

THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S
THAT LONG SILENCE AND THE BINDING VINE– A STUDY

MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

SOUTH WESTERN REGIONAL OFFICE

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SUBMITTED BY

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KARNATAKA STATE

April 2015

Annexure V

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg

New Delhi – 110 002

STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE IN RESPECT OF MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT

1. Name of Principal Investigator: **ROOPA RANI .G.S**
2. Dept. of College : Dept. of English,
S. D. M. College, Ujire
3. UGC approval No. and Date : **MRP (H)-0184/12-13/KAMA009/**

UGC-SWRO Dated 23SEPTEMBER 2013

4. Title of the Research Project : **“THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN SHASHI
DESHPANDE’S THAT LONG SILENCE
AND THE BINDING VINE – A STUDY”**

5. Effective date of starting Project: 6 October 2013

6. a. Period of Expenditure :from October 2013 to April 2015

b. Details of Expenditure:

Sl. No.	Item	Amount Approved	Expenditure Incurred
i	Books and Journals	Rs. 30,000/-	Rs. 30,000/-

ii	Equipment (please enclose the quotation)	Nil	Nil
iii	Contingency	Rs.40, 000/-	Rs.36, 000/-
iv	Field work / Travel (give details in the proforma at Annexure VI)	Rs.40, 000/-	Rs.44, 600/-
v	Hiring service	Nil	Nil
vi	Chemical and Glassware	Nil	Nil
vii	Overhead	Nil	Nil
viii	Any other items (please specify)	Nil	Nil

c. Staff

Date of appointment: Nil

Sl. No.	Expenditure incurred	From to	Amount approved(Rs)	Expenditure incurred(Rs)
1	Honorarium to PI (Retired Teachers) Rs. 12,000/- p.m.		NIL	
2	Post-Doctoral Fellow Fellowship @ Rs. 12,000/- p.m.		NIL	
3	Project Associate 10,000/- p.m.		NIL	
4	Project Fellow salary @ Rs. 8,000/- p.m.		NIL	

1. It is certified that the appointment (s) have been made in accordance with the terms and conditions laid down by the commission.
2. It is a result of check or audit objective, some irregularly is noticed, later date, action will be taken to refund, adjust or regularize the objected amounts.

3. Payment @ revised rates shall be made with arrears on the availability of additional funds.
4. It is certified that the grant of Rs. 1,10,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Ten Thousand) received from the University Grants Commission under the scheme of support for Minor Research Project entitled –“**THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN SHASHI DESHPANDE’S THAT LONG SILENCE AND THE BINDING VINE – A STUDY**” vide UGC letter No. **MRP (H)-0184/12-13/KAMA009/UGC-SWRO** Dated 23 September 2013 has been fully utilized for the purpose for which it was sanctioned and in accordance with the terms and conditions laid down by the University Grants Commission.

Signature of the Principal Principal

Investigator

STATUTORY AUDITOR

Annexure III

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

BAHADUR SHAH ZAFAR MARG

NEW DELHI – 110 002

Final report of the work done on the Minor Research Project.

(Report to be submitted within 6 weeks after completion of each year)

1. Project report no : Final report
2. UGC reference : **MRP (H)-0184/12-13/KAMA009/UGC-SWRO**
3. Period of report : from 23 September 2013 to April 2015
4. Title of research project: “**THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN SHASHI**

DESHPANDE’S THAT LONG SILENCE

AND THE BINDING VINE – A STUDY”

5. a) Name of the Principal Investigator: **ROOPA RANI G.S**
- b) Dept. and college where work has progressed: DEPT. OF ENGLISH
6. Effective date of starting of the project: 6 October 2013
7. Grant approved and expenditure incurred during the period of the report:
- a) Total amount approved Rs. 1,10,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Ten Thousand
only)
- b) Total expenditure: Rs. 1,10,600/-
- c) Report of the work done: (please attach separate sheet).
- i) Brief objective of the project: The Quest for Identity in Shashi

Deshpande's That Long Silence Binding Vine – A Study

- ii) Work done so far and results achieved and publications, if any resulting from the work (Give details of the papers and names of the journals) in which it has been published or accepted for publication – Work in progress (Sent for publication in an e journal)
- iii) Has the progress been according to original plan of work and towards achieving the objective, if not, state reasons.
- iv) Please indicate the difficulties, if any, experienced in implementing the project – No difficulty is met.
- v) If project has not been completed, please indicate the approximate time by which it is likely to be completed. A summary of work done for the period (Annual basis) may please be sent to the Commission on a separate sheet.
- VI) If the project has been completed, please enclose a summary of the Findings of the study. Two bound copies of the final report of work done may also be sent to the Commission – ATTACHED
- vii) Any other information, which would help in evaluation of work done on the project. At the completion of the project, the first report should indicate the Output, such as (a)

Manpower trained (b) Ph. D. awarded (c) Publication of Results (d) other impact, if any
– Steps are taken to publish book on this topic.

Signature of the Principal Principal

Investigator

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is my duty to show my gratitude and indebtedness to the management and the principal, Dr. B. Yashovarma, S.D.M. College (Autonomous) Ujire, for the support and encouragement to take up this Minor Research Project.

My sincere thanks are due to the Deputy Secretary, UGC, Bangalore, for providing me an opportunity to undertake the project.

I wish to record my sincere thanks to Dr.Shankaranarayan, HOD and the staff members of English Department.I am grateful to Dr. Udaya Chandra P.N, Registrar, S.D.M College (autonomous) for his guidance.

I thank Mr. Yogesh, Librarian and other staff members of S.D.M. College, Ujire. I also remember and thank all the people and Universities, Colleges who directly or indirectly supported in completing my project. I thank all the staff members of English Department, PES College, and Bangalore for their kind support.

My deepest thanks should to my friends and colleagues Mr. Lakshminarayan, Mr. ShashikanthKurodi, Mr. Rakesh for their guidance, timely co-operation and help. I also thank my long time friend Ms. PavithraSatheeshkumar for helping me from a long distance.

I am indebted to my parents Mrs.Kamala, Mr.Shivalingappa and my brother Mr. Srinivas who have been more understanding and standing by my side in all my endeavors of life. My special and earnest thanks must go to my husband Mr. Mahantesh who has been more tolerant and supportive throughout this undertaking.

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Introduction

Indian English fiction has always dedicated itself to the demonstration of realities. In the works of Indian English writers like Nirad. C. Chaudhuri, R K Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and Salman Rushdie gave space to different national as well as social realities in order to arrive at numerous preferred transformations. It may be the changing site of life, the country politics, natural features, hunger, poverty or any other aspect of reality. Literature has integrated everything within its realm. One important element that needs examination is the issue of women marginality and their status in the modern society. The beginning of English in nineteenth century English helped as an ideological force behind social reform and control.

Feminism, as a concept, has originated in the west; its universal significance and relevance remains unharmed. However, the enormous scope of feminism has provided women writers across the world with the vocabulary and framework to articulate the experiences of female oppression and feminist longings. The emergence of women novelists has considerably influenced the change in attitude as well. Their writing reflects a shift in the sensibility of the writer as well as the reader. The Indian women writes who are educated, middleclass women express in their writings the dissatisfaction with the

predicament women trapped in suppressive institutions such as child marriage, dowry, prohibitions on women's education, arranged marriages, domestic life, male and female relationship, patriarchal society etc. Influenced by the feminist movement in the west, Indian women writers too reflected the domestic and their psychological ordeal in their writing. Men devote more time to work outside the home; hence the patriarchal society considers domestic chores done by women are inferior to men. A large number of novels have appeared over the decades dealing with various subjects. The treatment is often powerful and novels end up glorifying the writer of Indian women like patience, devotion and acceptance of sufferings as the design of fate. Representing "the female voice" is a way of identifying women's place in the society. The female voice is the expression of the female experience and view. It is the reflection of the "female identity". The best way of expressing female self-awareness emerges through literature. Therefore, the female voice is established by constructing a self-conscious and a self-defining character against the patriarchal system.

Born in 1938, in a small town of Dharwad, Shashi Deshpande is the daughter of the famous Kannada playwright. She was educated in Bombay and Bangalore, and acquired an M.A. in English from the Mysore University. She has written several novels and short stories. Despite having only five important novels to her credit, Deshpande has emerged as one of the

mainstream women writers in India today. Her work is comparable to that of the established writers Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal, her contemporaries, who have also registered their protest against patriarchal oppression in their writing. Comparatively, Shashi Deshpande is a new name on the scene of Indian English writing. However, despite the smaller volume of her writing, her work has drawn critical attention because of her detailed, sensitive and realistic representations of the Indian middle class woman in the domestic sphere. Her concern for women and their oppression is reflected strongly in all her writing. Her novels and short stories depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated Indian woman caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self-expression, individuality and independence for the woman on the other. Her fiction explores the search of the woman to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role as daughter, wife and mother. She has examined a variety of common domestic cries, which trigger off the search. Deshpande's concern and sympathy are primarily for the woman. While revealing the woman's struggle to secure self-respect and self-identity for herself, the author subtly bares the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by women in our society. This attitude of Deshpande's makes her feminist writer.

Being famous contemporary Indian novelists in English. She deals with the inner world of Indian women in her novels and portrays her heroines in a realistic manner. Basically she writes about the conflict between tradition and modernity in relation to women in the middle class society. Deshpande's protagonists are women struggling to find their own voice and continuation in search to define herself. Her major theme is 'quest for identity'. Her main concern is the urge to find oneself, to create space for oneself, to grow on one's own. The strong point about her fictions is her delineation of the woman's inner world. Her novels explore the search of the women to fulfill herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role as daughter, wife and mother. She had examined a variety of common domestic crisis, which trigger off the search. Deshpande's concern and sympathy and self-identity for herself, and subtly bears the multiple levels of oppression.

