

***MODERN WOMEN'S CONFRONTATION WITH THE
TRADITIONAL CONSTRAINTS IN THE WORKS OF SHASHI
DESHPANDE AND NAGA WOMEN WRITERS:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY***

(Thesis is submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for award of Degree of Philosophy in English)

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MERIEMA, 2017**

DECLARATION

I, Moasenla Imchen, do hereby declare that the thesis entitled *Modern Women's Confrontation with the Traditional Constraints in the Works of Shashi Deshpande and Naga Women Writers: A Comparative Study* is a bonafide research done for the award of Ph.D. in English under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary Dzüvichü during the period of 2014-2017 and that it has not been submitted either in full or in part or previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or title on the same title to any other University.

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NU/ Eng/2017/

9th October 2017

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that thesis entitled ***Modern women's confrontation with the traditional constraints in the works of Shashi Deshpande and Naga women writers: A comparative study*** is a bonafide record of research work done by Ms. Moasenla Imchen Regn. No.691/2015, Department of English, Nagaland University, Kohima Campus, Meriema during 2014-17. Submitted to the Nagaland University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other title and that the thesis represents independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my supervision. This is again certified that the research has been undertaken as per UGC regulations 2009 and 2016 and the candidate has fulfilled the criteria mentioned in the University Ordinances-OC-4, sub-section 5(i) of the section-9 for submission of the thesis.

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Date:

(Moasenla Imchen)

ABBREVIATIONS

ATM	-A TERRIBLE MATRIARCHY (EASTERINE IRALU)
BT	-BEGINNING THEORY (PETER BARRY)
CENPFR	-CRITICAL ESSAYS ON NAGA POETS AND FICTION WRITERS IN ENGLISH (A.J. SEBASTIAN)
CGE	-CHANGING GENDER EQUATIONS (CHRISTINA KEKHRIESEN)
ESWN	-ENQUIRY INTO THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN NAGALAND (NORTHEAST NETWORK)
FB	-FALLEN BIRD (AVINUO KIRE)
FMI	-FEMINISM THE MOVEMENT AND THE IDEOLOGY (SUSHILA SINGH)
FNSD	-FEMINISM IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE (N.K.PRASAD)
FPNSD	-A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE (Y.S.SUNITA REDDY)
FT	-FEMINIST THOUGHT (ROSEMARIE THONG)
IJELLTS	- INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LITERATURE AND TRANSLATION STUDIES (SHYLA L)
IJIR	- IMPERIAL JOURNAL OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH (CHANBRAKALA S HALLI AND SHRIDHAR M MULLAL)
LCINE	-LITERARY CULTURES OF INDIA’S NORTHEAST (K.B.VEIO POU)
LOH	-LIFE ON HOLD (EASTERINE KIRE)
OBN	-ON BEING A NAGA (TEMSULA AO)
SR	-SMALL REMEDIES (SHASHI DESHPANDE)

SSDN	-A STUDY OF SHASHI DESHPAND'S NOVELS (SHYLA L)
SP	-SEXUAL POLITICS (KATE MILLET)
TAN	-THE AO NAGAS (J.P.MILLS)
TBV	-THE BINDING VINE (SHASHI DESHPANDE)
TDHNT	-THE DARK HOLDS NO TERROR (SHASHI DESHPANDE)
TDS	-THE DIALECTIC OF SEX (SHULAMITH FIRE)
TLS	-THAT LONG SILENCE (SHASHI DESHPANDE)
TPTF	-THE POWER TO FORGIVE (AVINUO KIRE)
WCS	-WOMEN IN CHANGING SOCIETY (I.SARKAR)
WG	-WOMEN AND GENDER (NOUNENUO SHUHU)
WMI	-WOMEN IN MODERN INDIA (GERARLDINE FORBES)
WNSD	-WOMEN IN THE NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE (S.PRASANNA SREE)
WPN	-WOMEN AND POLITICS IN NAGALAND (TOSHIMENLA JAMIR)

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PREFACE

The definition of Feminism is broad in the sense that it differs from place to place according to the need of the given society. However, it is common in the fact that all feminism fight to gain women's right. Women are subalterns in all the societies since time immemorial. A look back in the history reveals how traditions and cultures have been manipulated by men to gain superiority over women. Along with the changing times the status of women has also improved. Education has also played an important role in the upliftment of women. Along with the modern period, a new type of women emerged known as the new women who were educated and striving for independence. This resulted in the battle between tradition and modernity as their ideologies are totally different. In a place like India where the society is rigidly bounded by traditions, it becomes difficult for women to apply a new lifestyle. Modern women India suffer untold sufferings as they try to balance in a society which is in a transitional period.

Sashi Deshpande, one of the most popular Indian writers has portrayed vividly the physical, psychological and emotional sufferings of modern women in the Indian society. Unlike other writers who mostly deal with either the elite class or the lowest section of the society, Deshpande writes about the middle class modern Indian women. Her women aptly represent the constraints felt by modern women and further sketches the way these women confront with the obstacles.

Nagaland is state in the North eastern part of India. The traditions and cultures of the Nagas are different from that of the mainland India. Though there are variations in the intensity it is similar in the fact that women are subordinated in this region too. A study of the Naga history shows that the traditions and cultures of the Naga society have always been in favour of its male folk. Today, along with the progress of the society, there have been significant changes in the status of Naga women. Women enjoy equal status in many areas; however, they are also denied equal rights on many occasions. Nagaland has a high number of women literacy rate and many high positions are occupied by the women. Despite all this transformations, women in Nagaland face challenges demanded by the traditions thus sandwiching them in between.

Naga women writers such as Monalisa Changkija, Temsula Ao, Rosemary Dzüvichü, Easterine Kire has been the voice of women predicaments in Nagaland. The novels of Easterine Kire and the short stories by contemporary writer Avinuo Kire has been studied in this research to analyse the prevailing situation of modern Naga women and the way they deal with the traditional constraints.

MOASENLA IMCHEN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I write for those women who do not speak, for those who do not have a voice because they were so terrified, because we were taught to respect fear more than ourselves. We've been taught that silence would save us, but it won't.

Audre Lorde(www.barinyquotes.com).

Women had taken the victim role of patriarchy since time immemorial. The standing order of our tradition, culture and religion had set the conditions for women to be subjugated. Despite the diverse traditions, cultures and religion, our society doesn't differ in the designation of women as the "other". Albeit the gradual amelioration of our society through the years, the status of women remains insignificant. Perhaps at this pace, it will take another few more decades to overthrow the allocated binaries between men and women. Patriarchy is deeply rooted in the minds of the people that only a massive qualitative refinement in reasoning and understanding can completely terminate the patriarchal mindset. Until then, women will be condemned to the vigilant eyes of patriarchy.

The face of India has transformed over the recent decades. The impact of globalization had been massive and had broadened the minds of billions. India is no doubt a country rich in its cultures and traditions. It is one of the countries which are glorified for its vibrant and diverse cultures. However, this very quality has its own drawbacks as it also serves as one of the main instruments in the advocacy and production of patriarchy. As this traditions and cultures had been moulded since time immemorial, a precise study of Indian history and Naga history is needed in order to understand the present position of women in the society. According to documented records, during the Vedic times, women enjoyed fair status in the society. Women of higher society especially were given equal rights in the field of education and religion and they excelled in it. "Distinguished women such as Gargi and Maitrayee are well-known names of this period that excelled as scholars in their own right." (SWI.298). In the Rig Vedic times too, the father was the patriarch, possessing the supreme

control over his household. Along with it woman also played an important role. Infact, the wife was considered as a mandatory member of the family.

Thus, a wife was regarded an indispensable member of the family without whom, the Consummation of human life was not possible. It was generally made imperative on all for the Proper discharge of their duties- spiritual and earthly- to marry and to have progeny. The necessity of a female partner was so great that the scriptures allowed man to remarry at once after the death of his wife – else he could not perform any religious rites.(TSWAI.28).

The status of women at the beginning of British rule was still at its lowest. The position of a woman especially that of a wife was miserable. The practice of social evils such as sati was at its peak. It was in the 19th century that social reformers came about who fought for social evil practices and for women's equality. Reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Chandra Vidyasagar were some of the prominent reformers who fought against child marriage, polygamy, and sati. "Rammohun Roy's (1772-1833) name is usually listed first among those nineteenth-century Reformers concerned with improving women's status. Historians have called him "father of Modern India," a "champion of women's rights," and a feminist."(WMI.10).

The child marriage restraint act was passed in 1929 which prohibited marriage of girls below fourteen and boys below eighteen. Sati was also abolished in December 1829 with the help of Lord William Bentick, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dwaraknath Tagore. Hindu widow remarriage Act was enacted in 1937 and The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act was passed in 1937 which gave the widow the right to succeed her husband's property. Thus during this period, the British colonizers along with the social reformers, women movement and National movement improved the status of women in the society to a large extent. "Though initially all the leaders were men, women gradually came into the scene and played their Role not only changing history but also society as a whole, through their efforts in different areas of work such as education, politics and freedom movement." (SWI.299).

Lord William Bentick who was the Governor –General of India from 1828 to 1835 played an important role not only in administrative reforms but also in bringing

about education to the Indians. Thus education opened up the eyes of many Indians including the Indian women. They could now understand that their problem is universal. Feminist movements in the West had already started by then. Gradually the Indian women also made their moves to gain equality in the society. Further, in the early 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi legitimised women's participation in the freedom fight movement which served as a stepping stone for women to come out of their homes and work in areas other than their domestic work. It also sowed the seeds of a sense of equality and gradually women learned to stand on their own feet. Feminist Literary criticism is the literary criticism formed by feminist theory or is a result of the politics of feminism. It is result of the Women's Movement of the 1960s because during these movements the feminist revealed the significance of the images of women disseminated by literature and thus found it necessary to confront and question their authority and coherence.

This movement was, in important ways literary, from the start, in the sense that it realised the significance of the images of women promulgated by literature, and saw it as vital to combat them and question their authority and their coherence. In this sense the women's movement has always been crucially concerned with books and literature, so that feminist criticism should not be seen as an off-shoot or off-spin from feminism which is remote from the ultimate aims of the movement, but as one of the most practical ways of influencing everyday conduct and attitudes. (BT.116, 117).

Toril Moi distinguishes between the terms 'feminist', 'female', and 'feminine' as he explains "the first is 'a political position', the second 'a matter of biology', and third 'a set of culturally defined characteristics'. (117).

Futhermore, In order to understand feminist criticism, it is necessary to distinguish the three phases in the history of women writing. According to Elaine Showalter the three phases are the:

1. The Feminine Phase (1840-80): In this phase, women writers imitate the male writers and conform to male values and standards.

2. The Feminist Phase (1880-1920): In the feminist phase, women writings advocated women's rights and values and wrote against male values.
3. The Female Phase (1920 onwards): in this phase, women writers concentrated on female writings and their experience as women.

Thus, literary feminist criticism is a form of literature which studies how male and female are related to each other and questions the oppression of women and the portrayal of women in literature. It credits Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* for its conception. In the 1970s, feminist criticism exposed the mechanism of patriarchy that is culturally structured, bring about sexual inequality. During this time, books written by male writers and which had stereotyped women role were scrutinized. By late 1970s the interest in male writings was shifted to female writings which Elaine Showalter describes as a shift from 'androtexs'(books by men) to 'gynotexs' (books by women). In the 1980s, the feminist criticism begin to focus on other approaches such as the Marxism, structuralism etc. They shifted its focus from questioning and analysing male writings to reconstruction of the female world. Further, they gave a new meaning to women writings which were neglected by rewriting its history. Despite the geographical, cultural, religious diversity, feminism in India is no different from its counterparts in the sense that they all women liberation movements fighting for gender equality. Feminism in India can be defined as a set of ideologies and movements "aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights and equal opportunities for Indian women".(www.wikipedia.com). In order evaluate the condition of women today, it is important to understand the women's movement in India since the struggle for Independence till date. Feminism in India can be a little different from the western feminism because of the historical circumstances and because India is a country which is strongly rooted in its traditions and cultures. However, Feminism in India is definitely about gaining equal status in all spheres of life for women like any other feminism.

Their goal is to gain gender equality which includes equal wage, equal opportunity to health and education, and equal social, economic and political rights. Besides these common issues, the Indian feminist worked and fought for social evils

such as sati, child marriage, dowry, inheritance problem etc and still continues to do so.

Feminism in India can be divided into three phases:

1. The First Phase (1850-1915):

The British colonizers brought about the concept of modernity which brought about social reforms related to caste and gender. This concept of modernity influenced many educated Indians too. Thus the first phase of feminism in India was initiated by men such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy who fought against eliminating the practice of Sati, widow immolation, child marriage and fought for individual rights such as the right to property. "Rammohun Roy was considered one of the greatest reformers, so all the details of his life have been recorded. Sati, a custom that pronounced a woman virtuous if she agreed to be burned with her husband's corpse, was strongly opposed by Rammohun Roy." (WMI.11). However, by the late 19th century, this struggle for gender equality came to a standstill because of the emergence of the Nationalist Movements in India. These movements were against any concept or idea that concerned the British colonizers.

