

SOLIDARITY AMONG WOMEN IN BINDING VINE BY SHASHI DESHPANDE

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ABSTRACT

Shashi Deshpande is one of the best English-language authors from India. She portrays the inner thoughts of a typical middle-class Indian woman focused on her job yet caught between tradition and modernity. She manages every aspect of life with grace. Her portrayals of mother-daughter, husband-wife, mother-in-law, and daughter-in-law relationships in her novels have a profound impact on her readers. In "The Binding Vine" by Shashi Deshpande, the research topic of solidarity examines the idea of women helping one another in a patriarchal culture. Shashi Deshpande's work *The Binding Vine* is a stream-of-consciousness novel in which the main character, Urmi, describes the story from her point of view. There are several parallel threads in the novel. The novel examines issues including rape, violence, loss, a loveless marriage, marital strife, and the spirit of women who overcome adversity to find relief, triumph, and even salvation. The research subject examines how the novel's representation of female solidarity contributes to the novel's overall theme. Inni, Mira, Akka, Shakutai, Kalpana, and Vanna are some of the female characters in this novel who I strive to pinpoint as having a feminine kinship, sisterhood, and solidarity. It is based on a woman's capacity to support or meet the needs of another woman who is unhappy and is going through pain. The study's focus makes a significant contribution to the study of Indian English literature and offers a provocative examination of the intricacies of interpersonal relationships and the quest for identity.

Keywords: Solidarity, Marital rape, Rape, Female bonding, Patriarchal society, Binding Vine, Shashi Deshpande.

INTRODUCTION

Famous Indian author Shashi Deshpande was born in 1938 in Dharwad, Karnataka. She is the second child of Sharada Adya and the renowned Kannada playwright and dramatist Adya Rangacharya. She earned her degrees in Economics and Law before moving to Mumbai to study

journalism. Deshpande is the author of nine novels, four children's novels, a collection of essays titled *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*, and a handful of short stories. She received the Padma Shri Award in 2009 and the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990, respectively. Her first novel to be published, the subject of marital rape was first addressed in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1986), though it had previously appeared in one of her earlier writings. One of her best novels, *The Binding Vine*, portrays the tale of *Urmi*, an educated woman who must contend with the pressures of a patriarchal culture. Deshpande gave back her Sahitya Akademi award and resigned from her job as the organization's general counsel in 2015 so that she may peacefully join other writers in their protest against the organization's silence on the murder of president M.M. Kalburgi. She is renowned for her perceptive and provocative work, most of which explores gender, identity, and societal issues.

In the novel, the women are victims of a patriarchal society and suppression by orthodox males who control every right of females. Nevertheless, the best part of *Binding Vine* is the female bonding between mother-daughter, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and female friends. They share their sufferings, pain, stress, problems, fears and mental agony, and then they overcome all these with women solidarity; they enjoy each other's company and help each other through sorrow to get a burden-free life. They feel the deep sorrow by heart and solve the problem. They have a bond of love, friendship and humanity with each other in awkward situations. They do not have any guilt or doubt about each other.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Binding Vine (1993) is a multi-dimensional literary, artistic creation with the familiar bonding, humanity, and women's right to their bodies and desires. *Binding Vine* explores the love and mutual understanding between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, the young girl who was raped and on death bed, and the central character *Urmila*, who was suffering the mental agony of her baby daughter, *Anusha*. Despite great pain and stress, the spring of life emerges at particular periods or repeatedly.

Binding Vine is all about *Urmila*, the central character or the protagonist called *Urmi*, who is connected with her dead mother-in-law *Mira* through her diary at one time or in the past and correlates with a 15-year young, smart and open-minded girl *Kalpana* who was raped by her uncle

and in a coma at the hospital. The novel explores the female futuristic views and her position in the family and societal field and renovates her existence.

Traditional Indian women want to become "New Indian Women" by rejecting conventional traditions and complex norms. They do all of their obligations with unwavering dedication, strive to be the better half of their spouses, and complete their education to become good, knowledgeable moms. Her opponent, meanwhile, can feel anxious about his social dominance and house.

