

Emerging 'New': The Binding Wine by Deshpande

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Abstract:

Women have always been depicted as passive, submissive, dependent, and the "other" in canonical literature. This is because in patriarchal cultures all throughout the globe, women's position has always been subordinate to men's standing. Feminists argue that cultural differences rather than biological ones account for the disparities between male and female identities. Feminist literature explains itself and initiates the dramatic change currently evident in the general attitude towards man-woman interactions by breaking the feminine ideals promoted by canonical works. The focus of present paper is to examine Shashi Deshpande's novel *The Binding Wine* in which we see strong female protagonist attempting to find their place in patriarchal societies and how they as a 'new' woman tries to cross patriarchal threshold.

Key words: Patriarchy, Threshold, Feminism, Culture, Society

Every literary work, in reality, lives inside the society's dominant power systems. This means that literary works convey important political ideas that are part of the broader social and cultural conversation of the period in which they were written. These politically motivating ideals have a social meaning that exerts enormous pressure on those who are unable to resist it. Women are referred to as "sex" throughout Western intellectual history, from Plato to Hegel, and particularly in the works of Sigmund Freud. As a result of patriarchal social order situating women beyond representation, they are referred to as "lesser men" or the "dark continent" in this tradition. The goal of feminist literature is to rewrite the history of women by rearranging the current gender roles. Women authors in India have been compelled to redefine the patriarchal value structure. "Indian civilization had stayed in stasis and degradation for many years; deconstruction had become the rule of the day," according to E. M. S. Namboodripad (36). Many Indian women authors' works attest to the significance of this.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the well-known feminist authors who have chronicled the fight for gender equality in their novels. Deshpande's writings reflect the rapidly changing social conditions in postcolonial India. *The Binding Vine* looks at how women build alternate places and identities in order to fight patriarchy. She is concerned about the constraints and compulsions that keep women from succeeding in a male-dominated society. Deshpande has a commonality of experience as observant and perceptive investigators of the feminine mind and behaviors. As a result, it goes

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without saying that female concerns remain at the heart of their worldview. She is on par with feminist authors abroad in documenting women's experiences against the background of culture and history.

Deshpande's first collection of short stories, *Legacy and Other Stories*, is introduced by G. S. Amur, who writes, "**Woman's struggle, in the context of contemporary society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and, most part of all, as a human being, is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writer and it appears in all her important stories.**"

Unhappy with her marriage, Deshpande's protagonist reflects on her history and current mid-career to come at a deeper knowledge of reality. This theme appears in all of Deshpande's novels. *Roots and Shadows*, among other books, have this as their central subject. Her books' major problems and themes are rooted in India's changing social climate. Deshpande's criticism of the patriarchal value system delves into the complexities of human interactions and provides a visionary interpretation of women's fight for self-definition along with its ideological and materialistic frameworks. The quest for identification of her female characters, like that of the victim, becomes a common thread running through all of her stories.

The Binding Wine shows how the female characters achieve self-mastery in the last stages of their journey. The book explores a variety of issues concerning women's life. In the book, Deshpande explores many forms of male dominance versus female dominance. The primary character, Urmila, is a college professor who was raised in a traditional joint household with all of its gender categorizations and role definitions. Her daughter's death while she was a baby. Anusha. 18 is a watershed moment in Urmila's life, allowing her to go on a quest into her past. While her love and concern for her son Kartik are palpable, she is haunted by memories of her deceased kid. She resists the memories, but she also understands that forgetting is a betrayal: "To forget is to betray" (Binding 21). Urmila reflects on her life with Kishore, a guy she chose for herself. After her marriage to Kishore, she discovers that they are not united by love and that their union is just a legalised sexual connection. Kishore, she learns, is a guy *who comes into her life for a few months every year and then vanishes, leaving nothing of himself behind" (Binding 164). *The Binding Vine* focuses on Urmila's inner existence and her inner path toward asserting her own selfhood.