2. The Second Phase (1915-1947):

By this time, India's struggle for freedom was intense. It was during this time that Mahatma Gandhi, brought out the women into the public sphere and legitimized their participation in the struggle for freedom. Women started participating in the non-violent civil disobedience movement, Satyagraha etc. Gradually, women organisations such as All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) emerged. In the 1920s, these associations started working for women's education, worked for the benefits of working women and started organising various women conference. Meantime, they also worked alongside the Nationalist Movements to fight against the British rule. After India's independence, the National Federation of Indian Women was formed. However, feminist issues took a back sit as after independence, the Nationalist Movements were more focused on Nation building.

3. Post 1947:

In the 1970s, Indian feminist started challenging and questioning the inequalities meted out to women at workplace, unequal wages and underestimation of woman as extra labourers. Besides, during this period, Indian feminist became class-conscious in the sense that they not only discerned the difference between men and women but also with caste, tribes, language, religion, class, etc. Today, in the 21st century, Indian feminist movement not only focuses on the efforts to make women as a member of the society but also works towards their right to individualism. Over the past few decades, Indian women writers have contributed immensely to literature by exploring and presenting the predicaments of women. Today women writers work towards raising consciousness among readers about the predicaments of women as they meddle with everyday life. Along with the growing awareness of the injustice meted out to women, the themes in Indian women writings have also changed from the image of docile women to independent women. Girdhari in his essay has commented,

The emergence of the 'New Woman' in Indian society and its concept in the Indian English novel has to be seen as noticeable, if welcome, change. The significance of the woman awakening into the new world around her has not really made much difference in her realization of her place and position, in the Indian society. But then, it is at least a new realization of her place and position, her individuality and a sense of urgency about her rights as a human being. The early image of woman in Indian English Novel as a silent sufferer, an incarnation of patience and endurance, the main source of sustenance of Indian family life and culture, has gradually been eroded. (CIEN.79).

Shashi Deshpande is regarded as one of the most accomplished contemporary writers. Her works not only presents the quagmire of women but also influences her readers with the image of her protagonists who are strong, free thinking and independent. Born in 1938 in Dharwad, Karnataka, India, Shashi Deshpande is the second daughter of the famous Kannada dramatist and writer Sriranga. She has

degrees in Economics and Law, studied journalism and has completed her M.A in English Literature. Her career as a writer started in the 1970s by writing short stories. Deshpande's first book which was a collection of short stories *The Legacy* was published in 1972. She gradually started writing novels and her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* was published in 1980. She is also an awardee of the grand Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel *That Long Silence* in 1990 and the Padma Shri award in 2009. Shashi Deshpande has written four children's books, ten novels and a number of short stories till date. Though there are many Indian women writers, Shashi Deshpande seems to be the apt author to be studied as her protagonist represents the middle class educated Indian woman. She does not glorify the female figure and makes her protagonist the heroine of the novel but she portrays the predicaments faced by women in the contemporary world. Coming from a Marathi-Kannadiga background, the ethos and milieu of her novels are that of Maharashtra and Karnataka as such may fail to represent the whole of Indian women. However, the main focus is on the Indian middle class women who are stuck between tradition and modernity.

Through her portrayal of the Indian middle-class woman's existence in India, Deshpande 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 women. By traditions she means those values of security and harmony that symbolize the Indian way of life, while modernity essentially refers to the assertion Of the independent, individual self. (SDFSF. 120)

Five of Shashi Deshpande's novels have been selected for analysis in this thesis: *The Dark Holds no Terror*, *That Long Silence*, *The Binding Vine*, *A Matter of Time*, and *Small Remedies*. The protagonists of these novels are middle class women who are caught in between the roles assigned to them/expected of them by the society and attempt for emancipation from it.

The Dark Holds No Terror depicts the life of Sarita/ Saru, a doctor by profession. The novel opens with Saru returning to her parental home after fifteen years. Through her thoughts and memories, her struggles are unveiled. Sarita was a successful doctor during the day time but at night she became the victim of her

husband's sadistic acts. Thus she returns to her father's house unable to bear it. She remembers how she was treated unfairly because of her gender as a child. In order to escape it, she had worked hard and rebel her own mother by choosing to become a doctor and marrying Manu. However, she was wrong as she had to suffer the same fate even after marriage. Gradually, at her father's place she realises that the only way to survive is to negotiate with life and face the reality.

Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence* presents Jaya the protagonist who is a typical housewife. Jaya is from a liberal family where she was allowed to be herself. However, her husband Mohan is from a conservative family. After marriage, Jaya's life changes drastically as she bends every possible way to please her husband. Unfortunately, Mohan gets into trouble concerning bribery and dishonesty and therefore shifts to the Dahar house which had belonged to Jaya's mama (uncle). Despite the constant sacrifices, Mohan blames Jaya for the situation they were in which makes Jaya laugh hysterically. Mohan is taken aback from this incident and he walks away from the house. As Jaya is left alone, she realises that she had equally contributed to her own victimization and rediscovers her true self.

The Binding Vine is about Urmila, who is grieving over the lost of her daughter. She feels that moving on would be a betrayal to Anu, her daughter. Her family as well as her husband's family works to bring her out of this situation but in vain. However, it is through her experience with three other women that she encounters which sets her free. As she fights for their cause she slowly begins to accept reality and overcomes her pain. The first woman that she comes across is Mira, her dead mother-in-law. Though she had not met her personally she gets to know Mira through her writings which were discovered in an old trunk. Through her writings it is obvious that Mira was a bright and talented girl who suffered the blows of an arranged marriage. Despite her immense talent in writing she couldn't expose it because of the fear of being ridiculed. Then Urmila meets Kalpana, a young girl who had been raped and who was fighting for life. Her mother, Shakutai, who is just a daily wage earner, watch over her daughter with hope. Urmila bonds with Shakutai and gives her strength to face every day. In doing so, she also draws strength and courage from Shakutai, Kalpana and Mira.

The novel *A Matter of Time* is about Sumi, a young wife and a mother of three daughters. She is deserted by her husband one night without any warning or specific reason. Despite the pain she faces the situation with courage and fortitude. The next day she explains to her three daughters about their father's decision calmly. After sometime, she moves into her parental home along with her daughters. There she gathers herself and despite the obstacles she had to confront, she learns to move on with life until she meets her death in a tragic accident. This novel sketches women of three generations through the lives of Kaliyani, Sumi and Anu respectively. Kaliyani represents the idolised Indian wife whose life is characterised by supreme tolerance and sacrifice. Sumi, her daughter is a strong woman who learns to face disappointments in life with courage and grace. Anu, is the young daughter of Sumi, who is also a strong character and tries to take radical actions against her father. The lives of all these three women are affected by patriarchy in one way or the other. Despite the many challenges they face, these women handles it with courage and dignity.

Small Remedies by author Shashi Deshpande, is the story of Madhu. In order to get over her son, Adit's dead, she agrees to go to Bhavan to write the biography of Savitribai who was a famous singer. Besides, Savitribai was also her old neighbour and her childhood friend, Munni's mother. Through Madhu we get to meet a number of interesting women characters like Lata (Madhu's host in Bhavan), Leela (Madhu's maternal aunt), and Savitribai.

Madhu the protagonist of the novel is a victim of male chauvinism. She is an educated women brought up in modern India. At first, Som befriends her and hangs out at her place without any reservation or being judgemental. However, after marriage, when he finds out that she is not a virgin, his attitude towards her changes totally. Leela, Madhu's maternal aunt is a woman of great courage. She was a member of the Communist party. She was also married for the second time to Tony, a Christian which was a bold step against the traditional set up of the society. Savitribai is also a courageous woman who learns music with the help of her father-in-law, especially at a time when it was a taboo for girls to learn music. She also involves in a controversial affair with her lover Ghulam Saheb. These two women inspire Madhu to assert herself

Nagaland is a State in the North-eastern part of India. It is bordered on the West by the State of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and part of Assam to the North, Manipur in the South and Myanmar in the East. Nagaland has an area of 16,579 square kilometres. According to 2011 census of India, it has a population of 1,980,602. The State comprises of officially sixteen tribes viz. Ao, Angami, Chakhesang, Chang, Lotha, Phom, Sema, Sangtam, Zeliang, Tikhir, Yimchunger, Rengma, Pochury, Khiamniungan, Kuki, Kachari as well as some minor tribes. All these tribes have distinct cultures, dialects, customs etc. However, they have a common religion (Christianity) and their society is patriarchal and patrilineal.

Many Nagas trace back to the 'head-hunting' days for the genesis of allocation of gender roles in the Naga Society.

Traditionally, the Naga society was patriarchal and patrilineal and it continues to Remain so. By virtue of the 'man' being the head of the family and the genealogy Traced through him, he is inherently place at the top. In olden days, the occupation of man and woman were demarcated. Man, being physically stronger of the two took the outdoor activities for himself, while woman, being the biologically weaker, was given the limited space of the home chiefly looked upon for procreation. The times being days of incessant tussle for supremacy through warfare, typified by the (in) famous "headhunting" wars, it wasn't considered safe for women and children to be left to roam free outside the village for fear of sudden attacks. Thus, men took over the charge of being the protectors while the woman and children became the Protected." (LCINE.163).

Feminist movement in Nagaland can be traced back to the late 1970s and early 1980s. During this time, the society was afflicted by social problems such as drug addiction, alcoholism Naga political issues. Women being mothers realised that they were the most affected group of people because of such problems. Their husbands, sons and brothers were afflicted with these problems, damaging many good families. Thus, a group of mothers came together and formed the Naga Mother's Association

(NMA) on 14th of February, 1984. The NMA started working for the elimination of social evils prevailing in the Naga society. Taking the motto “Human Integrity,” NMA aims to:

- 1).To eradicate social evils and stop exploitation of women
- 2).To promote active participation of women, and people at large in social-political aspects of Naga life.
- 3).To create an ambience of peaceful co-existence between different groups of Naga society.
- 4).To serve as a mode of communication for Naga women and for welfare issues concerning them. (WG.128).

Besides, many educated Naga women felt the need to form women organisations as a representative of women’s voice and to tackle certain issues. Though initially, the formation of tribal women organisations had been for different reasons and issues, today these tribal women organisations plays an important role in bringing gender equality and empowering Naga women. Some of the tribal women organisations are the Wastu Mungdang representing the Ao tribe, Sumi Totimi Hoho from the Sema tribe, Angami women’s Organisation for the Angamis, Kongyak Women Organisation for the Kongyak, Chakhesang Women Organistaion representing the Chakhesang Women, Lotha Women Hoho for the Lotha Women etc.

The Nagaland State Commission for Women was passed by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly in 2006, and it was formally inaugurated on 28th March 2007. The main purpose of the commission is to “study and codify the customary law relating to Naga women, family institutions, social security for women and children tribe wise, particularly girl, from being orphan. Further study and research on all Acts of parliament including civil procedure code, criminal procedure code and Indian penal code regarding their applicability or otherwise to Naga women would be looked into. The commission endeavours to reach out to each and every woman, especially rural women, to empower them to enjoy their constitutional and legal rights with knowledge of their rights under the law.” (Women and Gender.p.129,130).

Over the years an impressive number of Naga women had gone against and beyond the cultural and traditional obstacles, achieving laurels for the Naga women. These

women have also played an important role in fighting against gender injustice and have also set up examples for the rest of the Naga women to break free from the shackles of the male chauvinist society. To mention some prominent Naga women leaders, it is apt to start with Rano Shaiza who was the lone member of parliament (M.P) from Nagaland, Dr. Rosemary Dzuvichu, who is a prominent Naga women leader who has been tirelessly working for human rights and political empowerment of women besides her contribution to NMA as the advisor and as the Head of English Department in Nagaland University. Monalisa Changkija, is the only woman who is the editor, publisher and proprietor of daily newspaper “Nagaland Page” in Northeast. She is also an outspoken feminist and a writer who has written many poems and essays especially on gender issues.

Nagas are traditionally an oral society. With the coming of the American missionaries in 1872, education was introduced to the Nagas. From thereon, gradually Nagas learned to read and write. Over the recent years, there have been increase in Naga writers writing in English and some have gained world recognition. It is noteworthy that most of the Naga writers are women and as K B Veiou Pou says, “women seem to have taken the helm in promoting Naga literature! This is a contrast compared to the other spheres of Naga society where men hold prominent roles.” (LCNEI.48).

In the field of literature, women writers have contributed in portraying the status and gender inequalities faced by Naga women in the male dominated society besides writings on Naga history. Naga women writers such as Monalisa Changkija, Easterine Kire, Temsula Ao, Rosemary Dzuvichu, Nini Lungalang, Avinuo Kire have penned down the injustice faced by Naga women through their works of poetry, fiction and essays. This research paper will focus on some of the selected fictions written by Easterine Kire, and Avinuo Kire so as to draw attention to and analyse the predicaments faced by Naga women in the society which has strict and rigid patriarchal set up.

Easterine Kire, prominent Naga poet and author was born in March 1959 in Nagaland, India. She did her schooling from Kohima and undergraduation from Shillong. Kire also pursued a course in journalism in Delhi. She also acquires a PhD

in English literature from Savtribai Phulu, Pune University. In the year 1982, she published her first poetry book “Kelhoukevira” which was also the first Naga poetry book published in English. In the year 2003 she published the novel *A Naga Village Remembered* which was also the first novel published by a Naga author. *A Terrible Matriarchy* was published in 2007 and *Mari* in 2010 followed by *Bitter Wormwood* in 2011 and *When the River Sleeps* in 2015. Besides these, she has also published a number of poems, children books, essays and articles.