A woman is the centre of her fictional world. Her desires, efforts and failures in the traditional Indian Society are the main points in her novels. She makes it clear that hers is not the strident and militant kind of a feminism, which sees man as the cause of all troubles. Her depiction of women's world is authentic, realistic, and credible. She presents the middle class women in her novels. Her writing is gender specific. Feminism is at the core of her novels. She deals with a woman's psyche and the way she is made to feel and inferior being, and

unwanted child, a burden on the family. She is also the one and only contemporary writer who has given graphic details about the girl-child and her psychology. Most of her women characters are able to transcend their identity crisis by analyzing their childhood and the process of their upbringing. Her novels are usually narrated by female protagonists who strive to find out their own selves throughout the novels. Her heroines try to find out their own selves through writing and they ultimately reach a resolution in their lives. No doubt, they are haunted by the memories of past and feel a kind of worthlessness, but towards the end they realize their selves. This is one of the important needs and messages in today's world where, women are facing hollowness, a vacuity in their lives. Though, they appear to be successful outwardly, but they seem to lack direction and feel a sense of futility. Deshpande's novels fit into such a scenario and help females realize their potential in a positive manner. The trials and tribulations facing by women of contemporary world struggling in patriarchal set up society has made to contemplate on the topic quest for identity. The quest for female identity has its roots in the patriarchal set up, where man is given every kind of freedom. He has the right to choose his aim. His emotions are taken care of. Blunders, errors, or anything which may be acceptable or unacceptable committed by him are either ignored or mutely accepted and considered, whereas women cannot afford a little deviation from

the set rules. She has to conform to social norms. If not, she is alleged as a woman of freemorals. Shashi Deshpande portrays the new Indian woman and her dilemma. She concerns herself with the plight of the modern Indian woman trying to understand herself and to preserve her identity as wife, mother and above all as a human being. Deshpande unveils the subtle process of oppression and gender differentiation at work in the family and in the male oriented society. One of the features of their upbringing is their inculcation as girls into the socially defined roles as daughter/wife/mother. Deshpande shows great sensitivity and awareness to the ways and means through which a young girl is prepared for her future status in society. *That Long Silence*, is about self-doubts and fears which Jaya undergoes till she affirms herself. *The Binding Vine*, deals with the personal tragedy of the protagonist Urmi to focus attention on victims like Kalpana and Mira; victims of man's lust and woman's helplessness. That Long Silence the most critically acclaimed novel and the allusion in the novel's title is to a British Feminist Manifesto quoted in the epigraph:

“If I were a man and cared to know the world I lived in,
I almost think it would make me a shade uneasy-the
Weight of that Long Silence of one half the
world.”¹

In *That Long Silence*, Jaya undergoes great mental trauma because she has refused to go into hiding with her husband as an enquiry against his financial irregularities is on. Like the mythological character Gandhari, she kept her eyes shut to her husband's illegal earning at office. Even her journalistic writings are circumscribed by her husband's likes and dislikes. Finally she is able to evaluate her expectations of life. After having rejected traditional role models, Deshpande's protagonists display great strength and courage in evolving, as their own role models as per the requirement of their social setting, her characters go through a process of self - examination before they reach self actualization. Thus, ShashiDeshpande has been successful in creating strong women protagonists who refuse to get crushed under the weight of their personal tragedies, and face life with great courage and strength. Comparatively, they appear to more life - like and more akin to the educated, middle class, urban Indian woman of today. In the novels *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine*, the major concern is to depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated Indian women caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self-expression, individuality and independence for the women on the other. It is a representation of a woman's struggle in a society marked by male ideology and of her situation as a woman writer in a patriarchal literarily tradition

Female Protagonists in the novels

Literature has always reflected the realism, dealt with the social predicaments and thus treated the aridity of lives. However, one such important dimension that needs contemplation is the issue of women marginality and their status in the contemporary society. Women are an integral part of human civilization, but they are regarded subordinate to men because it is believed that she was made out of man. Traditionally, a ‘good woman’ is always synonymous with good wife and a good wife must be faithful and virtuous like Sita or Savitri. Indian woman whose symbol has been that of silent-sufferer and who is an upholder of Indian culture has been one of the major themes of Indian English writers.

Shashi Deshpande, being one, voices the problems, which trap the middle class educated Indian women. The themes of marital incompatibility, identity crisis, imbalanced family relationships and the patriarchal gaze would be explored by taking into consideration Shashi Deshpande’s *That Long Silence* and *The BindingVine*. The novels highlight the struggle of the conscience of shackled Indian Women characters, their journey from darkness to light presenting the problems that majority of women are still faced with both at the domestic and social levels.

Women are not only viewed as a social category but a culturally conditioned and constructed category as well. It has been quite a 'great tradition' for women to follow the set norms of 'pavitrata' and surrender to the dictates of patriarchy. Women continue to suffer even in the Post-modern era whether at the hand of their own conditioned psyche or the society that they belong to. Indian feminism, therefore, exists as a clear response to the issues specifically confronting many Indian women. Shashi Deshpande's heroines belong to the middle class society. They are all modern, educated, conscious and urban. All of them find marriage painful and tormenting but they do not break away from their marriage bonds rather they try to make a balance between tradition and modernity. All her protagonist are career women, who are not satisfied with the rhetoric equality between Men and Women but want to see that the right to an individual life and the right to development of their individual capabilities are realized in their own lives. They want to come forward to bear the burden of work along with their fellow men in every walk of life. They try to make a balance between their family and career, seeing to it as far as possible, that their profession will not affect their married life.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* presents a realistic image of educated middle-class women. The novel gains authenticity from the fact that Jaya, the heroine, is a well read woman, blessed with literary sensibility though nurtured

in silence which corresponds with her fictional role. Jaya is a modern, convent-educated, fluent-English speaking woman and a creative writer who symbolizes the emerging new woman conscious of her status in the society. After seventeen years of troubled life in silence, Jaya pens her story revealing her feelings, incidents of ups and downs that caused her despair and disappointment, and endangered her life. She begins the novel by saying that she is not writing “a story of a callous, insensitive husband and a sensitive suffering wife. I’m writing of us. A lot of discussion takes place in the house of Jaya whether Mohan ought to be Jaya’s husband. Jaya ultimately makes up her mind to marry Mohan. The writer brings an unexpected turn in the plot at the end of the novel. The marriage of Jaya and Mohan is on the verge of a break. Shashi Deshpande probably wants us to draw the inference from Jaya: women should accept their own responsibility for what they are, see how much they have contributed to their own victimization, instead of putting the blame on everybody except themselves (p.169).

In the novel *That Long Silence* the Phenomenon how a woman’s identity is defined by others and her name keeps on changing according to the wishes of others. The protagonist is known by two names: Jaya and Suhasini. Jaya, which means victory, is the name given by her father when she was born, and Suhasini, the name given after her marriage, which means a “soft, smiling,

placid, motherly woman.” Both the names symbolize the traits of her personality. The former symbolizes victory and the latter submission. Jaya writes realistic stories for the newspapers and magazines apart from her domestic duties. The readers, editors and even her husband Mohan love her writing dealing with man-woman relationships. A realistic story of her even won her a prize that narrates about “a man who could not reach out to his wife except through her body”. But Mohan gets hurt assuming that the story is about their personal life and it is revealed to the world, He says:

They will all know now, all those people who read this and know us, they will know that these two persons are us, they will think I am this kind of a man, they will think I am this man, How can I look anyone in the face again? And you, how could you write these things, how could you write such ugly things, how will you face people after this? (Pg.143-44).

Feminist literary criticism that originated in the 60's out of the feminist movement demanding equal rights for women has gained strength and popularity in subsequent decades in India too. Women writers have come forward to voice their feminist approach to life, the patriarchal family set-up. They believe that the concept of gender is not merely a biological phenomenon but it has a social construction as Simone de Beauvoir says,

“One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.”²

A woman is commonly constructed as a submissive, surrendered and suppressed section of the society. Jaya, the heroine of the novel *That Long Silence* is not a born woman in this sense. The social taboos associated with marriage make her a woman:

“She was a child who used to get angry very soon. But after her marriage she tolerated her anger. She realized that to Mohan anger made a woman ‘unwomanly’.”(p.83)

This process of becoming a woman is beautifully shown in the character of Jaya. When she was born her father named her Jaya, which means victory. But after the marriage she is rechristened as Suhasini which means “a soft smiling, placid motherly woman.”(p.15) The former stands for a feminist figure and the latter symbolize submission, a traditional woman. She is brought up in a loving and affectionate care of the parents. On the one hand she has been given modern education to the west and she evolves herself into a writer. On the other hand her parents inculcate in her the image of traditional, ideal Hindu ladies like Sita, Savitri and Drupadi. She comes to learn that in this male dominated society a woman has no independent identity. She is the daughter, wife, and mother of somebody. She has no name. She is defined in terms of relationship with men. One feels that that the modern, independent and equal partner of the

society. The new roles lures her but the insecurity involved in it and deep rooted tradition in her do not allow her to give up the old guise completely. Centuries-old sheltering has made women too weak to lead an independent life. This is what we call a feminist dilemma, which is the root of *That Long Silence*. It is this dilemma which makes Jaya observes such a long silence despite being a writer. There is a clash between the writer and the housewife in her. The writer in her expects her to express her views and experiences before the society; but the housewife demands silence on her part. In this internal tug of war the housewife wins and she remains silent of which she gets a setback in her writing career. Publishers refuse her manuscripts because she does not bring the fire of her experiences into play in her writings. Her husband discourages her:

“I have know then that it hadn’t mattered to Mohan that I had written a good story, a story about a couple, a man who could not reach out to his wife except through her body. For Mohan it had mattered that people might think the couple was us, that the man him.”(p.144)

Being caught in this dilemma, she is withered. She neither becomes an ideal wife, which she tries to though complainingly nor revolts against the patriarchal yoke to liberate herself. Deshpande’s heroines in general lack the courage and strength to do so. They represent the modern women in transition.

Jaya suffers from inner conflict, confusion and indecision and fail to express them. She longs to make her own identity for which she is competent enough. She is intellectually independent, too. But Mohan does not understand her feelings. He neither loves her nor encourages her. He does not adopt a violent means to tame her. Kamat, Jaya's neighbor and a widower with whom she could freely discuss her stories, remarks that they are lacking in emotion and anger. She replies that expressing anger is not a womanly trait. A woman can never be angry. She can only be neurotic, hysterical frustrated (p.147). Kamat says contemptuously:

I never can imagine you writing this. This you, I mean. I can see the woman who writes this . . . she's plump, good humored, pea brained, but shrewd, devious, skimming over life (p.149).

The novelist unravels the mental conflict of both Jaya and Mohan in the small Dadar flat. They have run into "stormy weather and their secure sheltered life washes away like a water color in a rainy storm. The reactions of both Jaya and Mohan to the situation are different. Jaya feels normal in keeping house in the flat. But, Mohan becomes inconsistent and feels restless and insecure. He moves restlessly in the house un-able to sit down at one place as if waiting for something. He says the waiting is getting him down. Jaya reacts that it is really hard for Mohan to wait, as he is not used to it. She distinguishes between the

nature of a man's waiting and a woman's: He did not know what waiting was. He had always moved steadily from one moment to the next. But for women the waiting game starts early in childhood. Wait until you get married. Wait until your husband comes. Wait until you go to your in-laws' home. Wait until you have kids (pg.30).

I had to control myself, I had to cork in this laughter. But it was too late; I could not hold it in any longer. Laughter burst out of me, spilled over, and Mohan stared at me in horror as I rocked haplessly. When finally I recovered me I was alone in the room. Silence flowed into it. I wiped my face and tried to realize what I'd done (pg.122).

