

Feminism and Women's Bonding in Shashi Deshpande's the Binding Vine

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Abstract

*Society and literature have always had a deep and enduring link. It has seen how women's roles have evolved throughout time, and that development additionally influenced how women are portrayed in literature. Writings from the present day depict not just the oppressed and disenfranchised women but additionally the 'new women', who are always attempting to become independent, self-aware individuals. The privileged middle-class environment is portrayed by the author in this book. She still finds the sense of injustice and brutality she encounters in the world upsetting. Her natural incapacity to adjust to her social environment is a handicap. The following feminism-related themes are examined by the researcher in this novel-the necessity of hindrance in life, the impact of childhood trauma on adult personality traits, parental division, and alienation, the impact of childhood being homeless and the ensuing anxiety, distraction, regression to childhood, a state of isolation, and frustration of city life, lack of communication between partners, unpredictable contradictions, as well as brutality in life. Deshpande's novel *The Binding Vine*, middle-class Indian women of today, both professional and illiterate, grapple with the challenge of realizing their own identities and reestablishing their familial bonds. The author portrays women's lives in this book as they are much like in her previous works.*

Keywords: Independent, Self-aware, Injustice, Feminism, Own identities, Distraction.

Introduction

The goal of feminism is to determine and develop equality in the political, economic, social, and personal lives of the sexes through a variety of political and socioeconomic movements and ideas. *The Binding Vine* (1993) by Shashi Deshpande explores the dilemma and search for the identities of middle-class female characters in an era of patriarchy, where they have little opportunity to speak up. This is a theme shared by all of her works. Subtle similarities between *The Binding Vine's* plot and her other works suggest that this one is unique, but closer examination uncovers many subtle differences.

Shashi Deshpande was born in Dharwad, Karnataka. She was the second child of Sharada Adya and Kannada dramatist and novelist Adya Rangacharya. Her education took place in Bangalore and Bombay, which is now Mumbai. Her debut short story collection, *The Dark Holds No Terror*, was released in 1978, followed by her

debut novel the same year. Both in 1990 and 2009, she was the recipient of the Padma Shri Award and the Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel *That Long Silence*. 2014 saw a shortlist for The Hindu Literary Prize for her novel *Shadow Play*. *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays* is a collection of essays written by Deshpande. She has also published thirteen novels, four children's books, and several short stories. She returned her Sahitya Akademi Award and resigned from her role in the general council of the organization on October 9th, 2015. She thus joined a larger demonstration by other authors against what they saw as the Akademi's passivity. Deshpande recalled the people in attendance of the bloodshed and devastation brought about by the division of India and Pakistan on December 6, 2018, during her initial speech at the ninth edition of the Goa Arts and Literature Festival (GALF). She further encouraged Indians to consider the ramifications of desiring a Hindu nation.

Struggles of Urmila, as a Women

The struggle for identities and the plight of oppressed women are depicted in Shashi Deshpande's novel, *The Binding Vine*, winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award. Deshpande's books are a sarcastic examination of both the Indian patriarchal system and modern civilization. The women in her stories are shown as unstable, undergoing physical as well as psychological struggles while trying to forge a fresh sense of self as powerful, independent individuals. In Deshpande's novel *The Binding Vine*, middle-class Indian women of today, both educated and illiterate, grapple with the challenge of realizing their own identities and reestablishing their familial bonds. The author portrays women's lives in this book as they are, much like in her previous works. *The Binding Vine* deftly reveals the various forms of oppression, including sexual oppression that women in our culture face, while also illuminating women's battle for self-respect and self-identity. Even while *The Binding Vine*'s plot seems very similar to those of her other books, closer inspection reveals that it is rather unique and unusual. Deshpande has given the protagonist the highest priority in all of her previous works, emphasizing her worries and sentiments via the usage of every other character. However, in this instance, Urmila, the main character, assumes the position of a narrator, attempting to convey the agony that women from various societal groups endure.

The complex main character of *The Binding Vine* is Urmila, a middle-class lady with intelligence and education who works as a college instructor. Urmila adamantly confronts her sorrow after losing her infant daughter, but she also achieves a mental condition of internalizing her misfortune and provides assistance to the ladies who are suffering. The finding of her late mother-in-law's poetry, written when she was a young woman who had been raped in the course of their marriage, draws Urmila in. She also learns about Kalpana, a little girl who is starving to death in a hospital and is also a victim of men's physical hunger. The author aims to illustrate how difficult it is for a woman to give birth to herself with a self-sufficient one's identity in a male-dominated society like India by presenting a female protagonist like Urmila who must endure various layers of experience that ultimately lead to pain, suffering, nervousness, fear, insecurity and feeling helpless of women as a whole.