Easterine Kire is a recipient of the Governor’s award in 2011 for her contribution to Naga literature and also the recipient of Free Voice Award by Catalan PEN Barcelona. Her works *A Terrible Matriarchy*, *Mari*, *Forest Song*, *Naga Folktales Retold*, have been translated to German and her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* was selected to be translated into UN languages. In 2013, Kire’s novel *Bitter Wormwood* was shortlisted for the Hindu Prize. Furthermore, in the year 2016, her novel “When the River Sleeps” was awarded the Hindu Literary Prize.

The context of Easterine Kire’s novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* is set in the early 60s and concludes in the late 70s. It is set in Kohima, the capital of Nagaland which was the centre for all activities thus mirrors the social, economic and political conditions of the State. The book is a “coming of age” novel and reflects upon the time of transition in the Naga society from an agriculturalist society to a modern society. The protagonist is Dielieno, a young girl who grows up in a male dominated society. She is the narrator of the novel and she takes us along with her in a journey of predicaments she faces as a girl in a patriarchal society.

Life on Hold by Easterine Kire is a novella. It is the story of a young girl name Nime who grows up in Nagaland during the time when factional clashes was at its worst. Other than the reflection of Naga society being affected by factional clashes and insurgency, “Life on Hold” portrays how girls like Nime is caught up in times as such. The setting of the novella is in the 1980s. During this time, women were gradually getting educated, however, despite being educated it was considered unnecessary for women to get employed. Infact, Woman as “housewives” were preferred over “working” women.

Avinuo Kire, is a young poet and author from Kohima, Nagaland. She acquires a degree PhD in English Literature from Nagaland University. She worked at State Resource Centre for Women. At present she is working as an Assistant Professor at Kohima Arts College. She published her first collection of short stories *The Power to Forgive* in the year 2015 followed by her book of poetry “Where Wild Flowers Grow” in the same year.

Selected short stories from her book *The Power to Forgive* will be studied in this research paper in order to get a picture of women in Naga society and the predicaments they face in a society which aspires to be modern yet is rigidly bind by patriarchal rules.

The first story of the collection is also titled *The Power to Forgive*. It is the story of a young Naga girl raped by her paternal uncle. Even after sixteen years, she still could not forgive her father who had forgiven the accused. The psychological turmoil faced by her reveals the untold adversities faced by girl victims and her families in an androcentric society.

Fallen Bird by Avinu Kire is a short yet a powerful narrative. Through this narrative we get a glimpse of the modern Naga society. Despite massive changes over the years in lifestyles and despite being equipped with education at its best, many Nagas still live with a patriarchal mindset.

Promise of the Camellias is the story of Vimenuo, the narrator and protagonist of the story. It reflects on the lives of many Naga girls who with the pressure of the society end up in loveless marriages and suffer the bangs of it. A study of this short story will help unveil the present Naga society.

Globalization has brought about significant changes in our lifestyles. Many sections of women are allowed certain freedom and choice today. The constitution of India has also adopted several policies which works for the upliftment of the status of women and had been guaranteed legal rights. However, women suffer blows of patriarchy within their own families, inside their own homes. In sociological studies, a

family is described as the primary institution. Not surprisingly, this same institution also plays as the primary agency in advocating patriarchal ideologies.

Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole. Mediating between the individual and the social structure, the family effects control and conformity where political and other authorities are insufficient. As the fundamental instrument and the foundation unit of patriarchal society the family and its roles are prototypical. Serving as the agent an agent of the larger society, the family not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform, but acts as a unit of government of patriarchal state which rules its citizen through its family heads. Even in patriarchal societies where they are granted legal citizenship, women tend to be ruled through the family alone and have little or no formal relation to the state. (*SP.33*).

From their own homes, women are taught how and what a woman should be. In most cases, the change in lifestyles has only been superficial. Despite the legal rights, education and government policies in favour of women, they suffer in practice because they are given full freedom in theory alone. Education and legal rights teach women independence and allow them to voice out their opinion however, our culture and traditions teaches otherwise. At this juncture, women are confused and get sandwiched as the two clashes in its teachings. This research paper will study the constraints faced by modern women as they try to juggle between the contemporary lifestyle (which allows them freedom) and the traditional and cultural teachings which hold back this freedom at the same time. It will further deliberate the ways in which this women confronts such situations by studying selected fictions of Shashi Deshpande and Naga women writers.

As mentioned, five novels of Shashi Deshpande have been studied in comparison with one novel of Easterine Kire and three short stories of Avinuo Kire in this thesis. The Naga literature as compared to the central Indian literature is at its infant stage and thus many authors have not yet written much on the situations faced by Naga women. As such, the study of Shashi Deshpande has covered more number

of pages as it has been a study of five novels. Whereas, the Naga authors have covered much lesser pages as it is a study of only one novel, one novel and three short stories. However, attempt has been made to do justice to both the works of Shashi Deshpande and Naga women authors.

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CHAPTER II

PRESENT POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIETY

The face of India has transformed over the recent decades. The impact of globalization had been massive and had broadened the minds of billions. India is no doubt a country rich in its cultures and traditions. It is one of the countries which are glorified for its vibrant and diverse cultures. However, this very quality has its own drawbacks as it also serve as one of the main instruments in the advocacy and production of patriarchy. Siddhartha Sharma comments, “Women were denied the right to study the Vedas, and were bracketed with sinners and slaves. The code of Manu was so rigorously observed that the role of women was confined to the family, thus they were denied rights equal to man. Although her lot in the family kept changing with the times, but invariably remained an inferior one. Still she is hardly given any freedom” (*SDNFS.1,2*). As this traditions and cultures had been moulded since time immemorial, a precise study of Indian history and Naga history is needed in order to understand the present position of women in the society.

In the Vedic period the status of women gradually declined. Social evils such as child marriage, widow burning, the purdah and polygamy begin to set its foot in the society through epics and religious texts like the Smritis. The Manu Smriti, is regarded as the highest authority of principles and practices of orthodox Hindu. This law-maker has many good things to say about women however; at the same time he does not spare to degrade them. It opines that it is the nature of women to seduce men and classifies woman as having the capacity to led men astray. In *The Binding Vine* by Shashi Deshpande, as Kalpana lies half death in bed, Shakutai laments and blames Kalpana for painting her lips and nails and for dressing up. She blames her for the faith she is in and says that she had asked for it. In today’s society if a woman is raped or molested, instead of punishing the culprit, the victim is blamed and questioned for luring men. Manu also lays down a number of characters in women to be identified before marriage: women who have reddish hair, redundant parts of body, one who is unhealthy, one without hair or having excessive hair and one who has red eye are some physical attributes to be avoided. Women whose names are similar to

constellations, trees, rivers, those from low caste, mountains, birds were considered as bad omen.

It propagates that wise men should only marry women who are free from bodily defects, with beautiful names, graceful with moderate hair on the head and body, soft limbs and small teeth. Manus also strongly propagates the caste system. It divides the people into upper caste and lower caste. The Brahmin can marry a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and even Shudra women but Shudra men can marry only Shudra women. They were discouraged to marry a Shudra woman as it will morally degrade the whole family. The fact that caste system is still believed today is stated in Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror*. When Saru approaches her mother for her marriage with Manus, the first thing her mother inquires about him is his caste. He is instantly rejected because he is from the lower caste. However, Saru as a way of rebelling the old traditions disobeys her mother and marries Manus. This shows that educated modern women, she still are faced with unwanted traditional obstacles as they go about their daily lives. The Manusmriti says that after marriage a Brahmin, should not have his meals in the company of his wife, he should not look towards her when she is having her meals or when she sneezes or yawns. He must not look at women who apply collyrium to her eyes; one who is massaging her nude body or while she is delivering a child. A man should not accept meals from a woman who has extra marital relations; nor from a family dominated or run by women. A female, young or old woman is not allowed to work independently even at her place of residence. According to Manus, Girls are the custody of their father when they are children; women are the custody of their husband when married and under the custody of her son as widows. It goes on to say that even if a husband lacks virtue and good qualities, the wife should worship her husband and serve him silently. Women are not allowed to perform religious rituals. Her one and only duty is to please her husband so that she will be exalted in heaven. Any woman who goes against her husband's wishes will be disgraced according to Manus. If a woman enjoys sex with a man of higher caste, she will be excused but if she enjoys sex with a man of lower caste then she is to be punished and left in isolation. If a woman breaks her virginity before marriage, she should shave her head or her two fingers are to be cut off and made to ride on a donkey. In Deshpande's *Small Remedies*, Som who is

educated and a contemporary man still holds the belief in the purity of a virgin wife. When he finds out that his wife was not a virgin when he married her, he becomes aggressive and keeps questioning her. "Purity, chastity, an intact hymen- these are the things Som is thinking of, these truths that matter." (SM.262). Manu further preaches that husbands should control their wives no matter how physically weak they are. Drinking alcohol, association with wicked people, separation from their husband and sleeping for long hours are the demerits of a woman. Even while reciting the Vedic mantras, women are not allowed to recite it because they are considered impure, representing falsehood. A barren wife is treated with much disregard as it says that she should be superseded in the 8th year, a woman whose children die will be superseded on the 10th year and a woman bearing only daughters are to be superseded on the 11th year. Besides, a quarrelsome wife is to be superseded immediately. In the contemporary world, maybe these laws may not be strictly followed but such kind of teachings still gives power to men to take advantage of women. In *The Binding Vine*, Sulu is treated like a slave by her own husband Prabhakar because she is could not give her husband any children. Both Sulu and her sister Shakutai feels that having a roof to stay and someone to call her husband is enough for her. She is even asked by her husband to convince her own niece to marry him and she complies with him. In *A Matter of Time*, Kalyani suffers isolation from her husband because she lost her son at the railway station. However, she did never complain it was enough for her that her kumkum was intact and she was a wife to someone. There is no room for woman who suffers no voice for a suffering woman as it says that a woman who disobeys her alcoholic husband or a sick husband will be deserted for three month and deprived other ornaments. In the novel *That Long Silence* by Shashi Deshpande, Mohan's mother is the epitome of the ideal Indian wife. She waits for her husband till late at night without food and cooks fresh rice for him only when he is home. When he throws away his food because there was no fresh chutney, she gathers the utensils silently and starts cooking for fresh food again. No matter how rude and aggressive he was to her, Mohan's mothers served her husband without a word of complain. Even the protagonist, Jaya puts aside her interest, career for her husband and lives life according to her husband's wishes. Women are not even spared even after the death of their husband as it is laid down in Manu that a widow should emaciate her body by living only on fruits, flowers, roots and vegetables. She must also not even dare to utter the name of another man after the death of her husband. In the early Vedic

ages, there was absence of child marriage. Adult woman were allowed to marry the man of their choice. However, in the later Vedic period, child marriages began to be practiced. The *Smritis* as well as Manu insist that girls should be married before puberty. According to Manu, a daughter should be given for marriage at the right time, for failure of which his father will be held responsible. Further, he also rules out that a man of thirty (30) shall marry a girl of twelve (12) and a man of twenty four (24) shall marry a girl of eight (8) years. This law insisted that a girl should be married at the age of eight or twelve or even earlier if needed by the man (husband). Women were treated as a means of satisfying sexual desires of men. They were not allowed to pursue higher education because they were of the opinion that women were unfit to gain and retain wisdom and knowledge. For them, the only purpose of women was “begetting progeny for their lords who were pleased the more, the more their wives begot offspring. Hence, the precious time of woman’s life, during which the female organs were capable of bearing children – could not be wasted in studies or other pursuits and the sooner a girl was married the better it was generally held to be.”(TSWAI.56). This instance is reflected in the novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* because since when Saru was a small girl she was always reminded about her looks and always told not to play in the sun as she will become dark and no one will be willing to marry her. Since her childhood, her every lesson from her mother seems to be related to her marriage. When she grows up and plans to go for further studies, her mother refuses saying that a girl is not suppose to study too much and that they have saved money for her to use in her marriage and not for her studies. Later, after she becomes a successful doctor, better than her husband Manu who is only an English lecturer in private college, he rapes her at night as he couldn’t bear the thought of his wife faring better than him. Since the traditions and cultures of our society has taught that men should be greater and hold higher position than woman and that woman are degraded to just sexual beings, women suffer even today as they try to come out of their cocoons.

According to the Yajnavalkya, another law maker the proper time of a daughter to get married is the first appearance of her menses. If the father delays in marrying off her daughter at this time then he becomes guilty of Bhruna hatya which means causing the child to die inside the womb. The Parashara is no less, as it advocates that a father who doesn’t marry off her daughter at the age of twelve drinks

blood from her menses. According to Artha Shastra, “Parents, retaining daughters in their homes after seven menses, are said to lose authority over them. They should marry them ordinarily when menses appear.

No man, who has a connection with a maiden that has passed seven menses and has not yet Succeeded in marrying her though she has been betrothed to him, shall either be guilty or pay any compensation to her father. For her father has lost authority over her in consequence of having deprived her so long of the result of her menses.”(ibidem.59).