Despite her fighting spirit, Jaya is absolutely uncertain about herself. She is always in conflict with tradition and modernity in her mind. It reflects in the two names—Jaya and Suhasini by which she has been called. The former is given by her father which means 'victory' and the latter given by her husband Mohan meaning "a soft, smiling, placid motherly woman". Thus she has two selves—Suhasini deeply rooted in tradition and Jaya attempting to overcome the constraints of tradition. She does not want to be a "Sita following her husband into exile, Savitri dogging Death to reclaim her husband, Draupadi stoically sharing her husband's travails". She understands that there is pain in

hostility and anguish in rebellion. This is an echo of her own unhappy condition. Hence, she chooses a submissive attitude: No. what I have to do with these mythical women? I can't fool myself. The truth is simpler. Two bullocks yoked together . . . it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful (pg. 11-12). She asserts: The panic has gone. I'm Mohan's wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan's wife. Now I know that kind of a fragmentation is not possible (p.191). Over-coming her turmoil, she attempts to come to terms with herself by trying to write about herself and family and thus decides to break a 'Long Silence.' As a matter of fact, Shashi Deshpande portrays the image of a new woman in Jaya who silently accepts everything in the bearing and then breaks off silence. As a woman of maturity, she redefines her identity and relationship with her husband. "Her inner turmoil's are so bitter that she is unable to speak them out and remains silent in order not to be frustrated and disappointed after the disapproval of her actions by the society". Her maintaining 'long silence' denotes that the influence of the tradition is still there on the newly acquired professional roles of modern women. Jaya revolts in silence, which is her natural condition. Sarla Palkar regards That Long Silence as a self-critique and says Shashi Deshpande probably wants us to draw the inference from Jaya: women should accept their own responsibility for

what they are, see how much they have contributed to their own victimization, instead of putting the blame on everybody except themselves (p.169).

In order to have a well-balanced conjugal life, it is very important that husband and wife be on a par with each other. They should supplement and not supplant each other. Further, they should know each other well physically as well as emotionally. It is this harsh reality that Deshpande tries to project through the female protagonist who, at the end, chooses to break her long silence of the past. It is not only Jaya's silence that Deshpande is highlighting but the silence of each and every character in the novel from different strata of society. The novel is not only about Jaya's efforts to obliterate the silence that is suffocating her. It is also about the despair and resignation of women like Mohan's mother; Jaya's servant; Jaya's mentally disturbed cousin Kusum. It also deals with Mohan's silence, which is the silence of a man who speaks but can find no one to listen to him. Thus, in the novel, Deshpande has presented not a woman who revolts openly in the beginning and later on reconciles to the situation, but a kind of woman who wants to revolt, but ultimately does not. Her inner turmoils are so bitter that she is unable to speak them out and remains silent in order not to be frustrated and disappointed at the disapproval of her actions by the society. She is unable to unfold the truth. Her image becomes like that of a bird who has got wings and knows that it can fly, but, somehow, does not. In the

same way, Jaya is aware of her abilities and she knows that she can expose them openly, but somehow she does not. She always remains silent, which indicates that the traditional roles of women still have primacy over all the newly acquired professional roles (Ibid. pp. 46-47).

That Long Silence traces the passage of a woman through a maze of doubts and fears towards her affirmations. Looking at the man-woman relationship objectively, the novelist does not blame entirely the men for subjugation of women. She sees how both men and women find it difficult to outgrow the images and roles assigned to them by the society.

Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* (1993) is very much similar to her earlier novels, as it sketches her middle-class female protagonist predicament in a male-dominated world, where she has very little scope to give voice to her concerns. Although the story in this particular novel at the superficial level appears to be very identical to her other novels, but if one explores it deeply he can easily sense the peculiarity in it. In all other novels we find that the protagonist is of paramount importance and all the other characters are used to feature her concerns and feelings. But in this novel the minor characters play a very significant role; the protagonist Urmi plays the role of anchor, it is she who is used by the novelist very cleverly to expose the sufferings of women from different sections of our society. The Binding Vine deals with the

multidimensions of its central character Urmi. Urmi is an intelligent, educated middle-class wife, who is employed as a lecturer in a college. Urmi's vision towards life is quite different from other women of our society. She is one who affirms her independence and freedom in each and every judgment of her life. Urmi united in marriage with the man whom she preferred, but is desperate in her married life because of her ego and to some extent Kishore her husband is accountable for it. Since the beginning of her married life Urmi finds that the bond between her and her husband is not that of love, though she believes that the anchor to attach oneself to in this strange world is love. From the very first night of their wedding she feels distanced from Kishore. She realized that “he looked trapped.”(137) Marriage, which was a spiritual bond in the olden times, has become only a sexual, legal bond in modern days. Each time she tries to reveal her emotional insecurity, Kishore asserts himself sexually. Kishore, the typical Indian husband, never understands the depth of her feeling. She openly reveals her emotional insecurity. She says: “Each time you leave me the parting is like death.” (139)She tries to tell him twice, and both the times, he finds the solution only in the physical relationship. But to her, “sex is only a temporary answer, I came out of it to find that the lights had come back...I was afraid of what I would see, I turned round and fell asleep.”(140) This incompatibility ends in alienation. She thinks:” Each relationship,

always imperfect, survives on hope. Am I to give up this hope? (141) Thus, a marriage that suppresses Urmi's human demand, a marriage that denies her the fullness of experience forces her to take refuge in Dr Bhaskar Jain's friendship. She tries to find herself in the relationship with Bhaskar because he is a patient listener to her talk and gives her the talk and gives her the right response. He cares for her emotions and makes her feel complete.

The problem with Urmi is that she is brimming with confidence, as is financially independent and well settled in her life. Due to this economic stability she has developed a kind of super ego in herself, which makes her reluctant to submit before her husband. Moreover, she cannot tolerate the submission of Vanaa (her sister-in-law) and her mother before their spouses. The main character Urmi, in this novel is a clever, educated woman working as a lecturer in a college. Against the wishes of her parents she gets married to a man of her own choice but is desperate about her married life. Her problem is that being financially emancipated and having confidence in herself as she works outside the home, she has developed a kind of super ego, which enables her not to submit before her husband, Kishore. She cannot also bear the submission of Vanaa, her friend and sister-in-law, and her mother before their spouses. She says: "but her submissiveness, her willingness to go along with him in whatever he wants makes me angry."

The novel focuses on the struggle of the inner mind and self of restricted women characters. Urmila, who struggles through her own gloomy domestic atmosphere not subduing but voicing and trying to sort out things for herself and for other women also be they her mother-in-law Mira or the rape victim Kalpana in the novel. The novel begins in Urmila's personal loss. She, having lost her daughter, fights the despair alone as her husband, Kishore, a sailor by profession remains out mostly. Urmila is quite different from earlier protagonists in composure. She possesses a better control over herself and her relations also. Though being married to a man of her own choice, she is desperate of her marital life. Kishore and Urmila don't share the bond of love and understanding. The incompatibility results in alienation. Irrespective of being economically independent, Urmila requires Kishore by her side as a supporting oak to tangle herself around. The novel describes the trauma and anguish that she goes through and the stages through which she passes before coming to terms with the death of her daughter. While struggling, she comes across the poetry written by her Mira, her dead mother-in-law and through her diaries she gets to know about Mira's suffering as a woman and as a victim of forced marriage. Mira comes as a refuge to Urmila as she easily identifies with her and finds relief from the excruciating pain. Mira happens to be a silent victim of loveless marriage who faces death at a very young age but through

her poetry is revealed her desire to be recognized as a writer and a poet. Mira happens to be a woman, who used pen as a vehicle for self-expression, to save herself from abuse, from anonymity and mutilation in the prison like house of her husband. Mira represents a multitude of women who are forced into marriages at a very young age and succumb to the lust of their husbands. Urmila gathers the courage to publish her poems and reveals Mira's suffering to the world. Through Mira Urmila gains a new insight into herself. Though accused of being a traitor to Mira, Urmila remains firm enough in her resolution to break the silence of women in the name of social taboo or family honor. She advocates love as the binding force in relationships. The present day worldviews marriage as a business institution and that is why the hollow marriages are dissatisfying both physically as well as spiritually. Instead they confuse a woman whether to revolt or submit because both end in discontent and it is this set up, which requires change. As Urmila herself says that "each relationship, always imperfect, survives on hope..." The Binding Vine is projection of woman's biological needs and raises the questions of woman's right over her own body even within the marital domain. There is an effort to restore the discarded reality of life. The Binding Vine depicts how the educated earning woman helps poor women inculcation the spirit of solidarity among women. The novel is also about the agony of a wife who is the victim of

marital rape; the plight of women raped outside marriage, who would rather suffer in silence in the name of the family honor. Through her novel, she expresses the frustrations and disappointments of women who experience social and cultural oppression in the society. The story of Deshpande's protagonists always begins at the critical point where despite "total" freedom and sometimes total surrender to the expectations of their husbands, they are discontented and unhappy. Therefore, they wish to re-define themselves. A woman must give expression to her inner space and self; at the same time, she need not repudiate the social institution of marriage and family (and the duties that accompany it) or her basic human values.

Deshpande presents the conflicts of her protagonists without presenting simple solutions. She lets the different choice speak themselves, the choice to conform path to break free. "Having a life outside the family is very important for women."¹⁰ Accordingly all her women protagonists succeed in construction a self through individual professional achievement. They also come to terms with themselves by redefining their relationship, accepting at the same time social constraints and emerge as fully developed individuals doing justice in their domestic as well as professional fields.

A close study of Shashi Deshpande's novels reveals her deep insight into the plight of Indian women who feel smothered and restricted in a tradition-bound,

male dominated society. She delineates her women characters in the light of their hopes, fears, aspirations and frustrations, who are aware of their strengths and limitations; but find themselves thwarted by the opposition and pressure from a society conditioned overwhelmingly by the patriarchal mindset. She highlights their inferior position and the subsequent degradation in a male-dominated society. Deshpande's women protagonists are victims of the prevalent gross gender discrimination first as daughter and later as wives. Although she has a small volume of literary works to her credit, her works have drawn great critical attention and acclaim for her sensitive and realistic representation of the Indian middle-class women. Shashi Deshpande's sincere concern for women and her craft as a novelist are reflected strongly in all her novels. Deshpande is not against the institution of marriage, as her woman protagonists strive to make their marriages work in their attempts to lead a meaningful existence. Shashi Deshpande keep her narratives female centered and gives an intimate insight into the psyche of the middle class Indian women who feel oppressed by their patriarchal socialization. She provides new ideals for better man-women relationship, there by broadening the scope of woman existence. She prescribes a balance between tradition and modernity as a working philosophy for the contemporary woman. To her tradition are the values of harmony and co-existence that symbolize the Indian way of life, and

modernity is the assertion of the independent individual identity. Deshpande feels that the woman must venture out of the familial framework to give full expression to her individuality and identity.