Urmila is aware of the masculine power's automatic working over her. The collapse of the marriage is caused by Urmila's rejection of her position as a mere sex-partner to Kishore. When she learns that her connection with Kishore is not a romantic one, she feels estranged from him. "She says," she adds "Kishore isn't going to take off his armour. Urmila sees "love" as a one-of-a-kind experience. True love has an eternal redeeming power. "However, sex is just a temporary solution" (Binding 139). Kishore, the typical Indian husband, is oblivious to his wife's emotional demands, preferring instead to focus on their sexual connection. Urmila finds physical relationships unsatisfying. She declares: "**Sex is only a temporary answer. I came out of it to find that the lights had come back... 'Go to sleep, he said. He was kneeling by me his face close to me, but the closeness was only physical. His voice was cold. I could see the goose bumps on his shoulders, his chest. I did not look into his face. I**

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was afraid of what i would see. I turned round and fell asleep.”

Kishore and Urmila's marriage provides an intriguing glimpse into the unseen workings of masculine dominance. Their mismatch in marriage leads to the couple's estrangement. Urmila doubts a marriage that denies her the totality of her experience and opposes Kishore's power and dominance. Urmila welcomes Dr. Bhaskar Jain's company in order to live in an unfavourable home space. She has an option to marital servitude in this relationship. She has a patient listener in Bhaskar. He offers her the appropriate answers and shows concern for her feelings, making her feel whole. Urmila, like the women characters in Deshpande's early books, is searching for an autonomous female sexual identity.

Urmila's fondest memories of sensitive affection are associated with someone other than her spouse. Deshpande's female protagonists often engage in extramarital relationships in their quest for identity. According to R. Mala, "Shashi Deshpande is a modernist feminist" because she "works out an individual dialectic of the sexual problem in her books." (57). To offer a fresh viewpoint on women's lives, the author also revises the conventional picture of a woman as a monster/angel. Urmila's humiliating and loveless marriage has forced her to refuse her husband's financial assistance. "One of the most effective branches of patriarchal rule is the agency of its economic grip over its female subjects," according to Millet (39). Urmila opposes male authority and breaks free from the culture's shackles as a financially reliant wife. "I want to live on the money I make," she adds (Binding 95).

At one point in the narrative, we witness her dead mother's jewels and a trunk filled with books, journals, and poetry manuscripts. Mira, another in-law, is passed down to Urmila. Urmila is reassured by her reading of Mira's journal scripts that these scribblings are self-actualizing and not reliant on men. Mira's writings had helped her to transcend all of her traumatic experiences, even sexual ones. These fragments of text provide Urmila with a rich source of inquiry and study. Urmila discovers that Mira's writing "is not a daily record of her regular existence, but it is a communion with herself" after delving into her poetry (Binding S1). Mira's husband called her Nirmala after their marriage. She feels a tremendous feeling of loss as a result of this. Urmila investigates Mira's unhappy marriage as shown in her journal writings and poetry. Mira's own experiences prompted her to write about them. To Mira, writing is a kind of self-disclosure. Urmila uses Mira's words to delve into the lives of many other women she encounters. "The author is the source, origin, and meaning of the work" in a patriarchal social setting, according to Toril Moi (*Sexual / Textual Politics* 62-63). Mira had married at the age of eighteen to a guy who had fallen in love with her at first sight. However, she considered her marriage experiences to be revolting.

Mira was able to write anything she needed to say. Her interrogation of patriarchal social structures has many implications. Writing "constantly constructs meaning," according to Roland Barthes (quoted in Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* 63). Mira's journal entries highlight a number of troubling issues regarding women's lives, including rape in marriage. Mira's sexual connection with her husband was suffocating. "I have finally learned to say 'no,'" she writes. However, it makes no difference. What exactly does he want from me? When I look in the mirror, I'm not sure what I'm made of. Why must it always be me? Why isn't it possible? Deshpande explores the problems of rape

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and other forms of sexual assault against women in his book. Rape is a masculine technique for keeping women in their place. Rape shatters a woman's self-esteem and dignity. "Rape in marriage reflects the male feeling of right to access to women they annex; incest expands it," writes MacKinnon (532). Kelly and Radford claim that **"The presence of sexual violence is one of the defining features of a patriarchal society. It is used by men, and often condoned by the State, for a number of specific purposes: to punish women who are seen to be resisting male control: to police women, make them behave or not behave in particular ways, to claim rights of sexual, emotional and domestic servicing; and through all these maintain the relations of patriarchy, the male dominance and female subordination. (qtd in MacKinnon.)"**