Besides these, other law makers such as Vashishta says “out of the fear of the appearance of menses let the father marry his daughter while she still runs about naked.” (ibidem.61).Vishnu also remarks that an unmarried woman who has started her menses and who is living with her parents is to be considered as a degraded woman. Further he says that a man commits no crime if he takes her away from her parents. The instance of child marriage is seen in *A Matter of Time*, where Kalyani is married off at a very young age of fifteen.

Polygamy was rare and was practiced only by some upper class. Monogamy was the general practice during ancient rig Vedic society. Thus, under two conditions polygamy was accepted:

- 1). If the previous wife fails to beget a son.
- 2). If the previous wife is unable to perform religious sacrifices.

However, in the later Vedic period the practice of polygamy spread and the status of women degraded massively. “She was no longer an equal partner – but a very inferior entity – much worse than even a slave. She was an object, as a piece of land or an animal, who would be permitted by Narada for common enjoyment.” (ibidem.72). Manu allowed a Brahmin to keep as many as four wives, Kshatrya three, Vaishya two whereas Shudra was allowed to marry only one. Yajnavalkya also allows this practice, whereas Vishnu also allows a Brahman to take four wives.

According to the Vedas, the marriage between a man and a woman is to be regarded as unbreakable even after death. Thus a woman could not marry after her husband’s death. Manu lays down that a woman after her husband’s death must live on flowers, roots and fruits and never utter the name of another man. She must bear

all hardship and discipline herself in living a pure and chaste life till death. It opines that if she remains chaste, she will reach heaven even if she didn't have any son. However, if she forfeits her duties in the desire to have offspring than she will disgrace herself and loses her place in heaven with her husband. Yajnavalkya is of the opinion that a woman's marriage can happen only once as remarrying after her husband's death will result in the corruption of the social structure. On the other hand it may be noted that woman of young age, a virgin is allowed to remarry. However, woman who were matured were totally forbidden to remarry. Contrary to this, though it advocates that man and woman are married for eternity, Manu allows men to remarry after the death of their wives. Further, "The Dharmashastra associated with the name of Yajnavalkya is most unkind in this matter. It lays down that a man after performing the last rites of his wife, who is dead, *should at once without any delay* marry another wife, else his attainment of virtue will suffer."(ibidem.122).

Women's right to inherit property as a daughter, wife were also very limited. Women were considered incapable of holding property. As Indra M.A. states that the position of women in the *Rig Veda* denies a widow the right to inherit her husband's property but gave her the right to inherit as a daughter of her parents which also had its limitations. Deshpande reveals in her novel *A Matter of Time* how women are denied property rights. Sumi is shocked to find out that her maternal grandfather's property is given to her father instead of Kalyani. Aru, Sumi's daughter is also taken for a surprise when she finds out that women are not mentioned in the family tree. She is further shocked when her lawyer tells her, "Do you know that Manu doesn't mention any duty to maintain a daughter? The duty is towards a wife, parents and sons" (204).

Buddhism came about as a reaction against Hinduism. It brought about sociological changes though not in a massive way but it did succeed in the improvement of the status of women. Buddha did not look down on women as inferior beings. His teachings advocated equality of both the sexes. The birth of a girl child was treated as equally to that of the birth of a son, women were not contempt for bearing daughters, a single life was not considered as a failure (marriage was not upheld with utmost value like Hinduism), the authority of a wife in decision making

of the family was equal to that of her husband, there was almost non-existent of pre-pubescent marriage, monogamy was encouraged, divorce based on petty excuses was not allowed and widows were treated with more respect and were not deprived of their privileges. On the other hand in some Buddhist text we do see some derogative remarks on women.

“The great human wealth, attended with a number of cows and combined with a flock of women, with these the Brahman has become covetous....

Cows, beds, garments and adorned women and well- made chariots drawn by noble horses, carpets, by these the Brahman has become covetous.

Then you say Vasetha, that the Brahmans are in possession of wives and wealth and that Brahma is not, can there be then an agreement between the Brahmans who has none of these thing.” (ibidem.222).

A woman in ancient India was assigned the responsibilities of household. A woman who woke up early to carry out her daily chores was considered as a good wife. She was to look after the servants in assigning them work along with her own duty of cleaning the house. Besides her duty to look after the house, husband, children and servants, she was expected to look after her husband's family with devotion. Indra M.A. is of the opinion that in order to have an idea of the image of an ideal housewife, we ought to look into the epic literature as he says:

We feel persuaded to record it, only to give a faint idea about the existing beliefs and notions, about ideal womanhood. Thus in the Anushasan Parva of the great epic:-

“Gifted with a good disposition, endued with sweet speech, sweet conduct and sweet features and always looking at the face of her husband and deriving as much joy from it as she does From looking at the face of her child, that chaste woman who regulates her deeds by observing The prescribed restraints – comes to be considered as truly righteous in her conduct. Listening To the duties of married life and performing all those sacred duties, that woman who consider Virtue as the foremost of all objects of pursuits, who observes the same vows which are Observed by her husband, who adorned with chastity looks upon her husband as a god, who Waits upon and serves him as if he is god, who surrenders her own will completely to that of her Husband's

– who is cheerful, who observes excellent vows, who is gifted with good features and Whose heart is completely devoted to her husband inasmuch as she never thinks even of any Other man, is considered as truly righteous in conduct. That wife who, even when addressed harshly and looked upon with angry eyes by her husband, appears to be cheerful to him, is said to be truly devoted to her husband. She who does not cast her eyes upon the moon or the sun or a Tree that has a masculine name, who is worshipped by her husband and who is gifted with Beautiful features, is considered to be truly righteous lady. The woman who treats her husband with affection which one shows towards her child, even when he happens to be poor or disease or weak or worn out with toil of travelling, is considered to be truly righteous in her conduct.”(ibidem.36,37).

The two great Indian Epics: The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are considered as two of the greatest epics in India and people uphold and cherish its ideologies even today. In Shashi Deshpande’s novel *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Saru’s mother on her deathbed requests her husband to read The *Mahabharata* and The *Ramayana* to her. These two epics have greatly influenced the Indian culture and traditions and have mighty impact on the society especially concerning the roles and responsibility of women. Five women in these two epic will be studied precisely: Sita, the heroine of Ramayana, Draupadi, the heroine of the Mahabharata, Mandodari, wife Ravana, Ahliya, wife of the sage Gautama and Tara, wife of Bali. All these women are described as women with exquisite beauty and are considered as the epitome of virtue and dignity in the Indian society even today. Sita is the daughter of the earth, stable, forgiving and pure who is adopted by Janaka, the king of Mithila. Sita was married to Ram, the Prince of Ayodhya. However, Ram was banished for fourteen years and therefore, Sita follows him into the forest along with Lakshman. While living in the forest, the villain Ravana falls in love with Sita. He kidnaps her as she disobeys Lakshman’s advice not to step out of the Lakshman Rekha drawn for her protection. Ram rescues her from the clutches of Ravana and returns back to Ayodha for his coronation. As they began to live in Ayodhya, Sita becomes pregnant and Ram banishes her into the forest because the people of Ayodhya started questioning her purity. Thus she takes shelter in the Ashram of sage Valmiki, where she bore her two sons. Later, when she reunites with Ram, she decides to go back to her mother, the earth. This story portrays how Sita is punished even by fate for disobeying the rules

laid down for her. Besides Sita is also a women endowed with sacrificial qualities and is used as an example of the 'Ideal Indian Women'.

Sita – the devoted consort of Rama – who as like the ocean in gravity and mountain in patience was the high- souled lady who always followed him like his shadow. Exiled in Ravana's Ashoka grove, beautiful though unadorned, she looked like tragedy incarnate, reverence outraged, hope disappointed, worship deprived of her dues, effulgence darkened- a cold tongue on fire. (ibidem.8.).

Draupadi, the heroine of the Mahabharata, is the daughter of Drupad, the king of Panchala. She is set to be born out of fire and had beautiful copper toned skin. She is a strong women who is aggressive and caring at the same time. She becomes the wife of the five Pandavas (the five sons of Pandu,namely Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva). Since childhood, Draupadi faces a lot of untold hardship which she overcomes. Once, Yudhishtira, one of the five brothers loses in a game of dice and gives Draupadi as a slave to Duryodhana, his cousin who won the match. Duryodhana commands his brothers to take off Draupadi's sari. This incident depicts the status of women during this period where women were use more like a commodity and less like a human being.

Women captured in the war from rival clans or otherwise forced to matrimonial connections, were necessarily kept in subjection and treated more like chattels then human beings. They were virtually treated as slaves over whose life and liberty their husbands complete control. This was the lowest form of marriage – if it could be called by that name at all. Even as such later times as the age of the Epics- we find Droupadi the royal consort of the five pandavas- Pawned by Yudhishtira in a game of dice which he played with Shakuni. The Kurus for whom the Game was won, forcibly brought out the queen from her royal apartment and subjected her to a Series of inhuman insults and indignities that made the royal husbands boil. But they were utterly demoralised and could not raise their voice – not even their little finger- in protest because for Sooth, they had lost in the game. (ibidem.23).

Mandodari, the wife of Ravana tolerates the misdeeds of her husband who abuses numerous women. Mandodari is a woman of virtue and dignity and she tries her best to mend the ways of her husband.

Ahilya, is wife of Gautama, the sage. The chief of gods Indra likes her so much that he disguises himself as Gautama and seduces Ahilya. This angers Gautama and he curses her and turns her into a rock. Tara, the wife of Bali the monkey king is a virtuous woman. Bali is a tyrant and dies in the hands of Rama. Tara is left to live a piteous life all through her life.

It is evident that the portrayal of women in the Epics carried the message of patriarchy through construction of women role as weak, dependent, ever sacrificing and subordinate to her husband. These women have been praised for their devotion to her husbands, patience, chastity and tolerance besides their beauty, virtue and integrity and had set the standards of an ‘ideal Indian women/wife.’ Even today, the names of these women are uttered in every household to remind women of how a woman should be.

The Indian woman finds herself a victim of oppression at all such Levels. She does not have any control over her body. Her subordination is total at almost all stages of her life. As a daughter, she is the victim of gender bias. She is taught from early childhood to suppress her will and aspiration. Her ideals are Sita and Savitri, she is taught to emulate them to become an “ideal” wife. As a wife and a mother, she has no identity of her own. Her existence is geared towards pleasing her husband and bearing him children (SDFSF.97).

The condition of women during the medieval times came down to its lowest in this period. The coming of Muslim invaders worsened the situation. These invaders brought with them their cultures and traditions which impacted the women in an immense way. The Muslims practiced polygamy which became a problem for the women as they took away the women fancied by them in large numbers. As such, women were restricted to move freely and were caged at home. Thus, women came to be considered as a burden to the family adding fuel to the already existing opinion

against women. This gave rapid rise to social evils such as child marriage, sati, jauhar and purdah system.

Repeated invasions by the Muslims further pushed the Indian women towards inhuman “traditions” such as purdah and the sati (the immolation of widow on the dead husband’s pyre). The challenge of the Islamic aggression also made Hindu India defensive and introverted causing a desperate return to orthodox Hindu beliefs and practices and further constraining the status of Indian women. Thus, during the medieval period, Indian women lost their earlier status and were at the lowest ebb.” (IJIR.298).

In order to have a better understanding of the situation prevailing in the medieval India let us look into some of the social evils which were practiced during this time:

1). Sati: It is the practice of the Hindu custom where the widow of the deceased was burned alive on her husband’s pyre. Many Hindu scriptures glorified this practice and a woman who does so was considered to reach heaven. “Colebrooke, the famous translator of Mitakshara in one of his dissertations opines that when a husband died the wife was to immolate herself upon his pyre.”(TSWAI.139).

2). Jauhar: Women were considered as a property and were distributed as booty after war. Jauhar was practiced in Rajput community where the wives committed mass suicide by burning themselves alive in a large pyre. This was done so that they would protect their dignity and of the whole clan.

3). Child marriage: The problem of child marriage increased during this period. They were married at the tender age of six to eight. They were married off early so as to ensure that people did not marry outside their caste. As such “The plight of the shloka of Tulsidas where he writes “Dhol, gawar, shudra, pashu, nari, ye sab tadan ke adhikari”. Meaning that animals, illiterates, lower castes and women should be subjected to beating. Thus women were compared with animals and were married off at an early age”.(www.wewomen.wordpress.com).

4). Restriction on girl education: Formal education for girls was strictly restricted. Instead, they were educated on matters pertaining to household chores such as sweeping, moping, gardening, sewing, washing etc. Other religion of this period like Buddhism and Jainism were more lenient but in the Hindu society it was more prominent and strict.

5). Purdah system: The purdah system was introduced so as to protect the women from foreign invaders. It is the practice of covering or veiling one's body and face with a cloth. The word purdah means "curtain" in Persian.

After India got its independence in the year 1947, the constitution of India was drafted in favour of women in various aspects in the year 1947. Women were given equal opportunities in the field of education and employment. Through legislative reforms, the position of women improved to a great extent. The constitution of India not only provides equality of sex but also protects women from exploitation. Some legislative measures taken by the Government of India to ensure safety of women are: The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956, The Special Marriage Act, 1954, The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, The Suppression of Immoral Traffic of Women and Girls Act, 1956, The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983, The Family Court, 1984. There was a distinct improvement in girl education as it was encouraged by the government by setting up schools and offering special benefits for girl child.