Shashi Deshpande's novels are realistic depiction of the anguish and the conflict of the modern educated middle class women caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand, and self-expression, individuality independence on the other, her protagonists feel lost and confused and explore way to fulfill themselves as a human being. Shashi Deshpande's concern and sympathy are essentially for the woman. She has given an honest portrayal of her fears, sufferings, disappointments and frustrations. Besides revealing the woman's struggle to secure self-respect and self-identity, the author lays bare the multiple levels of oppression, including sexual oppression. Shashi Deshpande's protagonists' quest for identity gets largely accentuated due to their frustrating experiences born of the prohibitive nature of the Indian Patriarchal Society. In her novels, the male characters husbands, lovers, fathers and other relations- display different aspects of patriarchy and oppression. While the majority of husbands are patriarchal in their approach, the older men particularly the fathers are broad-minded. Surprisingly the male friends are 'feminist' in their approach and sympathize with the protagonists a lot. Deshpande's male characters only serve to enable the protagonists to define

their identities more completely. Shashi Deshpande states that she does not “believe in a simple opposition of bad men, I don’t believe the world is like that at all” (Prasad 78). Thus she has constructed motifs of patriarchy and oppression by employing the method of negation and affirmation. Her protagonists are victims of the Indian Patriarchy and after initial submission resist the oppressive situation, thereby reflecting the author’s view that a woman must assert herself within marriage to preserve her identity.

The protagonists in Deshpande’s novels are on the road to self-discovery. Usually some domestic crisis propels them in this quest. Shashi Deshpande’s novels also frequently ruminate over the condition of human alienation and the vicissitudes of time. Past resides with the present, and the novels often digress into Indian myths, fables and folktales that show the power of tradition and the society’s reluctance to change. But her novels are infused with a rich inclusiveness, which in itself enhances the possibilities of the hope. Her novels are essentially reflective of the unenviable situation of the beleaguered contemporary Indian women, which she has depicted with great artistic finesse and astounding originality. Shashi Deshpande’s realistic depiction of the contemporary Indian women’s situation and the practical solution she puts forward in agreement her novels, a perpetual importance for their affirmative eloquent marriage for women and the whole humanity as well. Deshpande

compares with women from an earlier generation as well as with women from the lower classes in her novels. The representation of these women advocates how women can also be strong and determined to better lives without any liberty and choice.

The protagonists learn from these minor characters that it is they who have to make life possible by standing up for themselves and resisting oppression. By portraying the minor characters and the protagonists together, Deshpande seems to be suggesting a reworking of the Indian idea of womanhood which both recognizes the reality of Indian society and repudiates stereotypes about women. The male characters in her fiction are there to represent the dynamics of patriarchy in the marital sphere. These men see women as made in their own image, and therefore incapable of existing as independent human beings. The protagonists' resolve to resist such marginalization marks the beginning of a major revolution in their outlook. The protagonists' recall of traditional precepts from the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagwad Gita*, emphasizing larger existential questions is of a piece with this. The recognition of responsibility in choice (That Long Silence), the meaning of *Dharma* in one's life (The Binding Vine) are severe issues that cleverly enclose Deshpande's works and take them beyond feminist concerns and feminist dilemma.

Delineation of Man and Woman Relationships

ShashiDeshpande's approach to man-woman relationship, displays well her strong sense of reality. Instead of portraying the attractive love story of married life, she shows the hard realities of life, in the life of a well-educated girl with literary sensibilities, and the effect of difference in her ideals and reality. But no one can degrade us, until we allow others to do so. Once we realize the power within us, then the whole world appears powerless. Jaya, by self-introspection, decides to give voice to her different roles in her life. She becomes the real Jaya, the winner when she conquers her own fears and fences, to bring the hidden self to the front In *That Long Silence* Shashi Deshpande depicts two different pictures of Indian women engaged in domestic chores to earn their living and educated middle class women. In spite of their different social backgrounds, they have one thing in common as they believe that a woman's success depends on the success of marriage. Women in this novel, no matter to which class they belong, they prefer to get married and maintain their marriage, for failure in marriage is considered to be a woman's greatest failure. The predicament of Jeeja, the housemaid and her granddaughter Tara reveals their poverty stricken lives. Tara is married off at the age considered suitable by her parents, not caring to know enough about the other particulars of the boy who is like any other man. The main focus is on Jaya who is the narrator-

protagonist of this novel. In spite of the delicate swings of mood, joy and despair, the anguish of the narrator protagonist Jaya, a housewife and a failed writer she is always at the silent level. This heart-wringing silence of Jaya really disturbs the reader. The question of her identity haunts her so obsessively that she fails to find her 'self'.

Her feminine dilemma is expressed in her indecisive state of mind. She is determined to break the 'Long Silence'. Despite her marriage to Mohan and subsequently becoming a mother of two children, she is lonely. Her husband cannot understand her feelings as a result of which she is torn from within. Here Shashi Deshpande has held a mirror before us. Most of the Indian women resemble her characters. 'Adjustment' is the word around which, many women's life and career revolves. Apart from Shashi Deshpande's prominence to feminine sensibility, it doesn't seem that she tries to dehumanize her male characters. Although she raises a question on patriarchal cultural pattern of Indian society, she does not hold a radical feminist stance. Deshpande's heroines have revolting urge in mind; still they cannot reject their Indian cultural roots. Jaya does not reject her family and home but tries to establish her own identity in the midst of these chores. In this sense, her male characters are different. Jaya chooses to be silent in spite of her urge to revolt.

In middle class Marathi Brahmin family, as described in Shashi Deshpande's novels it was difficult in the 80s for men to get education and establish their own identity in the society. Educated women like Jaya were in confusion whether to continue their traditional role or revolt against the tradition that puts them in manacles. Both men and women were in dilemma about their roles. Men were worried about their jobs and family. As they were still considered as "the sheltering tree", they had to support their family.

In Shashi Deshpande's novels there are examples where male characters have got their education through many hardships, depending on the benevolence of other Brahmins for resources. Mohan is a true representative of this period. He is typically a salaried man; he knows no other life except the life centered on office work and family. He is ambitious, fond of prestige and fame in society, cares for money and material comforts. He is a materialist and wants to support family single-handed. In this task he could not get enough financial support from his family. In a way he tries to be a perfect Indian man who considers himself as the sole breadwinner and the head of the family. He takes Jaya for granted and it hurts her. He wants Jaya to think alike him and induces her not to write something, which would endanger their marriage. But when he is caught in an act of malpractice he actually urges her to write something to earn money. But Jaya understands that it is nothing else but a 'delusion of

happiness' and she becomes indifferent in her attitude towards him. Mohan is happy and takes pride in the fact that he is a writer's husband but gets infuriated when he reads one of her stories. He always wanted a wife who is educated and fluent in English. When he saw Jaya he liked her not because she was beautiful but she was talking in English fluently and was intelligent, but after marriage he never allows her to be herself and do what she wants. This diabolic nature of his makes Jaya angry. She has every reason to be bitter with him. He has suppressed every facet of her personality. Man's greed for money and materialistic things is seen in the character of Mohan. He resorts to illegal and unfair means of getting extra perks to lead a comfortable life and is suspended from the job. In order to escape from enquiry he decides to stay in Jaya's flat at Dadar. He expects his wife to share his anxiety, doubts and unhappiness. But Jaya, being so indifferent fails to understand him. In a moment of clash with Jaya, he leaves the home without informing her about his whereabouts. He very clearly avoids stating the fact that his actions are a part of his ambition. The very reasons of his becoming materialist can be traced back in his childhood, which was traumatic for him. His childhood was poverty-stricken and like many other middle class Brahmin boys he had to depend on a rich old man who offered charity for his studies.

As a result of this humiliation and experience he had become more greedy and ambitious. His father had also played a vital role in the development of his psyche. His father had been very cruel, dictatorial and tyrannical with his mother. She tolerated everything in silence and so Mohan had in his mind the definite image of wife thus: "His image of a wife has been created by the submissive woman that he has seen in his family in his growing years." (Pg. 83) Mohan has seen strength in his mother who suffered silently the tortures of her husband. Here silence comes with altogether different connotation. For Jaya it represents suffering, despair, despondent and helplessness and through silence she wants to protest against tradition. But Mohan sees strength in his mother's suffering. Therefore in spite of his hatred for his father, he actually behaves in the same way. Mohan's sister Vimala too suffered the pain and agony caused by a tumor silently. The doctors too were surprised by her silent suffering. Rahul, Jaya's son who has been vacating with the family friend Ashok and Rupa, runs away.

Jaya finds the very edifice of her existence crumbling. Mohan leaves her accusing her of not being supportive at the time of crisis. Jaya is not even seen to know the details of the trouble at her husband's workplace. When Mohan asks her to shift to Dadar's flat, she agrees to do so without even asking the details. There is a complex and confused attitude towards the 'self' and also in

Mohan's relation to Jaya. His unjust anger and enraged remarks are examples of his frustration. Mohan crushes both the woman and the writer in Jaya in his frustration. He fails to protect and support his family. Like the protagonist of 1980s he actually sees a threat in Jaya that she may overpower him and proves to be more successful. He is a man who does not love the woman the way she expects him to do. That is why Shashi Deshpande prefers the image 'a pair of bullocks' to describe a married couple. Mohan wanted her to be like Gandhari, who blindfolded herself to become blind like her husband. The only thing to be noted here is the materialist attitude of Mohan. He is shown as running after the money because he thinks that only money can bring happiness in his family. Shashi Deshpande gives a sudden turn. Mohan sends a telegram informing her that all is well and he will be back soon. Their son Rahul is also found out and it seems that all the confusion is sorted out. But he tries to analyze himself and reality as well. There is a definite change in his behavior after self-realization. He adjusts himself to live in Dadar flat, which he has hated for not being comfortable and in good location. This change is a defining change and Jaya describes it: "And for that moment he had his old air of authority and confidence. Then the old self vanished, leaving behind a sad, bewildered man." (pg:8) Extra-marital relationships are a part of Deshpande's novels. In *That Long Silence* also Jaya has a fruitful relationship with Mr.

Kamat. Jaya leaves him at the time when he is dying. Kamat, a widower is Jaya's neighbor in Dadar. He does not feel awkward while cooking himself, because he has no reservations like doing things that are considered as women's responsibilities. But because of Jaya's ingrained inhibitions, she feels awkward when she sees him cooking. The most striking quality of Mr. Kamat is that he sees her as an equal. He is altogether different from Mohan. While Mohan discourages Jaya from writing Mr. Kamat introduces her with her lost 'self'. Jaya sheds her restraints in Kamat's presence who gives her reassurance and comfort in a fatherly way. He advises Jaya to be honest to self and realize her own faults. He tells her: "Spare me your complexes. And you're a fool if you think I was joking. I'm warning you- beware of this "women are the victims" theory of yours...Take yourself seriously, woman. Don't sulk behind a false name. And work- work if you want others to take you seriously". (pg: 148) When Jaya feels sad about her father's death, she finds solace in Kamat's company. At that moment she wants to respond to him with her body but she immediately restrains herself so that she can safeguard her married life. In a way she shares an intimate relation with him, she responds to his touch, kiss and embrace. He makes her understand that it is a part of life.