A writer or author who has a long-term perspective always enjoys the support of society and develops fresh ideas or a new role for women. The compassionate and realistic portrayals of women who are mothers, wives, daughters, etc. that writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee, Kamla Markanday, Shobha De, and Shashi Deshpande create have won them praise from critics. They are sensitive of their societal and personal norms, as well as their rights and boundaries. Let's attempt to assess the novel's main female character, *Urmila*, in light of Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir's feminist beliefs.

Deshpande used the stream-of-consciousness narrative approach in *Binding Vine* as it chronicles the life of *Urmi*, a middle-class college lecturer who encountered several women. All of the aspects are completely distinct from one another at the same time. Deshpande exposes the struggles of every social stratum. The beginning of the novel details *Urmi's* profound sorrow at the death of her one and a half-year-old daughter, *Anusha*. She completely cut herself off from reality, battles mental anguish, and tries to get back to normal life. She is a self-sufficient, self-assured working woman who has a kind heart and a helpful personality. She married *Kishore*, a merchant navy employee who is seldom mentioned in the novel, in a love marriage. Their marriage is very informal, just as he is. She forever felt that a part of her was lost after *Anu's* death.

“This pain is all that’s left to me of Anu. Without it, there will be nothing left to me offer, I will lose her entirely.”

(*Binding Vine*, 1993, p. 9)

In her girlhood days in Ranidurg, *Urmi* was mesmerised by her grandmother *Baiajji*; *Urmi* was very fond of her. Her childhood with *Baiajji* and *Ajju* (her grandfather) were happy days for her. However, she was always irritated or frustrated about why her mother sent her away while

Amrut, her brother, stayed with her mother. She has a burden on her that what was the reason behind this decision. At the end of the novel *Yamini(Inni)* explains the incident, and then *Urmi* understands the supreme but sinister power of male dominance that left her mother a helpless victim. *Urmi* now feels how her mother must have taken all the pain of separation and felt alone in this grief over the years without any complaint. Her mother remained silent and never blamed her husband for this. *Urmi* feels sorry for her mother as she thought that her mother was the reason for the separation. Here we see the relationship between *Urmi* and her late mother-in-law *Mira* (*Kishore's mother*) and stepmother-in-law *Akka* (*Vanna's mother*). *Akka* once brought a worn-out trunk that was filled with faded documents, journals, notes, and poems. *Urmi* became curious about the contents of the documents when *Akka* informed her that they belonged to *Mira*. *Mira*, who was *Kishore's* biological mother, aspired to be a poet. In her letters and diaries, she had expressed herself; in her poetry, she had communicated her sorrow, her wishes, her worries, her loneliness, and her aspirations. Because of her husband's obsession, *Mira* is in anguish. He is merely attracted to her for her physical appeal and not because of an eternal love. Through her writing, *Mira* displays her deepest emotions. *Urmi* recreates *Mira's* life to experience the suffering and lonely existence of her mother-in-law. She expresses genuine compassion for her. For *Mira*, love entails compassion, respect for one another's needs, and mutual understanding. When *Mira* is pregnant and is in love with her life, she feels appreciated. Sadly, she passes away during delivery.

After her break is up, *Urmi* rejoins her college and begins to work. She goes to the hospital one day to meet *Vanna* since she works there as a medical social worker and is aware of a rape case. *Kalpana* is the rape victim, and *Prabhakar*, her uncle, is the rapist. Here we get to see another story of women bonding, though both of them are unknown to each other. *Kalpana* is a very young, beautiful, vivacious girl of labour class background, but she has dreams in her sparkling eyes and wants to enjoy her life on her terms. She uses different hairstyles and makeup and is an earning person too. She wants to marry a person of her own choice. Her mother has one more daughter *Sandhya* and a son *Prakash*. *Shakutai* is a breadwinner for her family; her husband had left her for another woman. *Shakutai* has a sister named *Sulochana* (*Sulu*), who is childless and constantly fears her husband will leave her. When she comes to know about her husband *Prabhakar* wanting to marry *Kalpana*, she is ready and stress-free that she will be secure and

manage *Kalpana* as his co-wife; *Shakutai* also agrees to this. However, *Kalpana* refuses the proposal, which is why *Prabhakar's* gruesome act towards *Kalpana*. He brutally raped her and left her next to death.