By the turn of the century the number of schools for girls and school enrolment had risen dramatically. By the end of World War I, there were educational institutions for women in all Parts of the country, and enrolments tripled at school level and quintupled in universities. Parents now had more options: they could choose the type of institution, curriculum, even the Language of instruction. These alternatives assuaged the fears of conservatives and liberals, the religious and non-religious, those who desired radical change and traditionalists, anglophiles And Anglophobes. Institution builders like Karve had effectively argued that female education was the ideal method of smoothing over the rough spots in the transition from

tradition to Modernity and his successors continued to echo his reasoning.” (WMI.54).

Women were also given employment opportunities which pave the way for their economic independence. Thus, the number of employed women steadily started to grow. “ The urban middle educated women had taken up employment. Women’s economic horizon expanded and opened to compete with their male “.(Women in Changing Society.p.214).Besides, the Government of India also enacted several Acts like The Maternity Benefit Act 1961, The Equal Remuneration Act 1976 etc. so as to safeguard the interest of women even at work. In the field of politics too, Indian women had been forward in positive participation. They are given many political advantages including right to vote and legislative eligibility.

The transition of Indian women over the decades has been phenomenal. They no longer are confined to their homes but have conquered every field, defying the numerous myths constructed around women. It is noteworthy to mention that Indian women have occupied the seat of the Prime Minister, president, speaker of Lok Sabha in the political field and many had excelled in the field of sports, literature, art, science and technology, military etc. since the struggle for Independence, gradual positive changes in the status of Indian women had been witnessed. India, had thereon made efforts to stabilize the condition of women through different ways.

A huge decline in the practice of sati, dowry, and child marriage had also been witnessed over the recent years. Infact the practice of sati had become almost non-existent. Over the last few years the Indian government had set up many schemes and programmes to uplift the socio-economic and politico-cultural aspects of Indian women. Besides, the “State Commission for Women” was also set up which protect and safeguards the rights of women. The year 2001 was declared as the year of Women’s Empowerment. Girl education, women empowerment are some of the main agendas of the Indian Government today. In many homes, girl education is emphasised and a female child is treated at par with her male siblings. Infact, the Indian Government have introduced a new scheme “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” (Save girl child, educate girl child) in the year 2014 in order to revamp the coherence welfare services meant for women. Today, scores of NGOs and philanthropist along

with the government still fight everyday to abolish any existing injustice or violence against women.

However, the condition of women in India is a paradox. Albeit the fact that the changes in the status of women had been positive and tremendous, women still faces impediment in different domain. Traces of dowry, child marriage are still visible in many parts of India. Additional prejudices such as rape, female infanticide, forced prostitution and harassment and abuse at work place had also entered the scenario. Women are still expected to play the subordinate role and have been subjugated beginning from their own home. Perception and role of women in India are formed by traditions which are patriarchal in nature. Besides with the introduction of education, the socio-condition of India changed and the need for women to contribute to the family's economy became apparent. Thus, they were laden with family pursuits as well as work outside their home. The family still expects a wife or a mother to give primary importance to the family as this had been the tradition and on the professional front she is expected to give her best. The traditional set up of the society plays an important role as women are still expected to perform their old duties as mother, daughter, wife and daughter-in-law in addition to their profession.

The employed women, particularly who are married, face tremendous difficulties to adjust themselves both in family life and in home and working life outside in work Place. When women are increasingly participating in employment, family conflicts are arising. These conflicts are due to scarcity of time to compete both types of works On one hand and clashes of values, perception, beliefs and roles of traditional society With those of the modern society, on the other.(WCS.215).

Shashi Deshpande's novels portray women who are educated and modern yet who are faced daily with the traditional constraints. Irrespective of their caste or class they are suffer because they are women. From time immemorial women have been treated as the inferior being. A study of the past decades has shown us how the Indian traditions have been moulded which often binds women. Though the laws and epics and certain myths had been made ages ago, we still follow and believe it consciously or unconsciously. Living in a male-centred culture, the modern women are faced by one obstacle or the other.

The Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race. There are many theories regarding the origin of the Nagas. “The name NAGA is used for a group of inhabitants of a mountainous region of Northeast India and Myanmar (Burma). There is no generic term for the tribal groups as a whole. Actually the name or term “NAGA” was applied to this group of people by the neighbouring dwellers of the plains. According to legend, this term was derived from the Burmese word “No-ka” meaning people with pierced earlobes. ‘No’ means ear pierced or to make a hole in or through, in Kachin language.”(www.morungexpress.com). The Nagas have their own indigenous traditions and have their own set of customary rules.”These tribes present them as a mechanism essential to safeguard their identity that has been observed right from the early days (history).” (CGE.97).

The Naga Society was patriarchal and patrilineal in nature since time immemorial. Thus, we find women suppression in various aspects in the Naga society. As mentioned before Nagas are composed of different tribes with different customs, languages and distinct traditions. Yet they are similar in the fact that their family, social, political and economic structure are products of patriarchy. Comparatively with the women of mainland India, we can say that the status of women in Nagaland is better and many Nagas take pride in it. However, we cannot ignore the fact that in the Naga society too women are denied many human rights which only Naga men take the privileged enjoy. Different tribes have their own set of customary laws. Below are jests of customary laws of the Ao tribe and the Kongyak tribe would give us an idea about the position of women during that time.

In the Ao customary context:

- In case of divorce, where there is mutual agreement on both the parties that there is no compatibility between the two, immovable properties are equally shared except the landed property which remains with the husband.
- There is no defined scale/ specified for crime against women and thereby no laws are set befitting the crime. Mostly, it is settled within the family interventions and the community according to rules set for

the crimes like forceful intimacy (not rape in their context) and physical abuse which totally lack understanding the trauma of victims/ a sensitive approach.

- Women in all the tribes do not have a role/place in decision making in governance. Particular to Aos, the absolute denial to women on representing the clan has debarred women to be part of the larger apex decision making body Putu Menden.
- Following the above mentioned restrictions on women they are not appointed as Gaon Boras (GB) or Dobashis (DB) (these appointments are not traditional and the laws do not mention that a woman cannot be GB/DB, since these people play an important role of interpreting the customary laws:from this point it is important that a woman also be GB/DB).
- “Men’s property” are landed, iron/metallic items (iron was considered a very valuable property because of reasons of its scarce availability and its usefulness in the olden times). The other moveable properties are “joint property” this over again defuses the rigid inferior determination of a woman’s status.
- Incase of unmarried daughters, the right to occupy paternal house and inherit parents granary. However, they are never secure because of the clan members/ brothers who can anytime claim their right over the landed property with/without alternative measures for the unmarried woman.

In Konyak customary law:

- The Konyaks have a slight variation in Marriage and the rules. Love marriage is generally preferred, but as for the Angh (the chief), the queen has to be daughter of another Angh. For the commoners monogamy is the accepted norm but the Angh can practice polygamy.
- In case of divorce, no trial at length is conducted but efforts are made by both sides of the family to reconcile and unite the separated couples. If

however, this reconciling effort doesn't work, an official divorce is declared after which it is taboo for the couple to reunite.

- Domestic violence is not considered as a serious issue deem fit for punishment. If however, the wife has been killed as a result of the husbands violent acts, he is expelled from the village for a duration after which he can return if permission is granted by the Angh(the chief).
- Discussing sexual harassment openly in public is a taboo.
- If rape happens, the family, relatives and community elders intervene where the best efforts are made to let the perpetrators and the victim come to consensus of marrying each other.
- The father has the unspoken right of custody over children. More extreme is in case of women/ wife's infidelity, the husband has the right to not allow the wife to even visit or meet with the children. (ESWN.32, 33).

Among the Chakhesang tribe, the status of women is not considered as equivalent to men. They are paid lower wages as compared to men, denied inheritance, and they cannot participate in any decision making, village administration nor are they allowed to judge or decide in matters of divorce.

The Naga culture, since the very early periods, women as a group has been dominated by men And their status has been low in the family and society .However, status of tribal women is Far better than plainsmen in certain aspects, e.g., absence of dowry, presence of bride price, sati, Status of widow, etc. but there are also certain aspects where they are left behind such as relating To right to inheritance, political participation and so on.(97)

J.P.Mills in his book "The Ao Nagas" explains the customs of the Ao Nagas and is of the opinion that women were respected in the Naga society. However, they were denied certain rights. For instance, Naga women were denied the right to inheritance.

Inheritance is in the male line. Sons, brothers, brother's son and so on inherit in that order. Though a woman can possess property she cannot inherit it. If a man with an only daughter and No sons were to give land and money to his daughter during his lifetime those gifts would Remain valid after his death, provided the girl had made her father even a nominal for the land. But all the property remaining undistributed at his death would go to his next male heirs, Whatever his known wishes might be. They could give the daughter a share if they lived, But need not do so. A man cannot will his property away contrary to custom. If the daughter in the case mentioned above made her father a payment for the land it becomes her private Property. (TAN.189, 190).

Among the Southern Angamis too, inheritance of property is done through the male line. Christina Kekhrieseno explains "According to normal customary laws, women do no inherit ancestral landed property but they can use them even for a lifetime. However, they cannot inherit acquired property of their parents. Hence, customarily women are at a disadvantage. (CGE.108).

An instance of inheritance of property is seen in Easterin Iralu's *A Terrible Matriarchy*. After the death of grandmother, they find out that grandfather had left the house to the males of the family "Your grandfather left the house to all three of us and our male heirs. Technically speaking, it belongs to all of us men in the family. Whatever decision we make will be done in full agreement of all the male members" (ATM.302).

Divorce was also a common issue during this time, though the punishment for divorce was severe. Barrenness or inability to produce a male child was some of the reasons for divorce. Saying so, a male and a female child were treated without much difference. However, a male child was definitely preferred over a female child. In Eastrine Kire's novella *Life on Hold*, Abieu distant himself from his daughter Vinuo but gives extra attention to his son Zotuo. Nime says, "The teachers at school were happy with Vinuo's work for she was a neat student. Intelligent and industrious, Vinuo was well liked by all her teachers. She loved school, for it was here that she

found the attention she missed at home. Her father barely glanced at her school work. However, if Zotuo showed him a drawing he had made, Abieu would be very interested and praise the boy (LOH.95). In Avinuo Kire's short story *Fallen bird*, the narrator's parents, family and friends rejoice greatly when her younger brother, Keneisevor is born. A great feast is organised by her parents because of his birth. However when he passes away, her parents especially her mother loses all hope in life and lives a grief stricken life. It is only when the narrator gets married and gives birth to a son, that her mother comes back to her health. During the olden days, Naga ancestors worshipped different gods, thus in many of the villages sacrifices were made to the gods especially at the birth of a child. Through these sacrifices we get a glimpse of gendered practices. A cock was killed in order to mark the birth of a son and a hen to mark the birth of a daughter. For Nagas, a cock symbolizes superiority, strength and guardianship. A male child was preferred because in the Naga society, a man is considered to be the permanent member of the family whereas, a woman is considered a temporary member of the family as she is bound to leave her parental home to her conjugal home. Besides this,

The traditional occupation of a woman was either to be a housewife, a mother or a farmer because of the strong social stand that a girl's duty was to work and not to earn and the girl child remain illiterate. The basically patriarchal Naga society is reflected by the notion that the birth of a male child was considered auspicious, man as the breadwinner and protector of the society and women being subordinate to their husbands. (123).

When couples with children divorced, only the father had the right for custody over the children. In case, the child is still an infant and the mother may be granted a certain time limit to look after the child until the child grows up.

During this time, Nagas were headhunters. Men were believed to be biologically endowed with stronger physical and mental ability. They automatically became the "protectors" who went out for wars and women became the "protected". Women were excluded from political participation and were supposed to mind the domestic chores. They were not allowed to make any political participation nor allowed to make any decision related to political issues. They were also not allowed

to represent their clan or village. “As far as Naga customary law is concerned women have no place in decision making whether within the family or outside the family. The decision on the administration of the village and the society exclusively rest with men.” (100).

Not only politically were they debarred from participating but they were also not allowed to make decisions on social or religious issues. Before Christianity, Nagas were superstitious and had their own gods. Women were not allowed to participate in the religious ceremonies nor were they allowed to lead any social set ups. She could not become the village chief because a village ruled by a woman was believed to be cursed in the eyes of god. N.S. Khaikho states that among the Khamniungan society too, “Women were not allowed to participate in most of the gatherings and religious ceremonies, they were not even allowed to venture near the vicinity of Morung (Kamnoi) where men folk gather to make important decision.” (113).