He says, "The relation of man to woman is so natural of one person to another."(pg: 153) Her failed writing and her close association with Kamat are

two examples of Jaya's inability to seek her own identity. Mr. Kamat makes her aware of her emotional as well as physical needs and asks her to break her silence and speak freely. These two different characters with different mindsets put before us the novelist's views on masculinity. When Kamat makes her aware of her faults and warns her against blaming others for her failure, he actually is asking reader not to be biased against anyone. In spite of his support and encouragement, Jaya leaves him dying because of social fear. Mr. Kamat dies of heart attack and though she witnesses it, does nothing and leaves him alone to die. Her association with Kamat is meaningful but to save her family, she becomes indifferent towards him also. Jaya carries this guilt within her all the time. Jaya's negative approach and her habit of analyzing every situation cause havoc in her personal life. ShashiDeshpande here highlights the plight of the so-called educated women who indulge in egotistical feelings and are still bound firmly by the shackles of tradition and convention. When scandal is over Jaya says that we don't change overnight. But we can always hope. Jaya is a modern woman rooted in tradition whereas Mohan is a traditionalist rooted in customs. Thus ShashiDeshpande's feminism clearly brings out the dichotomy between man and woman and their attitudes towards life. The women characters are highlighted at the backdrop of male characters. But certainly women are not victimized thoroughly by male characters; they are victims of

their own perceptions and self-imposed restrictions. ShashiDeshpande does not end this novel in split relationships. ShashiDeshpande upholds marriage as the social infrastructure of a healthy society. The Egotistical feelings of Jaya and Mohan is more painful and not the institution of marriage. The novel can't be called totally feministic. Jaya refuses to make the scapegoat for her failures. She realizes her weaknesses lies within her. Mohan's coming back and Rahul's return help in the process of normalizing Jaya. In spite of rejecting the traditional role models, Jaya decides to reconcile. In her analysis of the situation she blames her failure on her own limitations: "With whom shall I be angry? With myself, of course." (pg: 192) It is not a quest to construct superiority; on the contrary it is a quest to construct identity through difference. It's about human being trying to place himself or herself within relationships, people, and ideas. Jaya has had the privilege of an outstanding supportive father, who has inculcated in her a positive belief in herself. He named her Jaya- 'Jaya for victory'. ShashiDeshpande stresses that liberty is not total freedom. An individual cannot behave as he likes; he should keep in his mind his duties and responsibilities towards society. She has dealt with the problems not only of middle class women but middle class men also. It is the inner conflict and search for identity of Jaya as well as Mohan. Instead of pessimistic note we find Jaya articulating ShashiDeshpande's feelings thus: "We can

always hope without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this; life has always to be made possible." (pg: 193)

The characters like Mohan, Rahul, Mr. Kamat, Jaya's father and Mohan's father present before us a wide picture of Indian masculinities. They are altogether different from each other and in a way it substantiates the view that ShashiDeshpande has not tried to dehumanize male characters; in contrast she has presented a realistic picture of Indian middle class families where relations or family gets prominence than 'self'. Deshpande shows up the hollowness of modern Indian life. She shows how the silence of women is the result of their own making. The materialist life of the middle class also plays a vital role in the making of male and female psyche.

Deshpande's novels show the urge of the woman to assert herself whether it is inside marriage or outside it. The married life of these women, whether working or non-working, ends in discontent. Shakutai talks about her sister Sulu's life. She says: "After marriage she changed. She was frightened, always frightened. What if he doesn't like this, what if he wants that, what if he is angry with me, what if he throws me out? What kind of life it is?" (195) The marriage in male-oriented societies turns out to be for the female partner both physically and spiritually dissatisfying. It creates confusion in a woman as to whether she should take up the path of submission or rejection because both

end in a state of discontent. Viewed critically, marriage is found to be a degrading experience in which there is no psychological and spiritual involvement. Everything else goes on mechanically. As a result, marriage becomes meaningless and sex alone seems to sustain the man-woman relationship. Urmi leads an economically and socially secured life even without her husband. Her husband serves in the merchant navy and therefore gets only one month to visit his home. Like a normal human being, she feels at times growing erotic feelings within her, whenever she comes across any object of love. Sometimes she finds it hard to control herself and wishes that "I could put my desires in to a deep freeze and take them out intact and whole, when he returned." (pg 164-65) The realization of this demand of sex by the woman has been effectively suggested by Deshpande. When Urmi develops friendship with Dr. Bhaskar, the conflict between her mind and heart becomes apparent. Shashi Deshpande gives a realistic picture of Hindu marriages. A counterpoint to Mira's loveless short life is presented in Priti's shallow modernistic preoccupations. Priti makes a film on 'sati' based on Mira. Urmila is invited to the celebration. The film is "about a woman who is raped by her own husband." Urmila realizes that is "Mira's story, exaggerated, colored, over-dramatized." (pg. 26) A serious study of *The Binding Vine* reveals that it concentrates on human relationships and love and feelings and emotions between husband and

wife. Urmila's desire to keep Kishore by her side also relates to the 'binding vine' theme and symbol. (pg.82) It is love, which is the binding vine of life. She writes: "The most important need is to love. From the moment of our births, we struggle to find something, which we can anchor ourselves to this strange world we find ourselves in. Only when we love do we find this anchor. But love makes you vulnerable." (137) Urmila finally realizes that relationships bind one another and that "each relationship, always imperfect, survives on hope." (141) Deshpande, while propounding her own brand of feminism, nevertheless, does not cease from making a dig at pseudo-feminists like Priti, who in their over-enthusiasm to fight for equal rights for women, often end up with ideas which are never practical. In one of her conversations with Mira, where they are discussing a judgment in a case filed by a husband against his wife for restitution of conjugal rights, Priti is very excited that the judge had ruled that the wife could not be forced into physical relationship with her husband against her will.

Urmila does not reveal any radical attitude towards the institution of marriage. She argues with Dr Bhaskar that marriage is a necessity for women like Shakuntal because it means security. Deshpande suggests that there is incompatibility between Kishore and Urmila because of Kishore's reticent and withdrawn nature. Urmila confesses that she is overpowered by a desire for

physical gratification during the absence of her husband. Dr Bhaskar, who declares that he is in love with Urmi, provides her with an opportunity for satisfying this urge. But Urmi, though she comes perilously close to adultery, refuses to forsake her virtue because, as she holds it, it is easier and simpler to be a goodwife. Thus she is not the kind to overstep her limits and defile the institution of marriage. In this context it is appropriate to refer to what Simone de Beauvoir says about woman's role as the husband conceives it in the marital relationship. She views: "A husband regards none of his wife's good qualities as particularly meritorious; they are implied by the institution of marriage itself....he is still more profoundly ignorant of her dreams, her fancies, her nostalgic yearnings, of the emotional climate in which she spends her days."⁴ Shashi Deshpande's call to women in *The Binding Vine* is clear. The role of the prejudiced, indifferent husband in a patriarchal society is questioned. Urmi brings to light the inmost reaches of a woman's heart by means of her perspective on women's experiences in Indian society. The need for love and the woman's ability to nurture it and thus contribute to harmony is a frequent theme in *The Binding Vine*.

The novels cleverly depict the discarded reality of life. *That Long Silence* delineates the perceptions and self-imposed restrictions of educated women struggling as the victims in the patriarchal set up and *The Binding*

Vinedelineates the man woman relationships and their sexual freedom/liberation. AlthoughDeshpande's Primary Focus is the man-woman relationship in Indian marriages, she also concerns herself with the exploration of various human relationships like the relationship between mother-daughter, father-daughter, siblings..etc.

Concept of Self

'Self' is one of the vital concepts, which haunt human existence in this mundaneworld. Since childhood human beings spend a lot of time brooding over the feelings, perceptions and real or expected,ideas about oneself. They develop some ideas of his own about his own self and many things in the world, familial and social interaction, and leads to the basisof the experience with the self. The concept of self develops in a cultural context, which has theelement of continuity, keeps changing with the relations of people and places, and when thegap between ideas and reality persist, the person may feel alienated, isolated and deceived.Hollow between ideas and reality, consciousness and unconsciousness divides the person into many selves which ultimately leave him disjointed and the victim ofcontinual crises.

The post-modern literature highlights many such issues, which even today remain unresolved. One important contemporary voice is ShashiDeshpande who concerns herself with the struggle a woman undertakes in a society to find and preserve her identity as a wife, a daughter, a mother and above all a human being. Shashi, however, doesn't advocate a radical or strident kind of feminism, which sees man as the cause of all troubles. Instead she highlights the need to harmonize the relationships, the need to grant others a space and a

freedom to express. She seeks a re-orientation of societies in which balanced relationships find a room for cultivation. There is a constant tussle between patriarchy and tradition on one hand and self-expression, individuality and independence for women on the other and it is this crisis which Shashi Deshpande brings into focus through her novels. The themes of marital incompatibility, identity crisis, imbalanced family relationships and the patriarchal gaze are brought to the forefront through her fiction. The established conventional ethos is questioned and deconstructed to get more constructive answers. In her novels *That Long Silence*, *The Binding Vine*, the crises that engulf present day women are very effectively reflected. The women protagonists pass through various stages ranging from the self-oblivion to self-awareness.

Love and marriage are interrelated concepts of human relations. Love has many forms and one of its forms is seen in the relations of husband and wife. This relation has been the major concern of feminists all over the world. The most stable, pious and natural form of love, and its expression in daily life changes with time and space, from a permanent fountain to occasional drops. Even in this expression, a woman has no equal share and this results in dissatisfaction, subjugation and suffocation, which is well brought to the fore by Shashi Deshpande in *That Long Silence*. A male partner not only changes a

female's identity from a girl to a woman, but dominates her whole life to such an extent that she accepts herself as a part of his identity. She accepts everything silently, not because she is afraid of changing the society, but she fears changing herself, her relation, and her forced identity. She becomes so suppressed from within, that hardly she feels the need to change her predefined roles and assume her new identity. *That Long Silence* is an exploration of the nature of the cultural and social construction of female identity and behavioral pattern particularly as a wife and a mother. It projects a multitude of women's problems, dilemmas, disputes and frustrations. The novel revolves mainly around Jaya, a convent educated, middle class woman married to Mohan who is a materialist at heart. Apparently living a stable life with two kids and responsibly managing the household chores, Jaya suffers from an inner psychological crisis. Jaya is haunted by the ghosts of Suhasini and Sita, the ghosts, which haunt her more than terror, and make her more fearful than fear. She analyses and finds that "the ghost most fearful to confront is the ghost of one's own self." (pg. 13)

The marriage fails to offer her the genuine respect and understanding irrespective of the fact that she places her own self at stake for the happiness of family. Jaya sets her life pattern in accordance with the likes and dislikes of her husband but ends up with nothing more than emptiness and silence. She loses

her real life in her efforts to become an ideal wife and mother and this realization arrives to her when she self-introspects. She tries to locate the cause of their marital incompatibility and finds that it is the 'long silence' that they dwell in which has destroyed their happiness. Jaya breaks the silence at one level by writing for the magazine 'Seeta' but even this annoys Mohan who believes that to be angry is to be unwomanly and Jaya sets her mind not to be angry even in writing. She confines her thoughts and defines her role according to the expectations of her husband. Naturally she loses her 'true self'. The internalized anger turns her nervous and incompetent. She says: "...no woman can be angry. Have you ever heard of an angry young woman? ... A woman can never be angry; she can only be neurotic, hysterical, frustrated" (p.147). Jaya is not a feminist but a woman caught in a tussle between submission and assertion. However, the repeated allegations and accusations by her husband finally force her to react sharply. And she realizes that it is not only Mohan who is responsible for her plight but her own being also. It is she who allowed herself to be victimized. And when this realization dawns upon her, she decides to come out of her cloistered self and be the real Jaya. Towards the end of the novel, she decides to break the silence, reveal her real self to the world, and start anew. She grows from despair to hope, from self-negation to self-assertion. Her determination reveals itself in the lines:

“I will have to speak, to listen; I will have to erase that long silence between us.” (p. 192).

