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QUEST FOR WOMEN IDENTITY IN THE BINDING VINE BY SHASHI DESHPANDE

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Abstract

This paper has attempted a feministic critique through the study of The Binding Vine appeared in 1994. Shashi Deshpande has been acclaimed for her treatment of the women's issues mostly prevalent in the Indian society. She has voiced the female agony, smothering experiences and restrictions imposed by traditional mind set. She finds that the context of women's subjugation in the modern day Indian society has been changed. This paper aims at explication of the complexities in women relationships itself emerged in the light family ties. It focuses on how the relations between the mother and daughter hamper growing of womanhood and how it influence the life of the woman in general.

Keywords: subjugation, hamper, feminist, patriarchy, Quest.

Introduction:

Today women writers are moving forward through their successful endeavor by adding their creative contribution to the Indian Writing in English. The Indian English novel by these women writers seems matching the pace of the world in display of incomparable genius. They have relied on their inventive skills in the use of English language as a skilled craftsmen. Though during the pre-independent era, the women writers have started writing in English. The well-known women writers like Torru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu started writing in English under the spirit of freedom fighting against British rules and love for nation. They show interest in national issues as the influence of Ghandhiji's movements for free India was in vogue. At the same time the enlightened thinkers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Dayanand Saraswati's had initiated social reforms to abolish the practice of Sati, the custom of child marriage, custom of distinguishing

widows, the ban on remarriage of the upper caste Hindu widows and many other evil practices prevalent in the society. This gave impetus to the women writers who also harnessed their pen for the cause of welfare of this vulnerable section of the society. They gave vent to the women's suffering. These effects were depicted by Indian women writers' modern generation after the independence by using the foreign medium, English as well as regional languages.

The women writes of post-independence burst out in full bloom spreading their own individual fragrances. They got recognition for their originality, versatility and the indigenous flavor of sensitizing the local gender issues through their literary work. It seems that the voice of new Indian women writers through their writings has ushered in a literary renaissance. The well-known women Indian English writers of post- modern generation are Nayantara Sehgal, Anitha Desai, Kamala

Markandaya, Gita Mehta, Bharathi Mukherjee, Jhumpha Lahiri, Shashi Desh Pande, Manju Kapur, Arundhati to mention a few only have created their own distinct identity as a novelist and raised the Indian novel to the world level recognition.

Among the this line of luminaries of writing of and about the lives of women, the most successful of the Indian women writers is Shashi Deshpande who created the difference among all the women writers. She is a dazzling storyteller with a distinctive voice. She has achieved international applause for her writing which mainly like non-resident Indian characters who dealt with, refugee issues and problems of people in overseas lands.

Deshpande's distinctiveness relies on her not only being Indian but as an Indian writer who writes about the place where she resides itself. She is unquestionably one of the celebrated Indian - English fiction writers. She was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award, in 1990 for her novel, "That long Silence " and has been awarded Padma Shri award in 2009 and for The Hindu Literary Prize 2014 her novel *Shadow Play* was shortlisted.

She has to her credit eight novels *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1985), *That Long Silence* (1988), *The Binding Vine* (1994), *A Matter of Time* (1996) and *Small Remedies* (2000). The novelist with the most sustained achievement is Shashi Desh Pande. She is labeled as feminist novelist as she has been succeeded in depicting the plight of a successful educated woman and problems of being a woman. Shashi Desh Pande's novel *That Long Silence* (1988) is viewed as her emergence as a major success. It tells the story of an Indian housewife Jaya, an upper-middle class house wife. The lack of depth in a woman's life is clearly depicted in this novel. Her other novels include *A Matter of Time*, *Small Remedies*, *'The Dark Holds No Terror'*, *'Roots and Shadows'* etc.

#### **Search for women's identity in contemporary novelist**

Many Indian women novelists have voiced the women's issues during and after as

contemporary of Deshpande. Manju Kapoor is also one of the significant writers whose work establishes the nexus between the tradition and modernity. The dominating works of Kapoor can be critically seen in her significant novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) which offer her Common Wealth Award. Her novel 'A Married Woman' is a seductive story of a love at a time of political and religious upheaval, and is told with sympathy and intelligence.

In the similar fashion, Bharati Mukherjee's fame has shot up in the recent years as an Indian American writer. Her novels *Wife, Jasmine, The Holder of the World, Leave It To Me* and *Desirable Daughters* make a bold attempt to rewrite the origins of America's history in the light of wider American experience. For instance her second novel *Wife* (1975), she writes about a woman named Dimple, who suppressed by men attempts to be the ideal Bengali wife, but out of fear and personal instability murders her husband. Her best fiction *Jasmine* (1989) develops the idea of the synthesis of the East and West with a story telling of young Hindu women, who leaves India for U.S. after her husband's murder as an illegal immigrant. However, Bharati Mukherjee recaptures history in the most aesthetic sense.

Gita Mehta is also another woman writer who proclaimed about the problems of the contemporary immigrant women with sublime standards. She wrote *Snakes and Ladders* and *Glimpses of Modern India*.

Arundhati Roy is the luminary among the contemporary women writers. She is one of the women writers who wrote about the plights of the downtrodden and the suppression of women in a male dominated world and the influence of Marxism on the lives of the downtrodden. Her novel 'The God of Small Things' won the 1997 Booker Prize for fiction and it was one of the bestselling books at that time.

Another novelist of the modern Indian fiction is Kamala Markandaya. Her first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955)' is a bestselling novel. Here she has given the expressed to the women's struggle against the patriarchal family set up.

The Indian novel which won the prestigious Booker Prize in 2006 is *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai. She is daughter of Anita Desai and her work is motivated by globalization, and the consequence of the country's development on all social classes. Her work focuses on women and different aspects of Assamese society. Chitra Banerjee is indeed a gifted writer. Her significant works include *Palace of Illusion*, and *Mistress Of Spice*. She was awarded the American Book Award for *Arranged Marriage*. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is an award-winning author and poet and her work has been published in more than 50 magazines like the *Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*.

Anita Nair is an Indian-English writer whose novels are keenly woven on the thread of human nature and values; with a female oriented element. Her 'Mistress' was included in the list for the 'Orange Broadband Prize' for Fiction. Nayantara Sahgal's fiction deals with India's elite responding to the crises engendered by political change. She was the first female Indo-Asian writer to receive wide recognition. Her main works are: 1) *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (memoir), 1954 2) *This Time of Morning*, 1965 3) *Storm in Chandigarh*, 1969 4) *The Day in Shadow*, 1971 5) *Rich Like Us*, 1988 6) *Lesser Breeds*, 2003. Other famous Women Writers in Indian English Literature like Rama Mehta, Susan Viswanathan, Suniti Namjoshi, Anuradha Marwah Roy, Nergis Dalal, Krishna Sobti, Dina Mehta, Malati Chendur, Gauri Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Ruth S Jhabvala have all reacted and articulated the women's issues in the context of Indian cultural and social conventional mind set and traditional evil practices.

The patriarchal society prevalent in India had jeopardized and crippled the Indian mind to such an extent that men thought that no woman was found worthy of education. Men considered themselves independent, superior and even almighty. A man was invariably the breadwinner whereas the woman was supposed only to share what the man had earned with his sweat and blood. It looked as though, a man's world would continue even without a woman. Traits are visible, that in ancient India, women though having an enormous potential, were being unutilized and underutilized.

Today, women dare to walk shoulder to shoulder with men. They are ready to expose the splendour and beauty of the world in which they live have a better role to play than remaining mere spectators within the four walls of the house. Women are not inferior to man in rank or performance in anyway. This is true in the field of literature too.

In the *Binding vine*, the reader perceive a type of quest through the interaction and relationship between Shakutai and her daughter Kalpna. It reveals how a middle class woman is always afraid of society since a woman is considered as an object only. Shakutai curses her daughter Kalpana that her fashionable life style derives her to be raped. She is a traditional woman who believes that having a daughter in the family is a type of blot, a burden. Despite herself being a woman, it is rather contractory that she does not file the case of her daughter's rape who is admitted in the hospital and very near to death due to a man's wickedness just because she is afraid of the society. She thinks that now Kalpana's younger sister Sandhya will not able to survive after Kalpana is wronged. The question of justice is too far. The novel focus on fear of a cruel mentality of our society. In the agony of mother woman towards a victim woman is aptly described in this novel which is indicative the women's search for her space in human society. Shakutai condemns herself when she knows that Kalpana has been wronged by her own uncle. Though Shakutai is deserted by her husband for another woman, she thinks that society would blame her that it was she who left her husband and the reason of Kalpana's rape.

She doesn't tell the real story to media person, the reporter, Malcom. Even she is in constant fear of male dominated society where no one is going to understand the pain of her daughter rather she would be the center of gossiping. Piloo has committed suicide as she is also victimized woman by her own husband Prabahkar who raped Kalpana. She has brought up Kalpana like her own child but her own husband had kept wrong eye on this innocent girl and one day he spoiled Kalpana. Where Meera, Shakutai, Piloo and Kalpana are symbol of submissive and victimized part of this society Shashi Deshpande has also depicted the

strong characters like Urmi, Priti and Vandana who not only take care of house hold but they are professionals too in the same society. They also cope up between family and professional lives. They have their own views to live up their lives. They are sentimental but not suppressed characters. Deshpande has worked on the female psychology and her inner voice in search of her identity which distinguished her stance as a great feminist writer itself.

### Conclusion

Shashi Deshpande is one of the greatest woman novelists who gave vent to the smothering emotions of women. Her women characters seems submissive to the subjugation of social orthodoxy. Like other women novelist, she does not hold decisive protest in action. Her suggestive approach indicates is the specimen instance of her craftsmanship as a novelist of progressive zeal who fights sans violence or vehement attack on the society. In her writing about the lives of women, she became the most successful of the Indian women writers. Shashi Deshpande has created the difference among all the women writers. She is a dazzling storyteller with a distinctive voice. She has achieved international applause for her writing which mainly like non-resident Indian characters who dealt with, refugee issues and problems of people in overseas lands.

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