While *Kalpana* lies in the hospital, life goes on. Her mother does not want to file a case at the police station; also police officer thinks that the rape case is a complicated process and an unnecessary burden for him. *Inni* and *Vanna* offer only oral concerns and show outer sympathy. Only *Urmi* wants to complain to the police and demand justice for *Kalpana*. She is the only one who agrees with *Kalpana's* views of life; she is with *Kalpana* wholeheartedly.

Shakutai, however, accuses *Urmi* of violating their way of life's restrictions and believes that she has a hidden goal to draw attention to herself and become well-known for her contemporary viewpoints. *Urmi's* decision to read *Mira's* poetry, her long-deceased mother-in-law, in order to better comprehend the thoughts and emotions of young, attractive, and educated women like *Mira* who become the victims of marital rape by their very own husbands, is virtually a direct result of the same situation and sensibility. Now that things have changed, *Urmila* often visits *Shakutai's* home in a slum to find out how *Kalpana* is doing. The case is obviously a rape, but everyone is trying to cover it up. *Kalpana* is not at fault, according to *Urmila*; the rapist is. Even *Kalpana's* mother, though blames her for all of it.

*“And if you paint and flaunt yourself do you think they will leave you
alone.”*

(Binding Vine, 1993, p.146).

Writing about rape allows *Shashi* to shatter the silence around the agony that women have long faced in silence in order to maintain family honour. *Urmila* feels extremely or intensely angry over *Kalpana's* scandal and wants to inform the authorities about the situation. *Shakutai* implores her not to. Then *Urmi* makes it quite obvious to her that *Prabhakar*, not *Kalpana*, is to responsible for committing this transgression, not *Kalpana*.

*“She was hurt, she was injured, wronged by a man; she did not do
anything wrong why can't you see that? It is not her fault, no, not her
fault at all.”*

(Binding Vine, 1993, p.147).

Anu (*Urmila's* daughter *Anusha*), the little baby girl has left her but she was blessed by a boy, *Kartik*, another reason to smile, another hope in life. When she observes the lives of *Mira* and *Kalpana*, who suffered marital rape and rape outside marriage. She learnt a new lesson in life: everyone has grief, tragedy, and their own sufferings, but life must go on. She rethinks about the beautiful days at Ranidurg with her grandparents, childhood friend *Vanna* and her stepbrother *Kishore* (*Urmi's* husband) and her brother *Amrut*. *Urmila* and *Vanna* help each other to share their pain and sorrow and finally come to happiness. *Vanna* helps her overcome her personal crisis. *Urmila*, a selfless, incisive lady with a strong sense of justice for other women like *Mira* and *Kalpana*, is a wonderful example of this sort of women's solidarity for all of mankind. Her helping nature and genuine care for them serve to build the feminine relationship. She fervently supports women's autonomy in making decisions about their personal life, jobs, marriages, and desires. She believes that women should be fearless in how they express their opinions on right and wrong. They shouldn't be hesitant to take their stand. *Urmila* recognises *Shakutai's* tears,

*“This is how life is for most of us; most of the time we are absorbed in
the daily routine of living. The main urge is to survive.”*

(Binding Vine, 1993, p.203).

Deshpande seeks to support the notion that the bride and groom should consent to marriage on their own and that no one should be coerced into this union in this novel. It is imperative that both parties embrace one another since only that would be advantageous, provide security and strength, and prevent the relationship from deteriorating. Men and women working together might change the social environment. The Binding Vine's epigram by Deshpande states the same thing.

*“Come my brothers, come my sisters. Let us join our hands.
A new road, a new way, a new age begins.”*

(Binding Vine, 1993, p.44).