Jaya is every woman who submits herself to roles assigned by the society and in living up to those roles loses her own identity. She is every woman who devotes her life to the family and in turn gets nothing more than emptiness and

Jaya is every woman who has the potential to rise and establish herself in whatever way she can but is restricted by the dogma engulfing the society. Shashi Deshpande conveys a strong message to women through Jaya's portrayal: “women should accept their responsibility for what they are and see how much they have contributed to their own victimization.” She advocates that women should sing of their true selves and transcend the oppressions. That Long Silence is the preparation of a woman towards the articulation, which will break the chain of silence and offer newer solutions because “...life has always to be made possible” (p.193). Jaya finds her existence so altered and disturbed by the changed circumstances of their life that for the first time she begins to question herself. Her husband has lost his status, and she, her identity, as a result. Traditionally, a woman has an identity only as her father's daughter, her husband's wife, or as her son's mother. Self-revelation is a cruel process. Her inward quest makes her realize that: The real picture, the real “you” never emerges. Looking for it as bewildering as trying to know how you

really look. Ten different mirrors show you ten different faces. Now she shakes off all her panic. After her self-analysis, Jaya becomes fearless. She finds it difficult to define her real 'self' because so far she has been defining herself differently with different people. She has no individuality. So much so that she cannot even decide at which point to begin.

A search for the self, for an authentic life is undertaken by her protagonists who actually represent numerous women caught in the conventional clutches in this world. Her fiction provides an insight into the psyche of Indian women. Her novel, *The Binding Vine*, focuses on the struggle of the inner mind and self of shackled women characters. Urmila, the protagonist and a college lecturer by profession is a typically feminine voice who struggles through her own gloomy domestic atmosphere not subduing but voicing and trying to sort out things for herself and for other women also be they her mother-in-law Mira or the rape victim Kalpana in the novel. The novel begins in Urmila's personal loss. She, having lost her daughter, fights the despair alone as her husband, Kishore, a sailor by profession remains out mostly. Urmila is quite different from earlier protagonists in composure. She possesses a better control over herself and her relations also. Though being married to a man of her own choice, she is desperate of her marital life. Kishore and Urmila don't share the bond of love and understanding. The incompatibility results in alienation.

Irrespective of being economically independent, Urmila requires Kishore by her side as a supporting oak to entwine herself around. The novel describes the trauma and anguish that she goes through and the stages through which she passes before coming to terms with the death of her daughter. While struggling, she comes across the poetry written by her Mira, her dead mother-in-law and through her diaries she gets to know about Mira's suffering as a woman and as a victim of forced marriage. Mira comes as a refuge to Urmila as she easily identifies with her and finds relief from the excruciating pain. Mira happens to be a silent victim of loveless marriage who faces death at a very young age but through her poetry is revealed her desire to be recognized as a writer and a poet. Mira happens to be a woman, who used pen as a vehicle for self-expression, to save herself from abuse, from anonymity and mutilation in the prison likehouse of her husband. Mira represents a multitude of women who are forced into marriages at a very young age and succumb to the lust of their husbands. Urmila gathers the courage to publish her poems and reveals Mira's suffering to the world. Through Mira Urmila gains a new insight into herself. Though accused of being a traitor to Mira, Urmila remains firm enough in her resolution to break the silence of women in the name of social taboo or family honour. She advocates love as the binding force in relationships.

The present day worldviews marriage as a business institution and that is why the hollow marriages are dissatisfying both physically as well as spiritually. Instead they confuse a woman whether to revolt or submit because both end in discontent and it is this set up, which requires change. As Urmila herself says that “each relationship, always imperfect, survives on hope...”

The *Binding Vine* is a projection of woman's biological needs and raises the questions of woman's right over her own body even within the marital domain. There is an effort to restore the discarded reality of life. The post-modern fiction of Shashi Deshpande doesn't have debating voices or doesn't intend to develop any thesis in the debate. The novels are simply open examinations of the experiences of people in specific settings. They are not just feminist in concern but packed with multiple issues at work. Jaya, Sarita, Urmila present in a literary microcosm the condition of society at large. They are women trying to understand their history, their place, their role in the society and above all their relationship with others and themselves. Shashi writes about “human beings and about other human beings who happen to be woman.” The characters are true to life and their problems, which nobody wants to talk about but they do and thereby, encourage others to break the silences on injustice. It is difficult for women to do away with the stereotypes and traditions especially for those who belong to the lower stratum of the society. There is a dire need in our society to

harmonize the relationships. However, subjugating or destroying the male can offer no victory. Annihilating the existing order, being anti-men or antimarriage doesn't lead one anywhere. Reconciliation and a re-orientation is necessary starting with the self itself. Apparent failures at different levels can't endanger the inner strength. On the contrary, extreme despair can ignite the superior self and grant an impetus to look forward for newer ways of living. Women need to rise from the quandary of their troubles and tribulations as victorious not defeated, re-energized and not worn out. They can't afford to be the ones who run away but they should become the ones to return with more firm resolutions. Shashi Deshpande's literary interventions into the postmodern Indian society need to be recognized for her writing in itself is an outpouring from a world within the woman. Through her novels Deshpande emphasizes the role of 'Self' and the importance of self-esteem in this modern world wisely projecting a vision of humanity and the value-based structure of life, which needs to be strengthened and taken into consideration.

Quest for Identity

Identity crisis or search of identity has received a thrust in the Post- Colonial literature. The quest for identity, which involves self-definition, which is often central theme of contemporary women's fiction. This process is both ecological and psychological that breaks upon the path toward female individuation and an understanding of the individual self. Rites of passage are depicted as the woman's awakening to reality of her social and cultural role as a woman and her subsequent attempts to re-examine her life and shape it in accordance with her new feminist consciousness. It is significant that it is not solely a search for identity crises that engages women writers in general, but rather an exploration and articulation of the process leading to a purposeful awakening of the female protagonist. This is evidently seen in Deshpande's *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine*.

The female protagonist, Jaya in that long silence, like any other educated middle class woman, conforms to the rules and constraints of the society. She is unable to find out whether she lives for herself or for her family. She is taken for granted by everyone in the family. That is why she feels like searching for her identity. She is a typical wife with love and affection for children, respect and sense of duty for husband and her in-laws. Nobody in her family understands her feelings and emotions. Being husband and wife, she shares

intimate relations with Mohan, yet, she is unable to relate herself with him in terms of feelings. Her silence is symbolic of most of the women of the world who are unable to express themselves as individual. Her introspection and memories are a part of every woman's life like every other woman she is not encouraged to take up profession. Though she tries her hands at writing, but she is not appreciated by her husband. Not only husband, her children also disappoint her. Grown up, they ignore her, as they remain engaged in themselves. They have no time for her. She is not satisfied with her life and lacks courage to revolt. Moreover, she loses her identity when her name is changed from Suhasini to Jaya after marriage. She feels a kind of stagnation when she recalls that her life, which seemed so busy, was nothing, but a worthless pursuit. She is taken for granted by everyone in the family. That is why she feels like searching for her identity.

ShashiDeshpande uses first person narrative to unfold the mute tale of Jaya. Jaya, in the very beginning confesses that she is going to reveal her real self. In order to do so, she alienates herself from her real self that is veiled under the taciturn attitude of Jaya. She moves back and forth in time to recall her submissive and passive self. Jaya was born in liberal family. Her father had named her Jaya, which means Victory. He expected her to be bold and courageous, but she can recall how her desires and feelings were suppressed by

her own liberal father. Jaya loved film music, but, her father wanted her to enjoy the classical music of Paluskar and Faiyaz Khan. To him, film music was poor and cheap. Jaya as a child did not revolt but kept quiet. It was the first blow to her identity. Deflated, she experienced a loss of self and began to keep her feelings and emotions confined to her. After marriage, Jaya encountered the similar expectations from her husband, Mohan. She sacrificed her taste for the sake of male family member. She failed to enjoy her married life.

Jaya confessed, "Worse than anything else had been the boredom of the unchanging pattern, the unending monotony." She needed a change in life. The pent up feelings started rushing to find a vent. She found a similarity between her marriage and "a pair of bullocks yoked together....." it is because she believed that she was like one of the bullocks that moves in the same direction and with same speed as the other one, to avoid pain and discomfort. She also compared herself to Gandhari, who blindfolded herself to share the blindness of her husband. She realized that she had totally altered and lost herself during the process of pleasing Mohan. She changed her name, personality and profession according to Mohan's will. Mohan expected her to change because he did not need Jaya, but a woman who could serve him, support him and act as dictated by him. Now left by Mohan, Jaya was broken and helpless. She moved out into unknown streets. She felt the situation unbearable, but it is this

crisis that awakened her to her own identity. She decides to search for her identity and sets on in quest for her identity. Jaya in her quest reached at a situation of Compromise. She agreed to change herself and hoped for a change in Mohan who had written a telegram that announced his arrival. The compromise on the part of woman, as well as man makes Shashi Deshpande a liberal writer who does not commit to a writing that chooses ultimate freedom for women and assigns domestic chores to men. The novelist moved a step ahead of the female dominated vision and portrayed the female psyche. Jaya thus emerged out as a round character that developed in the due course of time. It is the same Jaya who longed for disaster in the beginning but awakened herself so much that during crises she decided to be hopeful and start life anew. Therefore, this novel deals with female quest for identity in which the female protagonist long for self, identity and self-dependence because she suffers from silence and lack of communication with husband. On one hand, the novel teaches women to fight the silence and express themselves and on other, it gives a message to the man folk to try and understand women in a better way.

In male-dominated society, woman is given a secondary place. Whether a woman is a technologist, a bureaucrat, a lawyer, a novelist or a scientist, she cannot escape her ordained duties as a wife or a family member; this is neatly pictured in *That Long Silence*.

“A free and autonomous being like all creatures- (a woman) finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other”.³

In *That Long Silence* Shahsi Deshpande delineates the delicate swings of mood, the see-saw moments of joy and despair, the fragments of feelings perceived and suppressed, the life of senses as well as the heart-wringing anguish of the narrator protagonist Jaya, a housewife and a failed writer. The novel depicts the life of Jaya at the level of the silent and the unconscious. A sensitive and realistic dramatization of the married life of Jaya and her husband Mohan, it portrays and inquisitive critical appraisal to which the institution of marriage has been subjected to in recent years. It centers round the inner perception of the protagonist, a woman who is subtly drawn from inside, a woman who finds her normal routine so disrupted that for the first time she can look at her life and attempt to decide who she really is.