In Mira's married existence, there has been no room for her emotions and ideas. Woman is portrayed as a symbol of tyranny in her poetry. Sexual exploitation and victimization are two things that come to mind when we think about sexual exploitation. Because sexual oppression is primarily used as a control tool in the home, it is often concealed. Women frequently fail to distinguish between desired and unwanted sex since sexuality is the centre of masculine power. Women are placed in the position of an object due to a lack of a desire language and a lack of control over their own bodies. Threats of sexual violence have been used by males to exert social control over women throughout history.

Mira's poems frequently use the "dark night" as a symbol of terror. Her existence, she believes, has been confined to the dark space in which her husband has imprisoned her. Her feelings of insecurity and oppression, as well as her fears of the darkness that awaits her, are expressed in one of her poems: **"But tell me, friend, did Laxmi too Twist brocade tassels Round her fingers And tremble, fearing the coming Of the dark-clouded Engulfing night?"**

Obedience to male power is part of a woman's socialization. Mira remembers her mother's advice at the time of her marriage to never say 'no' to her husband: **"Don't tread paths barred to you Obey: never utter a 'no' Submit and your life will be a paradise, She said and blessed me."**

Mira's thoughts and feelings have had no place in her married life. Woman is depicted as a symbol of oppression in her poems. Sexual exploitation and victimization Sexual oppression as a control mechanism is primarily used in the domestic sphere, and as a result, it is frequently hidden. Women frequently fail to distinguish between wanted and unwanted sex because sexuality is the locus of male power. Women are treated as objects because there is no language of desire for them and they have no control over their own bodies. Throughout history, the threat of sexual violence has been used as a tool by men to exert social control over women.

In Mira's poems, the "dark night" is a recurring symbol of terror. Her existence, she believes, has been confined to the dark space where her husband had imprisoned her. She has expressed her feelings of insecurity and oppression, as well as her fears of the darkness that awaits her, in one of her poems: **"This is so primarily because literary creativity has seemed a rival to biological creativity in the most direct way. Normal female creativity, in other words was expected to find its outlet in childbirth and maternity; the creativity that gave birth to a poem or a painting was regarded as unnatural in a woman."**

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Mira is forced to find time and space in secret to fulfil her creative impulse due to social and cultural constraints. Mira never mentions her husband or family in her writings, which could be significant. Urmila believes there was a conscious rejection of her husband's identity and power over her. 178 (Elaine Millard). The emptiness that Irizarry detects at the heart of masculine discourse is mirrored in Mira's husband's refusal of her desires: **"A person who is in a position of mastery does not let go of it easily, does not even imagine any other position that would amount to getting out of it. The masculine is not prepared to share the initiative of the discourse. It prefers to experiment with speaking, writing, enjoying 'woman, rather than leaving the other any right to intervene, to 'act' her own interests."**

The activities of a woman are frequently scheduled and restricted to her domestic responsibilities. She is forced to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with no breaks. As a result, she has no free time (Rose 164). As a result, women are denied time and space to pursue their artistic and literary endeavours.

Deshpande's novel addresses a number of issues that are central to feminist thought, including the social status of a girl child, rape both inside and outside marriage, and the family institution. The vulnerability of a girl child in an androcentric society, as well as the social construction of womanhood, affects rich and poor, educated and uneducated people alike. Deshpande puts subjectivity and sexual difference at the heart of discourse in her books in order to concentrate on the issue of female sexuality. Kalpana's transition to womanhood seems to "require a symbolic loss of virginity to an all-powerful male" under the patriarchal social order. Rape is sanctioned by patriarchal structures, in which women are given, gift-wrapped in flimsy vestments, to both the male gaze and a castrating authority" (Elaine Millard 175).

Thus, instead of the traditional romance plot, female characters in this novel are on a journey for self-assertion. Journey to selfhood and independence of the protagonist becomes the primary theme of self-exploration in Deshpande's novels.

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