urmi narrates the pathetic tale of her mother-in-law

Mira, who is a victim of marital rape. Mira, who exist only in the notebooks, she has left behind, discovered by chance in a dusty storage trunk. Mira's journals and poetry reveal the pain of a vibrant young woman trapped in an unhappy arranged marriage. Urmi also narrates the story of Kalpana, the survivor of a brutal rape and a young girl who has also been silenced, as she hovers between life and death in a hospital ward. Realizing others tragedies, she tries to cope-up with her own tragedy, the death of her child Anusha. Urmi symbolizes a modern Indian woman, who stretches her hand towards other women like Mira, Kalpana and Shakutai.

Mira's writing reflects the extent of forced sexual activity. Mira was subjected to rape in her marriage. Mira dies in the childbirth after four years of loveless marriage. Everyday and every moment that she spends there is a cry of rape and anguish, there are feelings" runs all through her writing, a strong, clear thread of an intense dislike of the sexual act with her husband, a physical repulsion from the man she marries." (Deshpande-63). As Mishra, Saurabh & Singh, Sarvesh have cited Thornhill, R. & Thornhill, N.

Women who are raped by their partners are likely to suffer severe psychological consequences as well. Some of the short-term effects of marital rape include anxiety, shock, intense fear, depression, suicidal ideation, and post-traumatic stress. Long-term effects often include disordered eating, sleep problems, depression, problems in establishing trusting relationships, and increased negative feelings about themselves. Psychological effects are likely to be long-lasting.(P-2)

Mira symbolizes the mute suffering of many such unfortunate girls. Rape has always been a horrible indignity happened to women by men merely on the strength of brute force.

As Andrinee Rich says:

It is not rape of the body alone but rape of the mind as well. The feeling of being victorious and gloating over the act makes the rapist even more detestable. (qtd. in Indira: 61)

Marital rape is one form of sexual assault where a husband gets license to rape his wife night after night. In this regard Barbe kiffe says,

Marital rape is seldom given the legitimacy or validity of other forms of sexual violence, but it can be just as devastating. What sets marital rape apart is that the victim has to live with the rapist.(Dr. Kavya)

Submissiveness of the woman is ensured with the help of socialization that begins in early childhood and extends well into adolescence and adulthood. Girl children are trained to think, speak, dress and behave in such a way as to give preference to the male around them. But when they grow and get educated their new sense of identity and equality clash with the internalized sense of submission. A girl is admired not for her wisdom but for her elegance. Acumen and intelligence seldom count as qualities of recognition for a woman. Patriarchal ideology is imposed on girl's autonomy and deforms her personality. As Mira says in her poem,

Fixed forever in our places,  
Face to face the two of us,  
Like Siva and his nodding bull.  
(Deshpande: 82)

Relationship of a man and woman is like relationship of master and servant, superior and inferior, Siva and his nodding bull who are always opposite to each other and never side by side. Man is considered as Siva, God, superior and woman is always nodding bull, inferior and submissive.

Tradition is belief or practice passed on from generation to generation. In India patriarchy is the prevalent system and male dominates in society. As a tradition it is taught from generation to generation and mother makes her daughter a shadow of herself and nothing else. But girls like Mira have their own aspirations and ambitions. Mira's will rise up against her mother's advice as she writes,

No, growing painfully within,  
Like a monster child was born.  
(Deshpande-83)

Girls when they think of protesting against or questioning some codes of tradition or saying 'no' that thought itself makes her guilty of doing some

crime. Mira also considers her thought of saying 'no' to be a 'monster child'.

Generally speaking marriage is understood as an ever- lasting relationship between two persons. It also implies men and women sharing love, affection, companionship, understanding, security, sex etc. Nevertheless, many feminist theorists have pointed out marriage as a bond that push women into the role of servants or slaves and creates a pessimistic image within them. According to Beauvior,

The tragedy of marriage is not that it fails to assure woman the promised happiness- there is no such thing as assurance in regard to happiness, but that it mufilates her, it dooms her to repetition and routine. The first twenty years of woman's life are extraordinarily rich...she discovers the world and her destiny. At twenty or thereabouts mistress of a home, bound permanently to a man, a child in her arms, she stands with her life virtually finished forever.(Beauvior: 496)

Indian institute of marriage system changes a chirpy girl to an anxious and nervous woman. Deshapnde is concerned with the middle class and lower middle class where male repression shows a repulsive phase especially within marriage. She also demonstrates marriage as a patriarchal institution to enslave women to a lifetime of male domination. Marriage and so called sacredness that is attached to it, is the strongest weapon in the hands of men to silence women.

Mira got married at the age of 18 and died in child birth after four years of loveless marriage. She became a typical Indian wife who cared for her husband and never defied him. Mira was only the instrument for her husband's sexual gratification. Though, Mira did not like it at all, she could never raise her voice against it. Rape indicates brutality and it is the worst when it occurs within marriage. Mira's poems are all about her husband's malice. Mira wrote poems in privacy. She never published them but kept them in her box. Her poems are her buried feelings and agonies. She wished to be free from tenets and clutches of unfair marriage. Mira

never received any recognition or compassion from her husband. For society, marriage stands for security as it provides safety from other men. But in Mira's case her own husband gave a feeling of insecurity as she writes,

But tell me, friend, did Laxmi too,  
Twist brocade tassels round her fingers  
And tremble, fearing the coming  
Of the dark-clouded engulfing night?  
(Deshpande-56)

Mira here scoffs at tradition of comparing every wedded couple to Laxmi- Narayan. If every wedded girl is Laxmi then Mira wonders whether as a girl, goddess Laxmi had to pass through the terrified experience of submitting everything to her husband. A man like Mira's husband claims that he loves his wife but does he really love her? If he is in love with her, he can't hurt her, rather he takes care of her likes and dislikes. The fact is that a man loves his wife as a child loves his toy as an object. "He wants to have possession over her body and not her heart." (Deshpande-67)

Activists, far and wide have raised their voice against the patriarchal bent of mind to look down upon woman as an object or a possession of man. They are against the trends of denying the woman, her right as a free individual who can exercise her discretion and intellectual capabilities, make her own choices in life and play her role in decision-making. All these factors can bring about drastic changes in her life and in the life of the universe. In spite of this there are still girls like Mira are deprived of opportunities and become victims of male supremacy. There are girls like them who cannot raise their voices against the brutality of male- dominance and cannot fight their own battle. Such unfortunate girls have to depend on women like Urmila who understands her duty and fight others' battle. As Urmils says she has been lucky to manage everything but girls like Mira, "What happened to them- under the carpet forever because we are afraid of disgrace. (Deshpande: 174)

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