The question, “who am I?” (p.24) Haunts her so obsessively that she fails to find herself. She is “and utter stranger, a person so alien that even the faintest understanding of the motives of her actions seemed impossible” (69). Hence her agonized cries – “I can’t hope, I can’t manage, I can’t go on” (p.70). In such a stifling and suffocating domestic ambience and patriarchal set-up, she

finds her female identity effaced. Her feminine dilemma is expressed in her vacillating state of mind:

“I could and couldn’t do, all the things that were womanly and unwomanly [...]” (p.83). Jaya is Suhasini and also “Seeta,” the pseudonym she assumes to write columns about the plight of the middle-class housewife. Both “Suhasini and also “Seeta” are as Jaya says, “the many selves waiting to be discovered[...] each self-attached like a Siamese twin to a self of another person, neither able to exist without the other”(p.69).Hence if life is “to be made possible”(p.123),She is to live neither as “Suhasini” or “Jaya,” nor as “Seeta” or “anti-Kusum.” She is to live but not in fragments.Seething discontent within and without make her bounce upon the spring-board of life. She loses all hold on it and keeps on oscillating in opinions and choices, yet to decide, “who she really is”.Deshpande reveals the consciousness of Jaya through an exposition 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, all ago, to break away from the stranglehold of a quagmired social fabric rooted in patriarchy which repels as it attracts. In her tiny old flat in Dadar, Bombay, Jaya lives like an introvert, often given to brooding and reminiscing with a lot of self-reflection in order to discover her true self:

And I was Jaya. But I had been Suhasini as well. I can see her now, the Suhasini who was distinct from Jaya, a soft smiling, placid, motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family. A woman who coped (p.16)

Memories plunge for Jaya who is often linked by the ambivalent association of ideas. Each incident, a mini-story, a fiction in itself, imparts an unexplored vision to the narrative. The dejections and disappointments of unrequited selfhood, the illusions and pining of love and the yearning for companionship make up the stream of Jaya's consciousness. Recalling the ions of her split self-entangled in her memory, she creates a world of harmony, a world of fantasy, understanding, authentic selfhood and a composite self. The witnessing critic in Jaya is perpetually probing and protecting her autonomy. She revolts but in silence. Silence was her natural condition. When her husband, Mohan, talks about women being treated very cruelly by their husbands which he calls strength, she passionately bursts into rumination:

He saw strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw despair so great that it would not voice itself. I saw a struggle to bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender. (p.36)

Jaya is a modern predicament and the flood of consciousness that ensues 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[.] You never find a woman criticizing her husband, even playfully, in case it might damage the relationship, ⁸”

Jaya succumbs and surrenders to Mohan without revolting. Silently she wills to his will. She never says ‘Yes’ when her husband asks her whether he has hurt her. She endures everything, tolerates all kinds of masculine oppression silently:

“...in the emotion that governed my behavior to him, there was still the habit of being wife, of sustaining and supporting him” (p.48)

A dominating husband and a suffering wife that is set up with Mohan. She does not immediately react to the situation but the reader is insinuated through the flashback technique used by the author especially at critical junctures in the psychic life of Jaya. Lying solitary in her room, her mind shuttles between the past and the present and thus covers the whole span of her life. “Mute and desperate calls to restructure the groove of society”⁵

Rebellion and suffering in Jaya has a proclivity for being transmuted into an artistic expression. In her there is an inner need for creativity and fulfilment but this creative expression in her is inhibited due to lack of privacy, of sheer physical space to reflect and work in. Jaya being renamed, as Suhasini after her marriage is not a case of the loss of identity since Jaya and Suhasini are the two facets of the same coin and these two collateral names of the Deshpande protagonist are symbolical in their socio-familial import.

Jaya, her premarital name means 'victory' and Suhasini, the post marital name given to her by her husband means "a soft smiling, placid motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family. A woman who coped" Jaya is a woman who adjusts and accommodates unlike the modern women who find themselves "forced into the background by the claims of culture." She is not the structurally patterned woman of the traditional Indian Society where woman was chiefly confined to the hearth and man to the world, where woman was the follower and man the leader, where woman was the sufferer and man the ordainer. She does not want to be a "Sita following her husband into exile" or a "Savitri dogging Death to reclaim her husband" or a "Draupadi stoically sharing her husbands' travails. She believes that there is pain in hostility, and rebellion is anguish and agony. Hence, she adopts a subaltern and subservient attitude:

No, What I have to do with these mythical women? I can't fool myself. The truth is simpler. Two bullocks yoked together [.....] it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful; and what animal would voluntarily choose pain? (p 11-12)

In this way Jaya attempts to demystify her actions through the animal imagery of "two bullocks yoked together"(11). But she is never safe when yoked. So she flounders to break out of the yoke:

Stay at home. Look after your babies, keep out the rest of the world, you are safe. That poor idiotic woman Suhasini believed in this. I know better, now I know that safety is always unattainable. You are never safe. (p.17)

Past disappointments 'flashback' across her mind 'fading out' the consciousness of her present plight in the milieu. The memories of the past enlighten the present and the recurring images, the sparrow story and the myths (like the Ramayana) lend a universal touch to her tragic predicament. The nursery rhymes and the trivial scenes though unrelated to the sequence of the narrative, yet have a thematic import. They portray the abandoned and the

lonely Jaya's drift of thought and her evanescent mood captured through the broken and fragmentary stream of consciousness:

A husband is like a sheltering tree [...]. Take your pain between your teeth, bite on it, and don't let it escape [...]. (p.32) Jaya's self-questioning attitude comes as a split in the narrative. She broods over the metaphor of the "sheltering tree":

A Sheltering tree. Without the tree, you are dangerously unprotected [...] equally logically and vulnerable, This followed logically. And so you have to keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies. This too followed, equally logically. (p.32)

Struggling with the threats to her freedom and her integrity, Jaya desperately needs to protect herself from dissipating and sinking in the crumbling world around her. Her hysterical laugh at the absurdity of marriage echoes the insane woman's laughter. It symbolizes her cousin Kusum's insanity through which she tries to define herself negatively. Hence, the self questionings

"Who am I?" (p.24). She thinks, "Am I going crazy like Kusum"(125).

Such parenthesis in the narrative sequence as this part of reminiscence plays a unique part since the novelist's aim is to document the flow of human consciousness in different directions unmindful of its taxing effects on the readers whose sensibilities have been nurtured on the scientific and modern ideal of reality. An individual's real self exposes of thoughts and emotions rather than in his well thought out responses to life. Deshpande thus presents the unfathomable and concealed impressions of human life through digressions in the narrative.

Towards the end of the novel Jaya consciously acknowledges her writing as a kind of fiction and quotes Defoe's description of fiction as a kind of "lying", which makes "a great hope in the heart." Hence she decides to 'plug that hole' as said earlier by speaking and listening and erasing the silence between her and Mohan. It is this erasing of the silence that symbolizes the assertion of her feminine voice, a voice with hope and promise, a voice that articulates her thoughts. The novel does not depict Jaya's life as a totally dismal and hopeless struggle. It suggests "hope" and "change" for the better:

We don't change overnight. It's possible that we may not change even over long periods of time. But we can always hope. Without that life would be impossible. (p.193)

This ending suggests a new beginning for Jaya and Mohan. Modern Indian writers like Deshpande tend to depict the oppression of women with greater self-consciousness, a deeper sense of involvement and often with a sense of outrage. Earlier writers had deified and eulogized women's suffering but the writers of the latter part of the post-independent period have presented their suffering with much greater realism. But Shashi Deshpande "Overdose the theme of women suffering so that the novel is in some danger of turning into a sociological tract"⁶. William Walsh considers "the combination of the analytical and detached,"⁷ a particular and unusual quality of the novel. The noted critic further observes:

"Turmoil of feeling is conveyed in cool, idiomatic and sensitive prose. And it is served by a memory which is so rich and minutely specific and able to produce not just bright discrete images but rather a flow of naturally related scenes that it is a creative faculty making past life live again in the present".⁸

At once conversational and formal, the reminiscences of Jaya evoke a deeper and more tragic sense of vanished time, fleeting moments, personal losses recounted in a quiet and calm voice characterized by sobriety. It follows the natural movements of a mind experiencing, moments and expression that become meaningful spots of time. Jaya's unruffled stream of consciousness

symbolizes the flow of mind that registers experience in a prose of recollection and nostalgia. ShashiDeshpande has made the story self-propelled without the novelist acting as a meddler and as an omniscient narrator. In fine, she has tentatively succeeded in introducing

“the reader directly into the interior life of the characters without any intervention by way of comment or explanation on the part of the author”⁹.

Deshpande has ridiculed the mythical women, Sita, Draupadi, Gandhari...etc she has questioned why women have blind-folded themselves to the misdeed of their husbands. There are Mohans' in India who have been amassing wealth by unlawful means and thousands of Jays' are enjoying the riches, with their eyes closed to the moral lapses of their husbands. Jaya recounts her own story with a touch of irony. She recalled,

“Mohan had managed to get the job. I never asked him how he did it. If Gandhari, who bandaged her eyes to become blind like her husband, could be called an ideal wife, I was an ideal wife too. I bandaged my eyes tightly. I didn't want to know anything. It was enough for me that we moved to Bombay, that the things we needed... decent clothes, a fridge, a gas connection, travelling first class. And there was enough for Mohan

to send home to his father – for Sudha’s fees, Vasant’s clothes and Sudha’s marriage. (p.120)

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande delineates the delicate swings of mood, the see-saw moments of joy and despair, the fragments of feelings perceived and depressed, the life of senses as well as the heart-wringing anguish of the narrator protagonist Jaya, a house wife and a failed writer. The novel depicts the life of Jaya and her husband Mohan, it portrays an inquisitive critical appraisal to which the institution of marriage has been subjected to in recent years. It centers round the inner perception of the protagonist, a woman who is subtly drawn from inside, a woman who “finds her normal routine so disrupted that for the first time she can look at her life and attempt to decide who she really is”. But could she?

The question, “Who am I?” haunts her so obsessively that she fails to find herself. She is “an utter stranger, a person so alien that even the faintest understanding of the motive of her actions seemed impossible” (pg. 69). Hence her agonized cries- “I can’t hope, I can’t manage, I can’t go on” (pg. 70) In such a stifling and suffocation domestic ambience and patriarchal set-up, she finds her female identity obliterated. Jaya is Suhashini and also “Seeta”

Urmila in *The Binding Vine* is diametrically opposite to Jaya. She is aggressive, economically independent, takes her own decisions and her feminism borders

on militancy, and prompts harshness in her equations with others. A lecturer in a Bombay College, she lives with her mother, Yamini and her six-year-old son, Kartik. Hers is a love match with Kishore, a former neighbor now working with the Merchant Navy and away from home for long spells. Although she lives with her mother, her representation suggests the strong-willed single woman. In a way, she is like Indu, only stronger, more strident. In that respect, she is like any other of Deshpande's protagonists. Deshpande who is dismissive of militancy in women has possibly created a radical feminist only to subvert such a character. The novelist reveals through the representation that expressing one's needs, accepting one's vulnerability are not weaknesses but liberation, and that assertiveness and not aggressiveness is the desired ideal.

