



## THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THAT LONG SILENCE AND THE BINDING VINE

<b>S.FATIMA SUNDARI</b>	M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil Research scholar in English, Sakthi College of Arts and Science for women, Oddanchatram, Dindigul-624 624
<b>Dr.S.KANITHA</b>	M.A., M. M.Phil., Ph.D., Principal Research Department of English, Sakthi College of Arts and Science for Women, Oddanchatram - 624 624.
<b>KEYWORDS</b>	motivation, job satisfaction, performance of teachers

### INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande was Born in 1938, in a small town of Dharwad, Shashi Deshpande the daughter of the famous Kannada playwright was educated in Bombay and Bangalore, and acquired and 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.

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 women 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.

Shashi Deshpande has been successful in creating strong protagonist who refuses to get crushed under the weight of their personal tragedies and face life with courage and strength. Comparatively, they appear to more lifelike and more akin to the educated, middle class, urban Indian women today. In the novels *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine*, the major concern is to depict the anguish and conflict between patriarchy and tradition of the one hand, and self-expression Individuality and Independence for the women on the other. Its representation of a women's struggle in a society is marked by male ideology and of her situation as a women writer in patriarchal literarily tradition.

### CONFLICT BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

The Identity Crisis or Search for Identity has received a thrust in the Postcolonial Literature. The Quest for Identity which involves self-definition, which is often central theme of contemporary women's fiction. It is significant that it is not solely a search for identity crisis 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 modern woman is left confused between the opposing forces of tradition and modernity. She finds it difficult to reconcile between her personal aspirations and her duties towards her family and society. Deshpande deals with women's sensibility, their sufferings, their aspirations and their struggle to raise above all the oppressive forces in a male dominated society. She focuses on social, psychological and moral dilemmas that Indian women face and the courage and the fortitude with which they deal with them. Her novels echo a feminist understanding of a women's psyche grown out of a purely Indian environment. This chapter focuses on the conflict between tradition and modernity which arises due to the dynamic aspect of social existence.

### PROBLEM INVOLVES IN QUEST FOR IDENTITY

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 Binding Vine*.

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 'pavitratra' 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 *That Long Silence* 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.

Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* 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, if one explores it deeply in all other novels, 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.

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 and mother.

### CONCLUSION

Shashi Deshpande's not being 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 ahead in order to gain individuality and better existence in this contemporary world.

Deshpande avoids the simple technique of straight forward narration and employs the flashback method instead, to draw her readers' attention. The narrative technique has earned criticism from some critics who feel that this leads to confusion in the mind of readers. In novels where the writer is to present a gallery of characters along with their relationships and interactions, it becomes necessary for him to present things in their chronological order and not indulge in too much experimentation. . At times it is confusing. Hence a chronological clarity is important. Her heroines are educated young women with liberated and progressive ideas; therefore even ordinary incidents acquire a new meaning.

### References

1. Deshpande, Shashi. *That Long Silence*, New Delhi, Penguin Books India, 1998.
2. ---. *The Binding Vine*, New Delhi, Penguin Books India, 1992.
3. Ali, Suki. "Feminism and Postcolonial: Ethnic and Racial Studies (1990): 19-23. Print.
4. Dhawan, R.K., *The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande*. New Delhi: Bahri Publication. 1998.