Division of labour based on gender was prominent among the Nagas. Almost all the Naga tribes had traditional institutions separately for boys and girls. Boys were taught to prepare themselves for war besides other traditions such as folk songs, dances and folklores. “Naga villages in the days of yore were characterized by frequent raids and inter-village wars. Hence, the villagers were always in fear of a war and it was necessary to have disciplined band of young warriors ready for emergency. The Morung thus functioned as a guardhouse to warn the villagers in times of war.”(WPN.19). Whereas, at the girl’s dormitory, they are taught domestic chores such as washing, cooking, cleaning, weaving, gardening, collecting firewood and fetching water and also the etiquettes expected of a girl. Thus, as Simone De Beauvoir had commented, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” here too women were taught their designated roles. Division of labour based on gender devalued the work done by women. Despite the long hours of work at home their work is not considered as work because they are not paid for it. In Easterine Iralu’s *A Terrible Patriarchy*, Dielieno, the protagonist of the novel is also taught household chores from a very young age. She is sent to her grandmother’s house so as to become a “good woman”. In the Naga society too, a good woman is a woman who does all the domestic chores and lives with patience despite the injustices done to her. Her grandmother treats her ruthlessly and makes her wake up early in the morning to fetch

water, cook and run errands for her. She is also made to take bath only with cold water even in winter and is often hit by her grandmother if she doesn't behave like a girl.

The Naga society has its own set of rules and thereby they also have set punishments for those defying the law (customary law). Not only in the matters of law but in punishments too there is discrimination between men and women. In the book "Enquiry into the Status of Women in Nagaland" some of the punishments meted out to both men and women are listed for an understanding of injustice done even while delivering justice.

The following are forms of crime and offences and in the next column the glaring differences in serving punishment/ penalty between men and women:

- Adultery
- Physical/Verbal abuse
- In case of a man, the society looks down upon him as a disgrace. He gets retaliation from the family of the wife and he is imposed with material/money compensation. For a woman, her hair is shaved and nose chopped off. Publicly humiliated by driving her away naked from her husband's house to her parents house. physical punishment to the extent of mutilation to show the gravity of her crime. Material or monetary compensation is imposed.
- In the context of Ao customary, Kilamat (Customary fine) is imposed on ten spouse engaged in adultery. Besides imposing Kilamat, as for the case of a woman, she is publicly humiliated with her hair cut off and she does not have custody over her child.
- Angami context, man abusing wife: corrective guidelines are given and cautioned. There is no specific punishment for men. He is made to pay 2/3 of the grains to the other partner.
- Women abusing husband: the woman is deprived of all her entitlements, properties. No property is given to her. (ESWN.45).

Abuse whether it is physical, emotional or verbal abuse is often experienced by many Naga women. In *Life on Hold* by Easterine Kire, Nime is verbally and emotionally abused by her husband. However, Nime like any typical ideal women bears with him. The protagonist of *The Promise of the Camellias* also bears the emotional abuse hurled towards her by her husband. Despite knowing the fact that her husband is having extra martial affairs, she still bears with him. Despite living in contemporary world, this instance in the stories reflects upon the lives of many women who are educated, who knows their rights yet still bears with the mistreatment of their husbands.

Rev. Mile Bronson, a Baptist missionary is said to be the earliest missionaries who worked for Nagas from 1842-1852. He preached Christianity and also opened a school at Namsang in the Kongyak Naga area bordering Assam. However, due to ill health he had to leave Nagaland. In the year 1872, Edward Winter Clark, another American Baptist missionary came to Nagaland and along with his wife set up the first mission station in the Naga Hills. In the Angami area, Rev.C.D.King opened the Kohima Mission Centre on 30th August 1880 and which also looked after the Sema, Rengma and Chakesang area, W.E.Witter in 1885 among the Lothas. Along with Christianity, the missionaries also introduced education as it was difficult to teach the gospel to those who did not know how to read and write.

C.W. Clark comments, “Only by teaching the children, can we hope to have any church members who will be able to read the scripture.(BMM.39).The missionaries in different parts of Nagaland opened schools and churches. By the 20th century there were a massive transformation.The number of schools increased in towns like Kohima and Mokokchung, headhunting was history and there was transformation in the social and economic field. Education had played an important role in the transformation of the society and its impact on women had been immense. It was Mary Mead Clark, wife of C.W.Clark who was the first to initiate girl’s education among the Nagas. At the beginning it was not easy for the Naga parents to agree for their daughters to attend school as domestic work would be neglected. With much persuasion of the missionaries, they slowly started sending the girls to school. “However, despite the initial hesitation and qualms of the Nagas with regard to education for girls, the efforts of the Christian Missionaries paid off and the literacy

rate of Naga women stands today at 76.67 per cent against the total state literacy rate of 80.11 percent (2011 census)". (WPN.21.).

A Terrible Matriarchy by Easterine Iralu reflects vividly on girl's education.

In the novel, grandmother represents the traditional society whereas Dielieno represents the modern society. When the time comes for Dielieno to attend school, grandmother strongly opposes it saying that girls don't need education. She opines that education will stop her from becoming the "ideal woman" as it will give her all the crazy ideas. After much coaxing, Dielieno finally attends school.

Naga society in general and Naga women in particular have come a long way. The Naga Society had begun to witness eminent changes in the status, lifestyle and mindset of Naga women. Today, Naga women occupy some of the top positions in different professions and women are given the opportunity in education and employment. It is true that the freedom and scope of Naga women is bigger and brighter now. In this period of transition, the Nagas has witnessed many changes in their traditional set up itself. For instance, the Sumi Naga has records of a women chef. She was appointed as the village chef after her husband's death. As mentioned before, women are not allowed to be representatives of the Naga Hoho. In the year 1970, the Angami apex body known as the Angami Public Organistaion (APO) had women representatives known as women co-ordinator. Now, the number has increased to two representatives and works as fully fledged representatives. Prior to 2016, the Naga Hoho did not have any women representatives; however, there were changes as the APO brought its women joint secretary. Besides all these, there are cases of Village Council headed by women in places like Naharbari village (Dimapur) and Kohima village and also among the tribes of pochury and Chakhesang who had women members. In the 1980s, the Village Development Board rules states that 1/4th (25%) of the members should be women as 1/4th of the fund was allotted to women in the village. As such, in the 1600 villages of Nagaland, 25% of the seats are reserved for women in the VDB including the fund of 25%. There has also been a case where women have been ordained as reverends. Today, the mortality rate of women is high as well as the literary rate. Though women doesn't have the right to inherit according to the most of the Naga customs, today, many families give away their acquired land properties to their daughters. Daughters are also encouraged to do well in their studies

and area allowed to choose their profession without any hesitation. All these factors are indications of progress in the Naga society.

However, at the same time we cannot say that the Naga society is really progressive as there are many families and individuals who refuse to leave the traditional practices like grandmother of *A Terrible Matriarchy* by Easterine Iralu. Generally, the traditional Naga family is patriarchal in nature. For instance, the father is the head of the family and all the important decisions are taken by him. He is also the representative of the family and the supreme incharge of the family property. Like women in mainland India, the Naga women play an important role in the family along with the husband in discharging his duties. Generally, women in Naga society are expected to look after all the domestic affairs such as cooking, cleaning, washing, weaving, looking after her family etc. A widow is also expected of the same responsibilities and is given the right to use her husband's property in most of the tribes. However, she loses the right to enjoy his property if she remarries. Even here a widow who remarries is considered as a 'bad woman' by the society however, if a man remarries, it is considered as a necessity as he needs someone to raise his children. One prominent feature which highlights the patriarchal nature of the Naga society is its denial to women's participation in decision making. All matters pertaining to tradition, history, village development etc are made by men in almost all the tribes of Nagaland since time immemorial and still continues to do so.

At present the *Hoho* remains the most important traditional decision - making institution which is developed at various levels- Naga *Hoho*, different tribal *Hohos*, and the village level *Hohos*. The Naga *Hoho* represents the entire Nagas, and is considered the apex traditional decision -Making body in the State, constituted by representatives from various tribes. In line with the Traditional practice, no women representatives are included in the Naga *Hoho*. At the village Level, the Village Council is the apex decision- making body, which is represented by all the Clans in the village. However, only a male member could represent his clan. (WPN.25).

The customary laws of the Nagas often contradict with the Indian Constitution which sees women as equal citizens of the society. The women reservation in the Urban Local Bodies has been a recent major issue in Nagaland. The 74th Amendment of the

Indian Constitution in 1992 was a landmark decision for women's movement in India, as it guaranteed political participation of women in the Urban Local Bodies (ULB). Article 243 T (3) was inserted in the Indian Constitution which states that, 'not less than one-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and as such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.' In Nagaland, however, this clause was excluded from Nagaland Municipal Act when it was first passed by the Nagaland Legislative Assembly in the year 2001. This was challenged by a woman in the Guwahati High Court in 2005 and eventually, in 2006, the case was disposed after the State Government pleaded that the Act would be amended. Since then, the issue of reservation of women has been contested between key stakeholders involving the tribal bodies, civil societies, student bodies, women's groups, community based institutions and also the political parties. Most of the opposing tribal organizations that were predominately led by men, felt threatened that customary law of the land enshrined in the article 371 (A) has been infringed upon. Being a patriarchal society, the customary laws prevented women from taking part in the local decision making bodies because of which Naga women have always played a secondary role. These tribal organizations vehemently opposed the ULB election that ensures reservation of women in the ULB's and thus the State Government was pressurized in cancelling elections and declaring though held as null and void. In 2011, The Joint Action Committee for Women Reservation (JACWR) was formed consisting of frontal women organizations of various Naga Tribes. On behalf of JACWR the NMA filed a petition at the Guwahati High Court and won the case: the Government filed against the women in Division Bench Guwahati. In 2014, a Special Leave Petition (SLP) was then admitted at the Supreme Court for which the hearing was eagerly awaited by all the key stakeholders. Two petitions are pending before the Supreme Court on the issue of the 33% reservation to women in Municipal body elections- one appeal against a Guwahati High Court ruling from July 2012 and a second, a writ petition filed in 2014. On 5th April 2016 the Supreme Court passed interim order to hold Municipal elections.

Despite the tribal organizations opposing the move, the State Government initiated the Municipal Election process and it was scheduled to be held in February

2017. Few civil societies confronted the State's decision and called for State wide Bandh which resulted in violent form of protests thus crippling the State affairs for almost a month. The Naga Mothers Association (NMA) representing the JACWR, who spearheaded in advocating for women's reservation, was pressurized to withdraw their petition in the Supreme Court. In January 2017, application was filed for withdrawal of both the petitions. The State Government is considering re-drafting the act, the outcome of which is unpredictable.

The strong opposition in implementing the reservation policy in the municipal bodies is a reflection of the mindset of the Naga leaders who are adamant in preserving the age old customs. This approach has hindered the advancement of Naga women's participation in the political sphere.

Today, there are no Morungs to teach boys and girls or their roles and duties but they are taught at home through their daily activities and games. Girls are taught to cook, clean the house and play 'house house' or 'kitchen' and boys are made to do more muscular work such as fetching wood and water, helping around in building houses etc and play games which involves power and control like 'war games' or 'police' etc. Though the literacy rate of the Naga women population is impressive, we cannot deny the fact that in most of the families especially in the rural areas, a girl child is denied education because of low income of the family. They are also kept at home in order to make use of her labour. In many cases, a girl child is not encouraged to study as it would jeopardize the social structure and power relations. Education opportunities for girls also depend on the absence of male child in the family in many of the rural area. If the income of the family was very low and if they had to choose between the children for education, they would definitely choose the male child.

Despite the changes and understanding, there is still an existence of gender attitude among the Nagas. In many cases, especially in the rural areas, if a girl doesn't fair well in her studies, it is considered as something expected whereas, a boy is encouraged to study and become an officer. This is because man is still considered as the 'bread earner' of the family whereas, earnings from the wife or woman are considered as secondary income of the family. In the novel *A Terrible Matriarchy*, grandmother discourages Dielieno to study because she was only a girl. Even when

she is about to enter college, grandmother opposes it as it was still not expected for woman to work. In Kire's novella *Life on Hold*, when Nime tells her husband that she wants to do a job, she is shouted at. Many Nagas declare that Naga women are respected and are treated as equals and therefore there is an absence of gender discrimination. Many ways and morals of the Naga society may seem to be favouring women; however, patriarchal advantage and advocacy had been interwoven with and concealed by these ideologies. Besides, the people itself have been conditioned deeply by the traditional values which are pro-men despite all the advancement in different areas of life.

Despite appearances, Naga society is still traditional in its outlook and one of the abiding truths of the society is the 'position' of women in the public domain. For example, a women's achievement is always prefaced by the preamble, 'even though only a woman'. Truth to be told, even today many women are not free from such bias when they concede to male superiority out of defence to 'custom'. Thus, Naga women, no matter how well educated or highly placed in the society, suffer from remnants of this psychological 'trauma' of subordination, which in their grandmothers' times might have seemed perfectly logical but which now appears to be a paradox within the 'modern, educated' self. (OBN.50, 51).

Despite the need and want for changes, they still uphold the old ways and morals. In such a position, Naga women get sandwiched between the modern and the tradition. On one hand, they feel the need to move with the rest of the world without any prejudice and they are given space to do so. However, as they try to gain their place in the society, they are reminded of their position as women in the society, their expectations as a woman. Even today, Naga society still consciously and unconsciously looks down on women as the subordinate or the weaker sex. "Traditional values and practices still treat women as inferiors. This notion has long chained them from full and active participation in today's social system. Even educated women are reluctant to be seen as 'women libber' or 'feminist'. The greatest barriers against emancipation of women are the traditional values and practices, which

needs special action.”(CGE.98, 99). In both the cases, whether in the case of mainland Indian women or the Naga women, they are caught in the same situation and position.

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CHAPTER III

WOMEN'S IDEOLOGIES IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVELS.

Shashi Deshpande's novels present modern, educated middle class women. They are the product of struggles fought by social reformist, National movements, Women's organisation and individual women. These women in Deshpande's novel are not extraordinary women but are ordinary women and present the reality. They are women who face problems as every woman in one way or the other. Educated and thus, with a longing for freedom and liberation they march forward in life, only to be pulled back by the traditional 'roles' assigned to them. Ideologies generally mean doctrines or philosophies, views. The ideologies of Shashi Deshpande's women are definitely of the feminist which will be studied and analysed. Five novels of Shashi Deshpande have been studied to discern the different external and internal conflicts of modern women with the underlying traditional norms of Indian society. Each of her protagonists reacts and deals with the challenges differently, portraying the variation of women behaviour and their ways of dealing with such situations. In order to have a closer and more vivid idea of Deshpande's heroines, a scrupulous study of each novel is needed. The author's protagonists are all from middle class women who are perfect representatives of majority of the Indian women.

Deshpande's feminism does not uproot the woman from her background but tries to expose the different ideological elements that shape her. These include religious and cultural elements (such as myths, legends, rituals and ceremonies) and social and psychological factors (such as woman's subordinate position in the family and her restricted sexuality). The protagonists of the novels are modern, educated, independent women, roughly between the age of thirty and thirty-five. (SDFSF.14)

3.1. *THE DARK HOLDS NO TERROR:*

The novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980) by Shashi Deshpande presents the condition of modern women in the Indian society. It wriggles its way inside the mind of women and presents to us the predicaments faced by them and how they endure and deal with it. The protagonist of the novel is Saritha (Saru), who is an

educated, economically independent woman from a middle class family. The novel begins with Saru returning to her father's home after fifteen years. She returns home to her father, hoping to find consolation from her troubled marriage with Manu, her husband. As she stays with her father, she remembers her childhood and gets a chance to introspect about her relationship with her husband, mother, father, children and Dhruva.

The Dark Holds No Terror represents the typical traditional Indian family. Since childhood Saru, the protagonist of the novel gets to taste the bitterness of gender discrimination shown to her especially by her mother in favour of her brother Dhruva. "Shashi Deshpande presents here a vivid picture of the traditional Indian family where much importance is given to son's birth. But the birth of a daughter is a burden and liability of the family" (TNSD.59). She had an insecure childhood and is always seeking for parental attention even to the extent of pushing off her brother from her father's lap. She also recollects Dhruva's birthdays and other celebrations related to him which was celebrated every year with much triumph which was in contrast to her birthdays which was not given much priority. Her insecurity is further aggravated by her mother's remarks about the day of her birth which seemed utterly different from her brother birth day which had been one of the most joyous occasions as she thinks:

But of my birth, my mother had said to me once... 'It rained heavily the day you were born. It was terrible.' And somehow, it seemed to me that it was my birth that was terrible for her, and not the rains. (TDHNT.169).

Her mother's hatred for her grows even more after Dhruva's death as she blames Saru for it. Saru talks about how even the celebrations were stopped after Dhruva's death which makes her feel unwanted. The presence of Saru's father in her life is insignificant. She struggles to get her father's attention which she hardly succeeds and envies Dhruva's good fate as he always got to have long conversations and go for long rides with his father. As Saru grew up and attains puberty, she expresses her resentment for womanhood because not only is she not allowed to enter the kitchen and the puja room but it was synonymous to her mother and prejudice.

You're a woman now, she said. If you're a woman, I don't want to be one, I thought resentfully watching her body. The cleft which ran down her back, a deep furrow, dividing her body sharply in two. The two buttocks sharply outlined by the kind of sari she wore, ducked in between her legs. The way her hips moved as she walked. I can remember walking as stiffly as possible, holding my pelvis rigid, willing it not to move, so that I can be unlike her as possible. (62, 63).

Indians are known for their obsession for fair skin. Since ancient times, fair women were always preferred over dark skinned women. Even today, fairness is synonymous to beauty in India. Besides, there is hardly even a person who goes by without mentioning that "fair skinned will be preferred" in the matrimonial column. As such, relentless efforts have been made to prevent and transform dark skin into fair skin. In the novel, the protagonist memories flashes back when she as a child, she was constantly reminded by her mother that she are ugly because she is too dark to be beautiful. On many occasions she is forbidden to go out in the sun as it will darken her skin even more which will create problems for them to marry her off.

Don't go out in the sun. You'll get even darker,
Who cares?
We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married.
I don't want to get married.
Will you live with us your whole life?
Why not?
You can't
And Dhruva?
He's different. He is a boy. (45).

All these words and actions of hatred makes Saru feel insecured, unloved and unwanted. She already gets a sense of being unwanted because of her being a girl since childhood. Naturally growing up in such an environment she becomes rebellious against the traditional norms. "Saru's feminism springs out as a reaction to this discriminatory psychological set up of society at large and her parents in particular". (WNSD.70).

Saru gets through her exams in first class but she still had to convince her parents especially her mother who was totally against it. She strongly opposed Saru's determination to go to Bombay for her Medical studies as she is a girl and saw her daughter as only a responsibility which they couldn't evade.

Yes, they are girls whose fathers have lots of money. You don't belong to that class. And don't forget, medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor, you still have to get her married, spend money on her wedding. Can you do both? Make yourself a pauper, and will she look after you in your old age? Medicine! Five, six, seven.... god knows how many years. Let her go for a B. Sc. you can get her married in two years and our responsibility will be over. (TDHNT. 144).

Fortunately, her father approves of it and Saru sets out of her home to study medicine. This decision against her mother's wishes is her first step in confronting her mother and her traditional mindset. During her years of studying medicine, she starts accepting herself as a woman who is supposed to be the way she is "Things fell, with a miraculous exactness, into place. I was a female. I was born that way, that was the way my body had to be, those were the things that had happened to me. And that was that!" (Ibidem.63). Then she falls in love with Manu, who was an aspiring writer and a poet, someone whom the ladies of the college eyed, "one of the known names by then" (ibidem.50) whose life seem to be alluring and full of promises. She considered herself as extremely fortunate to be chosen by Manu as she says, "And yet there was always a gnawing disbelief...how could I be anyone's beloved? I was the redundant, the unwanted and appendage one could do without. It was impossible for anyone to want me, love me, need me."(ibidem.66). Saru's confrontation with her mother reaches its climax when she decides to marry Manu, whom her mother is dead against. Being a rigid orthodox woman, Saru's mother, opposes to it because Manu was from the lower caste whereas, Saru belong to the upper caste.

What caste is he?

I don't know.

A Brahmin?

Of course not.

Then cruelly. . . his father keeps a cycle shop.

Oh, so they are low-caste people, are they?

The words her mother had used, with the disgust, hatred and prejudice of centuries

Had so enraged her that she had replied. . . I hope so. (96).

Saru accuses her mother of her marriage with Manu. She feels that if her mother had loved her then she might not have jumped into the decision of marrying Manu. It was her hatred for her and the rebellious self which wanted to hurt her mother that had led her to make the impulsive decision of marrying Manu.

If you hadn't fought me so bitterly, if you hadn't been so against him , perhaps I Would never have married him. And I would not have been here, cringing from the Sight of letters, fighting with terror at the sight of his handwriting, hating him and yet pitying him too. (96).

Saru marries Manu despite her parent's opposition and leaves her parents to live with Manu in a one room apartment where they had to share the toilet. Saru who never got the love she wanted found it in her husband. Saru's experiences a life of dejection at her parental home and when she falls in love with Manu she imagines life with him to be different. In his love she felt wanted and felt protected.

She is crazy about him and his love appears to her protective, condescending, all encompassing and satisfying. This is no ego-problem and no assertion of identity. (WNSD.51).

Despite the inconveniences of corridors smelling of urine, dark rooms and a locality with unfriendly eyes, she found "heaven on earth" (TDHNT.40). Saru finally finds happiness in Manu and considers herself to be the luckiest person alive. "Manu is her saviour because he saves her from the hostile environment of her parents' house. He proves himself the romantic hero who rescues saru – a damsel in distress. She marries to regain her lost love in her parental home and her identity as an

individual.” (FNSD.79). Saru’s insatiable desire for love can be explained in Shulamith Firestone’s in book *The Dialectic of Sex* as she says:

In a girl, the mother’s rejection, occurring for different reasons, produces an Insecurity about her identity in general, creating a lifelong need for approval. (Later her lover replaces her father as a grantor of the necessary surrogate identity -she sees everything through his eyes.) Here originates the hunger for love that sends both sexes searching in one person after the other for a state of ego security. (TDS.117).

Their marital life is full of bliss and joy. However, problems began to seep in the moment Saru was recognised as a doctor. “As long as Saru is a student, Manu has been the breadwinner. They had peace at home despite its filth and stench.”(WSDN.52). There is an explosion in a nearby factory and Saru attends to the patients. She is recognised as a successful and reputed doctor and from that day on not a day went by without a knock on the door looking for her. As she became more reputed and popular, Manu’s behaviour began to change. He feels belittled as Saru got all the attention and he was ignored both by his wife as she had little time and by others too. On the other hand, Saru could no longer bear the life she was living. She wanted more.

For me, things now began to hurt... a frayed sari I could not replace, a movie I could Not see, an outing I could not join in. I knew now that without money life became Petty and dreary. The thought of going on this way became unbearable. (TDHNT.92).

Gradually, Saru and Manu start drifting apart. The insatiable love which Saru had once for Manu started to fade. It also gets aggravated by the fact that Saru starts to have an affair with Boozie, her boss which may be a sign of her trying to find emotional solace in other men. Taking advantage of this, she gets a loan from Boozie which helps her to set up her own consultation room which was her dream. When Saru tells Manu about the loan, Manu doesn’t question her. However, that night he tries to force himself to make love to Saru which she could discern it as his desperate act. She resists and denies him. On the day of inauguration of her consulting room,

she tries to ignore both Manu and Boozie. When Boozie tries to flirt with her openly it angers her and her anger was directed towards Manu.

And I should have hated him then... not Manu, for he had done nothing then for which I could have hate him, but this attractive, ravishing masculine man who was doing this deliberately. Attracting attention to the two of us. But, funnily enough, it was not him I hated. It was Manu for doing nothing. (94).

As Saru's career flourished, Manu still remained as a private lecturer at a third grade college. Along with this, their love grew colder. Manu's behaviour changed as she became more engrossed with her work. She was doing both the work as a doctor and a housewife which exhausted all her energy by the end of the day. Once they met a friend of Saru's at a store who comments that they could afford to go to Ooty because Saru was a doctor. That night, Manu attacks her in bed, asserting her manliness. On another occasion, a girl comes to interview Saru for a magazine. As they sat and had tea, she asks Manu, "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?" (200).and that night too Manu assaults her.

'He attacked me,' she said. 'He attacked me like an animal that night. I was sleeping and I woke up and there was this.. this man hurting me. With his hands, teeth, his whole body.' (201).

Marital life becomes a nightmare for Saru. Once she had found peace and solace in Manu and her desire for him was insatiable but it was different now. Though he is normal during the day time, he turns into a violent rapist at night and tries to assert his masculinity through sexual acts upon Saru. Her illusion of finding protection and happiness in her marriage is soon shattered. Every night became a torture and she feared the dark. She saw a person she had not known. However, the next day, she always saw the old Manu, who seems to be oblivious of his actions. He even asked about the bruises he had inflicted on her which surprises Saru and which stops her from confronting Manu.

...And I think it's true in his case. I can swear to that. I was dressing up one day and He said ... "God, Saru! Have you hurt yourself? Look at that!" I can swear his surprise, his concern was genuine. And if he doesn't know, what's the use of talking To him? (203).

Gradually, Saru changes her attitude towards Manu and her marital life. Once again Saru feels alone and dejected. Saru becomes frantic to save her marriage and even considers giving up her profession which Manu rejects because of their economic need. Saru realises that her success was slowly destroying her relationship with her husband as she says:

And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing which made me inches taller, made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I was his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband.(42).

The gender stereotyping that a men's place is in the office and a women's in the kitchen has been ingrained so deeply in the society that it is difficult for the male ego to accept situations when the roles are reversed. It is a fact that many marriages today fail because women are more successful than their husbands. Their egos are bruised when the wife gets more attention and recognition in the work front and therefore in many cases, men try to avenge this by asserting their masculinity through domestic violence, rape.etc. In Saru's case too her husband's ego is hurt by her success. He feels inferior and this sense of inferiority makes him brutal in his behaviour towards her.

On hearing about her mother's death she decides to go back to her parental home and met his father. She also wanted to get away from her husband whose brutal acts were unceasing. She becomes desperate for her father's sympathy and longs for security and emotional attachment. As she comes home she hopes for changes but finds that nothing has changed from the surroundings to her relationship with her father. However, her stay there gives her solace and peace and through flashbacks of her childhood and other experience makes her clear her guilt and confusion. At her father's house she takes time to introspect into the cause of her problems.

She remembers with anguish about the story of her friends' sister who had returned home to her parents from a failed marriage. She had been received with sympathy because her marriage was an arranged marriage and her parents were responsible for it. However, Saru's marriage was a love marriage and she holds herself solely responsible for any problem in her marital life. Saru yearned for comfort and sympathy but she couldn't find it anywhere. Saru contemplates her relationship with that of Padmakar, a classmate from medical college. When she realises that he wanted to develop a closer relationship with Saru, she rejects it. Saru feels that no amount of affairs or relationships would comfort her. She had started distasting love, romance and sex.

Now, I knew. It was not just the consequence I feared and hated, but the thing itself. What had I imagined? Love? Romance? Both, I knew too well, were illusions, and not relevant to my life anyway. And the code word of our age is neither love nor romance, but sex. Fulfillment and happiness came, not through love alone, but sex. And for me sex was now a dirty word. (133).

Saru also meets two of her school friends- Sunita and Nalu. Sunita is married and talks of her husband with great respect and admiration. From her talks she could make out that Sunita was just an insignificant partner in her marriage. She refers to her husband as "he" as many orthodox Indian women do out of respect. Sunita had also changed her name to "Geetanjali" which her husband had chosen for her. Nalu condemns Sunita for being timid and submissive to her husband. Despite her show of a happy married life, it is obvious that she had her own problems as she lends a hundred rupees from Saru. Nalu is a spinster and teaches in a college. Saru wonders at Nalu's change of personality. She was an enthusiastic person but she had become bitter and all she could talk was about her dissatisfaction with her brothers and mother with whom she lives, her college and students. However, Saru tells herself that it won't be wise of her to think that Nalu's bitterness was a result of her not being married or bearing children as she was married and had children but was not happy either.

On one occasion, while making butter Saru remembers Mai Kaki words. She had advised Saru to make butter every day. She told her it would keep her hands soft and smooth and that her husband will never let go of her hands. Thus Saru questions, “Everything in a girl’s life, it seemed, was shaped to that single purpose of pleasing a male. But what did you do when you failed to please?” (163). She realises her marital problem was a result of shattered male ego. Though Saru is against the traditional binary which differentiates a woman and a man, she sees now that in order to have a happy married life one should conform to these norms. Defying this would only bring failure of relationship between a man and a woman.

Have you girls seen an old-fashioned couple walking together? Have you noticed that the wife always walks a few steps behind her husband? That’s important, very important, because it’s symbolic of the truth. A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he’s an MA, You should be a BA. If he’s 5’4”tall, you shouldn’t be more than 5’3”tall. If he is earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety- nine rupees. That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. Don’t ever try to reverse the doctor-nurse, executive-secretary, principal-teacher role. It can be traumatic, disastrous. (137).

At her father’s home, the neighbour knowing that she is a doctor slowly starts to come. Some came for a chat while many came to share their ailments on the pretext of visiting her. Saru’s interactions with her neighbours made her realise that these women kept all their physical and emotional ailments to themselves out of sheer modesty.

Everything kept secret, their very womanhood a source of deep shame to them. Stupid, silly martyrs, she thought; idiotic heroines. Going on their task, destroying themselves in the bargain, for nothing but a meaningless modesty. (107).

These self-sacrificing women which obviously were an unconscious reflection of the myths of martyred women only angered Saru and she questions “Why didn’t

you do something about it earlier". (107). She feels the need for her to stay there and help these women but then she realises and quotes Betty Friedan who says "it is easier for her to start the women's lib movement than to change her own personal life." (107).

However, she realises that like other women, she can never voice out her feelings. All this time she had fought with her mother who represents the traditional ways but she realises that despite her modernity she was at bar with her mother because both of them were victims of patriarchy and couldn't defy it completely.

She retreated into the kitchen to dress up; she sat in this dingy room to comb her hair and apply her kumkum, she slept in her bed like an overnight guest in a strange place. And I have so much that my mother lacked. But neither she or I have that thing 'a room of our own. (136).

Saru's struggle with her guilt made her think: "My brother died because I was heedlessly turned my back on him. My mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood." (58). At last she finds comfort from her father as she confines in him. He advises her to forget about both her brother's and mother's death and that she shouldn't blame it on herself. He further tells her to confront her problems whatever it maybe without running away from it. He urges Saru not to run away from Manu but to confront him. At first, though Saru realises that she was equally responsible for mess in their marriage, she finds it hard to accept the truth and confront her problems. It is Madhav's words which gives her the final push as he says, "I can't spoil my life because of that boy. It is my life after all." (208). She realises that she has to face the situation because "we come into the world alone and go out of it alone". Further, while she argues with her father about the guilt she had for her mother's, Dhruva and Manu, her father asks, "...Are you not sufficient for yourself?" (217). This makes her realise that one need to be sufficient within oneself and that she cannot find refuge in the places that she was looking for. She accepts her weaknesses which led to her being unfair to her brother Dhruva, her mother and Manu. She understands that she needs to be assertive and she cannot live in silence no more. She is prepared to confront life as someone "...who has to break away from old images of womanhood and assert her ways, shape her life fearlessly

without feeling guilt for deviating from the tradition rooted models of Sita, Gandhari or Savitri".(FNSD.86).

To defy the traditional patriarchal set up completely would bring her loss and sorrow. It was rigidly ingrained in the society that it was impossible for her to avoid it without incurring emotional, mental, physical sacrifices. She is left with no choice but to face the realities and except her realities in order to live a normal life. Saru feels that she has to face the situation courageously and it is she who has to decide about herself. There is no room for escapism. She realises that the "dark holds no terror". Saru is a representation of modern women in India. Like Saru, they try to rebel against traditions and run away from it but realises that they have to empower themselves and at the same time compromise with the existing reality.

3.2. THAT LONG SILENCE:

That Long Silence is the story of Jaya, an educated middle class women like Saru of *The Dark Holds No Terror*. The story opens with Jaya and her husband, Mohan moving into their Dadar flat. They are doing so as Mohan who is an engineer is caught in a scandal of corrupt practices at his work place and is asked to hide for some time. Mohan is the dominating partner in their relationship and is focussed on money and status. Jaya comes from a family where her father encouraged her to be herself and to be confident. He had named her Jaya which means victory. Jaya's father always, makes her feel special and is certain that she will never end up being a mere housewife like the other girls. He dreams big for her and is confident that she will achieve International award or go to Oxford University. However, her father passes away leaving her without the support and courage for her to fulfil the dreams.

In a hest, she is married to Mohan and is gradually moulded into "a soft smiling, placid, motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family. A woman who coped." (TLS.15,16). For seventeen years Jaya is married to Mohan and in that period she snips off pieces of her to keep the scales keel. Mohan had always taken her for granted and as such he had not taken the opinion of Jaya about their moving into the Dadar flat. As they move in, Mohan asks her for the house keys which she quietly refuses. This shows that Jaya is already gaining confidence to deny

Mohan's dominance over her. She realises that "It was not he who had relinquished his authority, it was I who no longer conceded any authority to him".(9). However, she found that resistance subtle and found it natural. What really angers Jaya is Mohan's accusation on Jaya and the children for his actions which led him to the present condition. Work division is very distinct between Jaya and Mohan. Jaya is given the overall incharge of the domestic chores whether she is sick or not. As such Jaya also assumed that Mohan's work was his duty alone until he says, "It was for you and the children that I did this. I wanted you to have a good life, I wanted the children to have all those things I never had". (9). Mohan didn't accept the fact that the problem was his sole creation but finds a reason to blame it on Jaya.

As Jaya stays at the Dadar flat, devoid of all her routine work she gets time to introspect into her life. The break from her daily routine at first makes her feel that her own career as Mohan's wife is in jeopardy. At the same time she feels a sense of freedom. All through her years of being married to Mohan, Jaya suppresses her desires, dreams and had adjusted herself to become what Mohan wanted. Nothing of her individuality is left of her anymore. In many Brahmin families, after marriage, the husband renames her wife. Here too as Sunita's name is changed to Geetanjali by her husband in *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Jaya's name is changed to "Suhasini". With this new name, it appears that the light-spirited and courageous Jaya had been reduced to a mere proud housewife and mother. Jaya is also an aspiring writer and one day she wins a prize for one of her story. The story is about a man who couldn't reach his wife emotionally except through his body. This threatens Mohan's security and angers him as he thinks that people will surmise it's their story and the man in the story is him. Thus, the fear of hurting Mohan again stops Jaya from writing stories as the stories might resemble "Mohan's mother, aunt, or my mother or aunt".(149). She stops writing stories which she is passionate about because Mohan is conscious about it. Instead she writes humorous stories on middle class housewife in a column called "Seeta".

Centuries old sheltering has made women too weak to lead an independent life. This

Is what we call a feminist dilemma that makes Jaya observe such a long silence despite being a writer. Actually there is a clash between between the writer and the housewife in her. The writer in her expects to express her views and experience before the society; but the housewife demands silence on her part. In this tug of war the housewife wins and she remains silently probing into her past and struggling with her present. (SSDN. 54).

Jaya alters herself in every way she could in order to please Mohan. Jaya after marriage stops expressing herself and starts controlling her anger as it was “unwomanly” according to Mohan.

I had learnt to control my anger after that, to hold it to the leash. Terrified of his disapproval, I had learnt other things too, though much more slowly, less painfully. I had quit all the things I could and couldn't do, all the things that were womanly and unwomanly. (83).

In the beginning of their marriage she religiously reads magazines which gives her information and advises to keep her husband in love with her, to keep the romance alive and to increase her charm. She creams her face as advised by magazines and brushes her hair up to fifty strokes all in an attempt to satisfy Mohan. Even long after all these exercises seem to be fruitless and the thought looms whether she wants him or not, she is still always “apprehensive of not pleasing him as a woman”.(96). In many love or marital relationship, it is the woman who is expected to make all the adjustment to keep the family happy. Women are assigned the role of Sita and Draupati, the wives who are beautiful, tolerant and who stand by their husband unconditionally. They are aware that the moment they try to break this traditional norm, they will suffer the blows of it. Jaya's situation show case the reality of many women today. They are educated and they know what they want but once they get into the institution of marriage they either have to choose to save the marriage or do as she desires. Jaya is a wife who is confused like all modern women. She is taught to be liberal by her father yet at the same time she had been advised to keep Mohan happy and told that the happiness of her family depends on her. She had been told that “a husband is like a sheltering tree”. Jaya doesn't know the politics of these words of

wisdom imparted to her by her family and relatives. Jaya thinks that the power of her family lies in her but she is soon to be disappointed. These words carry the very essence of patriarchal agenda to suppress women, making it sound natural.

At first Jaya is a romantic soul and looks forward to her marriage with Mohan. Like Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terror*, she too looks for happiness and expects happiness in her marriage. She is soon to be disillusioned as she realises that there is no real involvement between a man and a woman. Jaya describes her relationship with Mohan as without mutual love or understanding. They play their roles as husband and wife in a mechanical way without involving any emotions. She says that their relationship is like “a pair of bullocks yoked together.” Jaya efficiently plays the role of Mohan’s wife and Rati and Rahul’s mother. As long as they are economically and socially stable, she plays along and makes Mohan her career. Gradually Jaya became the ideal wife who like Gandhari bandages her eyes to become blind like her husband. She ignores her true self in order to make her husband happy and create a happy family and narrowed down her scope to adjust with the needs of her family.

I bandaged my eyes tightly. I didn’t want to know anything. It was enough for me that we moved to Bombay, that we could send Rahul and Rati to good schools, that I could have the things we needed...decent clothes, a fridge, a gas connection, travelling first class (62).

Vanitamami tells Jaya that “a husband is like a sheltering tree” (32) and advises her to ignore if her husband keeps a mistress or two and to take up a hobby instead. Ramukaka tells her “the happiness of your husband and home depends entirely on you”(138) and Dada advise her to be good to her husband. Jaya accepts all advises showered to her. She suppresses all her wants and emotions. She plays out the role of the ideal wife which she had managed to learn over the years. Thus, she manages to create the portrait of a happy family to others. In that process she also loses her identity as Mohan becomes the focus of her life.

What else could I name it when I thought of the agony it had been to be without him, when his desires, his approval, his love, had seem to

be the most important thing in my life? It seems to me now that we had, both of us, rehearsed the roles of husband and wife so well that when the time came we could play them flawlessly, word-perfect (95).

As Jaya browses through her diary, while staying at the Dadar flat, it surprises her to a great extent. The person who has written down the diary seems to be entirely a different person. She wonders what had made her write down those things. She had just recorded facts about the day. “Matter -of-fact, prosaic, everything was meticulously noted down here – what I had bought, how much I have paid for it, the dates the children schools had begun, the servant’s absences, the advance payments they had taken, the dates of our insurance payments...” (ibidem.69). She had completely achieved in suppressing her inner voice which says “I can’t cope, I can’t manage, I can’t go on” (70).

During the early years after marriage, Jaya and Mohan gets into an argument and Jaya bursts out her anger like she had always done. This upsets Mohan to a great extent and makes Jaya guilty of her act. After this, the relationship lapses into silence. Jaya guilty of not living up to Mohan’s expectations, fixes every part of her to become the ideal wife. However, Mohan was cold to her and so the silence continues. When crisis strikes their family, Mohan takes for granted that Jaya will follow him. She doesn’t even bother to take her opinion about shifting to the Dadar flat. