

## The Agony Of Women In The Novel Binding Vine

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### abstract

Ever since the dawn of post- colonial age, women have been fighting and struggling against the social discrimination. One of the major concerns of the contemporary literature all over the world has been focused on the plight of women and their physical and mental anguish in the male dominated society. In the contemporary Indian women writers like Kamala Das, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande, openly express their views on the sexual problems of women and questioning gender discrimination. Shashi Deshpande is one of the most prominent Indian feminist writers in the 20th century. All her short stories and novels are concentrated on women's psyche. Shashi Deshpande's writings are the mirror of impressive dealing of female experience. She profoundly examines the issues and problems of contemporary middle class women. Her heroines are penetrating, intellectual and career-oriented. *Binding Vine* is one of the best feminist novels of hers. The aim of writing this article is to highlight the agony of women in the Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Binding Vine*. The novel, *Binding Vine* depicts the agony of women's lives in the society and examines the tragic incidents in the lives of different women. She addresses various social issues of contemporary Indian gender issues. This novel revolves around the individual tragedies of three women characters, Urmi, Mira, and Kalpana and their attempt to change societal roles and attitudes, but the most disturbing issues are that those women prefer to suffer in silence than expose. They would rather choke their voice of protest for the sake of social and moral security.

**Key words:** Protest, Feminism, Agony, Tragedy, Gender issues, Voice.

Shashi Deshpande is very recent author in Indian writing in English. Within no time she carves a niche in the hearts of the readers as a prominent writer. She wants to bring forth in her novels the changed society, but she was so much fascinated by her women characters that she laid more emphasis on women. She herself says that she knows how the women feel and she knows the mood of India.

Ashok Mahashabde finds Shashi Deshpande portraying middle class women's predicament in a male-dominated society as in his article '*The Binding Vine: Women's Vision of Life*'.

He asserts:

*"Although Shashi Deshpande has tried to articulate the hurts and agonies of woman experienced in a male-dominated society her vision of life is not pessimistic."* p.4

Shashi Deshpande's sixth novel is *The Binding Vine* was published in 1993. The novel is a multi-dimensional narrative about family bond, human relationships, women's right to their body, environ of pain and loss. The Title of

the novel ***Binding Vine*** emphasizes on the bond of love, affection, understanding and empathy which binds us together. In *The Binding Vine*, the three characters are suffering with their lives, problems and aspirations. The three characters are – Mira, Kalpana, Urmila.

Mira is one of the agonist characters of Shashi Deshpande. Like all young women Mira has some dreams and aspirations but society turns down them. Mira expresses her feelings and emotions through her poems. She aspires to write and she does write, but she cannot make them public. Her poems are confined to trunk which can't get the line light. In spite of trying terribly to emit her protest they became in vain and the society around her snubbed them. Her voice is muted by the social norms. Mira's poems become a symbol of female oppression and sexual assault of her husband silently. Mira has become a victim of lustful husband. She is a dead mother-in-law of Urmila, who has notice through her poems. Her problem is the obsession love of her husband. He loves for himself, not for her sake. For him the gratification of his desire is of prime significance. She wants love, not lust. Love means understanding the other and caring for his or her needs; lust is selfish and it looks for personal satisfaction. Urmila learns that her mother-in-law has been raped by her husband every day. This agony finds her expressions in a number of poems written by her. She dislikes every form of physical intimacy because her marriage is only a dark- clouded with dead. God relieved her catastrophes by giving blissful death. In her poems she points out:

***"He knows what I'm doing and he angry with me. I don't mind his anger, it makes him leave me to myself, it is bless when he does that." P.67***

Another important character of agony is Kalpana, who comes from the lower class. Like all other girls she also aspires for her individual freedom, dress well, earning money, and also marry a person of her choice but all these things become a mirage and She loses freedom in her personal life. Kalpana's mother Sakuntai, suffers with her conjugal life from the beginning to end because her husband leaves her alone. Shakuntai gives some suggestions to her daughter that there regarding her dress, speech, behavior and conduct to avoid the attention of the bad men in the society. Shakuntai accuses Kalpana of wearing tight clothes and applying lipstick and nail polish. Kalpana is a girl full of spirit who wants to enjoy life as a bed of roses. But she has been brutally raped by her relative none other than her aunt's husband, Prabhakar. One day Urmila goes to hospital to meet her friend who is medical social worker. Urmila learns of the rape case of Kalpana. While Kalpana admits in the hospital, the outside world moves around her. Kalpana's mother Shakuntai does not allow her to disclose the matter to anyone which may spoil their reputation and becomes a difficulty to the second daughter's marriage. Urmila tries to explain to Shakuntai that Kalpana is not at fault, but the man who did this to her is the wrong doer and her is to be blamed not she:

***"She was hurt, she was injured, wronged by a man; she did not do anything wrong why cannot you see that? Are you blind? It is not her fault, no, not her fault at all." P.147***

The police officer says that if the rape case is reported, people will talk unwisely about Kalpana. The police officer blames her for being a professional prostitute as,

***"She may be a professional..... She must have been out with a boyfriend.....may be after they had a bit of fun she was knocked down by car" P.88.***

Urmila is shocked to find everyone keep silence on rape case, and in the process the rapist is able to get way scot free. Shakuntai doesn't like the case to be registered. In spite of all the protests from Kalpana's mother and others, Kalpana's story is published and becomes a big fuss. Questions are raised in the assembly. The police start investigating the case and soon find out Mr. Prabhakar, Sulu's husband is the real culprit. Knowing the information Sulu commits suicide. In the course of events we understand that the agony suffocates Kalpana which leads to her frustration in her life.

Another suffering character is Urmila, an educated middle class wife who is grieving her dead infant daughter. For Urmila, the loss is terrible and despite the efforts of her friends and family members she clings

on her grief. Although she tries to fight the loss, she feels that forgetting this loss would be like betrayal. It is her intense attachment to her daughter that becomes the causes of her agony. She struggles and fights for herself and other women as a representation. Although she is educated and employed as a lecturer in a college, she needs her husband should understand her feelings. She falls in love and married to Kishore who is merchant comes home once a while to spend some time with his wife and children but Urmila longs to have him permanently with her at her home. In spite of consoling her he was craving her sex and never understands her dreams and aspirations. Economically she leads her life like a normal human being even without the support her husband. Due to separation from Kishore sometimes she feels erotic feeling growing within her because she is deprived of true love and she finds it hard to control her wishes. Though she suffers a lot with her husband absence, she is not infatuated towards Kishore. She says:

***“There was a time when I was frightened by the intensity of my bodily hungers for Kishore. It seemed to do nothing but complicated my life enormously. I often wished. I could put my desires into a deep freezer and taken them out.....164***

Shashi Deshpande tries to show a realistic picture of women problems and agonies in Indian society. In *Binding Vine*, Pande dexterously handles the juxtaposition of the agonies – rape committed within and outside marriage. The narrator – protagonist Urmila highlights the agony of two women – Mira, who is a victim of marital rape and Kalpana, who is brutally raped outside marriage. Through this novel, Shashi Deshpande sensitively depicts the agony of such married women whose bodies are disrupted by their husbands and human evils but who neither protest nor reveal to anyone for the sake of social and moral security. These unfortunate victims are suffering in silently without publicizing their tragedies.

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