She envisions a perfect society where all people may live the fulfilling lives they have always imagined—lives filled with love, freedom, and inner tranquilly, and musical harmony. The first female protagonist to stand up for another woman in Deshpande's work is *Urmila*; one of the many reasons Binding Vine is considered to be one of the finest works of Deshpande. She presents *Kalpana's* case by herself to the press and police officers with absolutely no assistance. She wants *Kalpana* to receive justice. She works tirelessly to ensure that this rape case is brought

to the public's notice and that the police record it as a rape case rather than an accident. After the government demanded a probe, there was swiftly significant public interest and protest outside the hospital. Women from various backgrounds supported the demonstration and took part in it actively; the women's power in assembly and all local women social activists have now joined and are standing in solidarity for justice. *Prabhakar*, the perpetrator, comes to light as a result of the police investigations.

Ultimately at every turn in every woman's suffering, *Urmila* emerges out fully aware of inequality; she fights for women's sake and wins. She values the purity of love, sanity of womanhood and marriage. She knows the importance of men for society very well and wants to convey that men and women are equally crucial for social balance, mental peace, economic growth and spiritual harmony.

Urmi, the daughter of *Inni*, had a deep miss understanding of her mother that she left her at her grandparents' house. At the novel's end, she explains the whole situation to her daughter *Urmi*.

"I was frightened of you, Urmi I was too young; I was not prepared to have a child.

And you were not easy you used to cry all the time I didn't know how to soothe you.....then he(Papa) decided he would take you to his mother he did not say anything to me he just took you away....I begged him, Urmi, I cried. Nothing could make him change his mind."

(Binding Vine, 1993, p.199-200)

Urmi understands the pain of her mother and empathises with her.

The novelist highlights "female bonding" as a reward and a precious thing and even an auspicious occasion where women meet and reduce each other's pain with deep understanding and care for them. In addition to spreading joy, *Urmila* and *Vanna* are constantly willing to provide a hand to one another when they are in need. *Urmila* and *Shakutai* share their pain as both have the exact reason for grief; they give relief and emotional connectivity and soothe each other. *Shakutai* and *Sulochana* are good sisters who helped each other, shared and solved their problems. They loved each other a lot; whenever she talks about *Sulochana* to *Urmi* the words are dipped in love and affection. Another example of sisterhood

and solidarity. The title of the novel *Binding Vine*, the vine of love, affection, companionship, and fellow feelings, binds us all to each other. A vine is very delicate but has a great tendency to spread its tendrils and hold fastly to its support; same as intimate, heart-touching, caring moments, mutual understanding and compatibility. Supportive behaviour binds us very fast. Despite all pain, grief which makes our life a struggle there is always hope, a new beginning, and a spring of life emerging at intervals to help us overcome the sense of loss. According to Shashi Deshpande, women's compatibility is a sort of empowerment that aids in the creation of new identities for women as well as their ability to endure adversity. The novel shows two different approaches to women's empowerment: those who support one another via friendship and those who empower themselves at the expense of other women. As explained in a poem that *Mira* wrote for the college's annual journal, the nurturing behaviour and helpful nature of companionship offer an example to learn and grow. In order to illustrate the author's ambivalence as a woman exercising subjective authority in a patriarchal system, *Urmi* wants *Mira's* poetry to be published and interpreted as a social document. The frustration, hatred, longing, madness, passion, restlessness, and volatility of women battling in a man's world are all present in *Mira's* poetry, which are private yet look societal. *Urmi* is completely aware of the fact that the publishing of works by *Mira* cannot simply undermine or overnight alter the deep-rooted male dominance; rather, it may help to relocate the problem of power abuse, weaken victimisation processes, and foster both personal and political strength via the act of naming transgressions. The work honours the unity of women as peers, partners, and life-sharers at its finale. The novel makes an important contribution to the study of Indian English literature and offers a feminist critique of how women fight in a patriarchal society. The novel exhorts women to unite as "binding vines" to resist patriarchal tyranny. The novel has received high praise from critics for its sympathetic and accurate depiction of women who are constrained by their obligations as mothers, spouses, and daughters. Anyone interested in the challenges faced by women in patriarchal societies or the value of female friendship and sisterhood should read the novel.

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