Women Reinforcing Independence

The author portrays a woman's existence as an ongoing battle to overcome the imposed outside factors version of herself that society has placed on her. The narrative opens with Urmila reflecting on herself. All of us have an idea or rather, an image of who we are as children, and we strive our entire lives to live up to it. But when Vanna speaks to me, I understand all of a sudden that I've been fighting a continual battle against a self-image that Vanna has forced upon me. Urmila's childhood friend and daughter-in-law Vanna is a symbol of the average Indian lady who strives to uphold her

reputation as the Perfect lady. Unlike other women, who reinforce Urmila's independence in every assessment of her life, Urmila has a very different outlook on life. Despite being joined in marriage to the man she adored, her wedded life quickly reduced to a social and familial obligation. Kishore, her childhood friend and lover, is still just Urmila's spouse due to a lack of real comprehension and psychological support. She feels as though all he wants from her is sex. As a commercial marine officer, Urmila has severe emotional distress anytime Kishore is gone from her for an extended length of time. In securities, instead of seeing that her need is not physical but rather another form of he makes sexual advances every time she attempts to disclose her mental health. Every time he leaves, she feels as though he has left absolutely nothing behind. Urmila's state, which is one of hopelessness and nothingness, illustrates how awful it is for a woman to be in a relationship that is empty and barren simply because they are joined by marriage.

Being financially secure and content in her life, Urmila has grown to have a high sense of self-worth, which makes her hesitant to bow before her husband. In addition, she finds it intolerable when her mother Inni, and sister-in-law Vanna bow before their husbands. Because Harish, her husband, dislikes baby talk, Vanna is unable to call her daughters as she pleases. Moreover, despite her strong desire to have a son, she is unable to express it to her husband considering only he has the authority to decide how many children they will have. The centerpiece of the story of the book, *Urmilala*, links the tales of Mira, Kalpana, Shakuntala, Sulu, Vanna, Priti, and Inni, finally illuminating the challenging environment faced by women of all ages and socioeconomic statuses. All feelings and themes are connected by Urmila's anguish as she grieves the loss of her infant daughter Anu, over time, this makes Urmila more sensitive to the pain of others. Three main tales are told in Urmila's narrative involves Kalpana's story, in which she is the victim of rape, Mira's story, in which Urmila's mother-in-law is raped in marriage, and Sakuntala's story, in which Kalpana's mother was raped. However, Urmila's story is particularly outspoken and the one that connects all of these tales the most. Urmila finds it more difficult to let go of her baby daughter's memory. She struggles with her baby's memories throughout the entire book, but she also realizes that forgetting is being unfaithful- I must turn away from these recollections and overcome them. I have to prevail in this one war to continue surviving. And treachery will be a characteristic of my success. Forgetting is betraying. Additionally, Urmila understands her responsibility to her kid, who merits her devotion and care.

The writer aims to expose the perplexing and biased viewpoint of society as a whole on some reasonable topics and its impact on the human psyche utilizing Sakuntala, a figure who is filled with terror, anguish, and powerlessness. Because of this, Shakuntala has conflicting sentiments for her traumatized daughter Kalpana; at one point, she is all love and admiration, while at another, she criticizes her for the way she is right now. When Sakuntala is portrayed by Deshpande with sufficient sensitivity, she represents a prime illustration of the deplorable and shameful situations that women face when their husbands forsake them. Our culture views marriage as fundamental, and individuals value it highly. Although Sakuntala only received children from her marriage and saw her sister Sulu in terrible circumstances, her desire for her daughters' marriage demonstrates the importance of marriage in every woman's life depends on other males to provide security. After her husband's shameful act with Kalpana was revealed, Sulu, the embodiment of love, support, and submission, took her own life. The novel's first and fourth sections are more specifically focused on the present, while the book's middle two sections are dedicated to the unraveling of the past via numerous interactions, the surfacing of memories, the physical surroundings, and introspection. Because of the relationship between Mohan and Jaya and because of the investigation into Mohan. The fourth section sees Jaya go Mohan travels to Delhi to settle his matters, and she goes home to check on her kid who has been mistakenly misplaced and for the mail. Ending on a good note,

Deshpande's story is better suited for women than any other. It is filled with small nuances of daily activities, anticipates, desires, and inconsequential incidents.

Women Potent Illustration of Interior Monologue

Deshpande's previous fictional heroines hibernate for a while at their parents' house. Usually, they come to these realizations without their spouses there. Since her husband Kishore works for the family business, Urmila doesn't need to travel to her parents' house as she did in the past to stay with her mother Inni. So, rather than being a regular part of the home, the Merchant Navy is more of a guest. She is also one of those absent spouses that Deshpande frequently features in his stories. While devastated by her daughter's failure, Urmila is worried and takes solace in the plight of two people- Kalpana, who is now dying, and Mira, who is experiencing a near-death experience. Three plot threads that were established in her previous novels are continued in *The Binding Vine*. Based on *Roots and Shadows*, Akka's marriage of horror and sadness is projected into Urmila's deceased mother-in-law Mira's experience. Mira was not allowed to choose to end the relationship since she did not love the man who was so neurotically in love with her. Passion and love are seen as a privilege of men. It is expected of women to fall in love and obey. The marriage that Mira has with her husband is one big nightmare. It is interracial rape. Additionally, Mira, a poet and journal keeper, passes away during childbirth. There are parallels to the Rukhmabai case from the late 1800s, in which the husband demanded that his parental rights be restored. As a result, events from the past continue to have an impact on the present.

In addition, Urmila understands her responsibility to her son, who needs her love and attention. The book attempts to show the perplexing and biased viewpoint of the world we live in on several reasonable topics and its impact on the minds of humans through the figure of Sakuntala, who happens to be full of fear, misery, and feeling helpless. Because of this, Sakuntala has conflicting sentiments for her traumatized daughter Kalpana; at one point, she is all love and admiration, while at another, she criticizes her for the way she is right now. Sakuntala is portrayed by Deshpande with enough sensitivity to make her the ideal representation of the deplorable and disgraceful situation that women face when their husband deserts them. Our society views marriage as fundamental, and individuals value it highly. Sakuntala, who witnessed her sister Sulu's sad state and received virtually nothing from her marriage, nevertheless, showed how important marriage is to women, who look to males for stability in their relationships. When her husband's shameful act with Kalpana was revealed, Sulu- the embodiment of love, support, and submission- committed suicide.

An additional viewpoint on women's predicament in marriage is provided by Mira's story. Mira doesn't have a physical presence in the book, but her poems and journal serve as a voice. The struggles that a married lady faces are revealed in Mira's publications. Ever since they met, Mira's husband has been driven to marry her with all of his heart. However, she never experienced any connection to herself with him, hence, Mira's interaction with her husband is comparable to sexual assault. The diary of Mira also describes her meeting with the poet Venu. She offered him a few of her published poems to read, and he asked, why do need to create poetry? For a young lady such as yourself, having children is sufficient. You write poetry; let us men handle the other kind. Such views of a representative male writer show the troublesome time that women writers have to face in a phallogocentric society. Mira's poetry haunts Urmila so much that, despite the strong objection of her over-attentive mother, Inni, and cynical friend Vanna, Urmila decides to translate and publish the poems. In our society, women are brought up in such a stereotypical way that, they start looking at the whole world from a male point of view. Urmila, however, appears to be the most rebellious of Deshpande's female protagonists. Being highly conscious of the injustices and inequalities prevailing in our society against women, she makes a positive effort to set things right.

Because Urmila, the primary character, tells the story, *The Binding Vine* is a stream-of-consciousness book. How did Urmila end up? She is in deep sadness over the death of her daughter. This fact is not disclosed to us. We only learn about it from Urmila's regrets. She uses associations to navigate her awareness. Urmila associates Anu's passing with Baiajji's passing and Baiajji with her childhood in Ranidurg. It is not mentioned that Urmila spent time with her grandparents. This is evident from Urmila's oscillating ideas. When Urmila comments on circumstances in life and Mira's outlook on life, she frequently turns to her inner monologues. For instance, we only know that Mira feared her husband's approaches; we are unaware that she was sexually assaulted during her marriage. What occurred to Mira too, happened to Kalpana, remarks Urmila. This reply is insightful even if it is nonverbal and not said out loud. The summation that Urmila gives at the end of the book is a potent illustration of an interior monologue. We have concrete evidence of Urmila's resilience, optimism, fortitude, and ability to move past her loss.

Conclusion

The narrative presents a fearless and brutal depiction of the lives of millions of Indian women who live in quiet, subordination, and ignorance while experiencing abuse, suffering, and even crimes. The narrative emphasizes themes of rape, violence, loss, etc., but it also honors the resilience of women and people who overcome adversity to find release, triumph, and even redemption. The book honors the notion that women can improve lives by banding collectively as partners and confidantes. During their lives, Deshpande's female protagonists battle to live as living human beings, trapped among both expressing themselves and patriarchal customs. The novelist in *The Binding Vine* deftly and compassionately examines the healing power of love inside a framework of losses and desperation, revealing a glimpse of hope. The tale concludes with Urmila remembering the love that provides the spring of life for humanity's existence.

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