Urmila has many strengths. Her fiercely independent nature is first seen when at the age of fifteen, she chooses to stay alone with her grandfather Aju's dead body (Aju had hanged himself to death) while Kishore goes to fetch some other members of the family. Unlike Mohan in *That Long Silence*, Kishore in *The Binding Vine* is a very supportive and understanding partner. So, the crisis in her life is not caused by a domestic wrangle but by the sudden death of their one-year old baby girl, Anu. The novel is ostensibly about Urmila's coming to terms with her child's death. It is, in reality, about Urmila's re-definition of her identity, values and choices with greater apprehension of her relationship with

others, especially her husband. The death of Anu is one event that reveals her at her most vulnerable. It is an event that causes her intense grief. Traumatized, she repeatedly asks, 'Why me?'" Her distress sometimes manifests itself in psychosomatic attacks of asthma so that she is left gasping for breath. At other times she is driven into hurting herself masochistically to experience pain, as she explains. The underlying theme of the five dreams she describes in her narrative is helplessness and despair, emotions that are typical of the strong Urmila:

I am running along the sea. There's someone else with me... I can hear the footsteps, I can hear the heavy breathing, but I cannot see whoever it is ... I have to keep runningNoe it is becoming difficult; the sand, soft and squishy under my feet, keeps dragging me down.... I can't go on...I can't go....(Pg.16)

The feeling of failure, the unconscious death wish, the psychosomatic expressions of repressed grief are explicit in her dreams which she never shares with the others around her. Her later self-disclosure made as a narrator, marks the growth that Deshpande envisions as strength in a woman. Unlike Deshpande's other protagonists who define themselves with respect to their usual gender roles, Urmila is out and out a feminist. Urmila is a strong woman but more aggressive than assertive. Her growth as a character in

the book is marked by her gradual realization that to assert is not to deny others their rights, that assertion means to stand up for oneself without hurting others. As a protagonist rest of the protagonists who are initially passive and whose evolution towards self-assertion record their growth. Urmila's growth is characterized by her evolution towards self-assertion from the opposite end that is aggressiveness.

On the positive side, Urmila's strength is also very admirable. She stands up for her values and convictions as few Indian women do. In the midst of family censure, she continues her friendship with Bhaskar Jain, exhibiting full responsibility for her decision. She also supports Kaplana, the raped young woman, and Shakuntai her mother, as domestic worker. She teaches the uneducated woman of the underclass to speak up so that her wronged daughter may get justice. She educates her not to live in fear, guilt or blame, which are the result of conditioning in Indian women. Reaching out and sharing her life with the oppressed (unlike Jaya who turns a blind eye towards suffering women), she is enabled to overcome her grief for the dead Anu as she learns to give herself to these others. She is the most proactive of Deshpande's protagonists.

The story of Deshpandes's protagonists always begins at the critical point where despite "total" freedom and sometimes-total surrender to the

expectations of their husbands (as in case of Jaya), they are discontented and unhappy. Therefore, they wish to re-define themselves. A woman must give expression to her inner space and self; at the same time, she need not reject the social institution of marriage and family (and the duties that accompany it) or her basic human values.. Her protagonists are not her representatives instead they emerge as living persons who ,though similar in some ways, possess personal traits and characteristics that set them apart from the other characters in her books, and form one another. Jaya, in *That Long Silence*, whose name is “small, sharp and clear, like her face...”, is however, passive, and has silenced and muffled her own voice consciously. She has the potential to re-define herself. Urmila in *The Binding Vine* is the plain looking young woman who wears glasses, and blouses that don’t match her saris. There are astonishing resemblances too among the protagonists – they are intrinsically defiant and committed to oppose oppression. Together they represent the new, collective voice of dynamic young women who are not going to lead circumscribed lives. Deshpande presents the conflicts of her protagonists without presenting simple solutions. She lets the different choices speak for themselves, the choice to conform or to break free. Sometimes she seems to be faintly echoing the sentiments of de Beauvoir, who she admits, has influenced her, and according to whom it is women who “have to define, measure, and explore their special

domain". Deshpande believes that women have so deeply internalized the dominant mores that sometimes, despite being better endowed than most other Indian women, her protagonists cannot visualize an independent identity for themselves and so they become submissive.

Perhaps, through their portrayals, Deshpande is also trying to explode the myth of the 'educated Indian woman' who, it is popularly assumed, is automatically liberated. Their education should have given them the freedom and the courage to do what they believe in. It should have given them the determination to assert themselves as individuals, to set limits with their partners. However, they have failed to utilize their education or benefit from its advantages because of a latent, patriarchal mind-set ingrained in their childhood via socialization.

Thus, Deshpande gives the impression to be conveying the idea of exert and come out of the quagmire of patriarchal oppression, to emerge as individuals and as human beings in their own identity. At least the educated Indian woman must do it so that she can light the path for her daughters. That seems to be Deshpande's vision of the future.

Conclusion

This study aimed at analyzing the elements used to reflect the significance of gaining a female voice in society. Women, being caught in the Gender-inequality and injustice in this patriarchal setup they still fight harder to prove their existence. As Sarla Palkar remarks that these are the “Victims of patriarchy and also of their own silence”. Undeniably, Deshpande presents the suppression of women “with greater self-consciousness, a deeper sense of involvement and often with a sense of outrage”. She depicts the inner chaos of the women vividly in a cool and sensitive prose.

Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists’ quest for identity gets largely accentuated due to their frustrating experiences born of the prohibitive nature of the Indian Patriarchal Society. In her novels, the male characters husbands, lovers, fathers and other relations- display different aspects of patriarchy and oppression. While the majority of husbands are patriarchal in their approach, the older men particularly the fathers are broad-minded. Surprisingly the male friends are ‘feminist’ in their approach and sympathize with the protagonists a lot. Deshpande’s male characters only serve to enable the protagonists to define their identities more fully.

Her protagonists are victims of the Indian Patriarchy and after initial submission resist the oppressive situation, there by reflecting the author’s view

that a woman must assert herself within marriage to preserve her identity. The protagonists in Deshpande's novels are on the road to self-discovery. Usually some domestic crisis propels them in this quest. ShashiDeshpande's novels also frequently ruminate over the condition of human alienation and the vicissitudes of time. Past resides with the present, and the novels often digress into Indian myths, fables and folktales that show the power of tradition and the society's reluctance to change. But her novels are infused with a rich inclusiveness, which in itself enhances the possibilities of the hope. Her novels are essentially reflective of the unenviable situation of the beleaguered contemporary Indian women, which she has depicted with great artistic finesse and astounding originality. ShashiDeshpande's commendably realistic depiction of the contemporary Indian women's situation and the pragmatic solution she puts forward accord her novels, an imperishable importance for their affirmative eloquent marriage for women and the whole humanity as well. Through her portrayal of Indian middle-class women's existence in India, ShashiDeshpande not only presents a feminist insight into patriarchal values, but also prescribes a balance between tradition and modernity as a working philosophy for the contemporary woman. Tradition symbolize the Indian way of life, while modernity essentially refers to the assertion of the independent individual self. Her protagonists at the beginning of their quest find that they

have passively accepted their socially ordained roles. Deshpande advocates, to realize herself, the woman must be true to her own self. The woman needs to venture out of the familiar framework, to discover her potential as an individual and give expression to her inner space and self.

The female-centered narratives provide an intimate insight into the psyche of the middle-class Indian woman, oppressed by her inferior social position and hemmed in by her patriarchal socialization. They also provide new ideas for better man- woman relationship and broaden the scope of a woman's existence.

Deshpande nicely portrayed in her novels the trials and tribulations of a woman as the emergence of women writers on the Indian literary scene with radical outlook of the recent phenomenon they presented an idealized image of woman in their works. It is therefore, imperative that these writers attempted to write from women's point of view, They projected well the emotion and experiences woman as a wife, mother and as an individual facing psychological and sociological problems. These writers also influence the Indian life and society to an extent. True to the ideals of these writers, Deshpande concerns herself with the plight of the modern Indian woman trying to understand herself and to preserve their identity as wife, mother and above all as a human being. But Deshpande, Being the author of the recent past, she reflects a realistic picture of the contemporary middle class woman. Initially she wanted to bring for the

in her novels the changed society, but she was so much fascinated by her women characters that she laid on the emphasis on women. The writer is primarily concerned with the recognition of woman as a being, an autonomous being. Jaya stands for revolt against oppressing social customs that throttle women in our society.

“The female sex, not the weaker sex”, Woman must cease to consider herself the object of man’s lust. The remedy is more in her hands than in men. She must refuse to adorn herself for men, including her husband; if she will be an equal partner with man, In the present era no matter if a woman is well qualified, if she is in higher position, if she is ambitious, woman has to perform her role as daughter, wife, daughter-in-law balancing her dream and wishes being in the contemporary world. In the worst part if the situation or the family expects she should be even ready to sacrifice her professional life over family. It may look appropriate to certain extent but the questions like who Iam? what Iam living for ? what is my identity? Why did I get education? What is my financial stability?always haunt and her inner chaos trouble her inwardly.

Living with no identity is the extreme pain on has to undergo throughout her life. A woman has to suppress herself for the sake of the family, be it her dreams, wishes, career, ambition. Unwillingly she has to serve everyone making oneself very meek and forgetting about of her own ‘Self’. Even in this

modern era, the most miserable condition of women is to continuously convince her mind and soul that she is happily settled looking after her family, pretending outwardly to be very happily married yet suffering inwardly in the quest of her own 'Self'.

That Long Silence and *The Binding Vine* are the typical Indian novels in English reveal to us the prevailing situation in Indian social structure. The traditional suffering of women in silence has come to be broken with assertion, courage and determination in order to march towards progress for self-fulfillment and peaceful life.

Analyzing both the novels, I realize that the heroines to be in a state of confusion at the beginning but slowly as the novel unfolds, they go through a process of introspection, self-analysis and self-realization. At the end, they emerge as more confident, more in control of themselves, and significantly more hopeful. The realization that is achieved through this study is that the predominance issues and terms in their novels arise from the situation that focus on women caught in the crisis of a transitional society where the shift is taking place from traditional to modern. In consequence, there are tensions emerging out of this scenario, wherein the woman is caught. Deshpande has given more importance to family relationship and how women have responded

to the tradition in the period of socio-economic transition, who is operating within the parameters set by the society of her time, is brilliantly pictured.

ShashiDeshpande not being an outright feminist, highlights developed quite revolutionary ideas about the representation of female voice and quest for their identity. She also wisely stresses the dire need for becoming constructive and to move a step a head in order to gain individuality and better existence in this contemporary world.

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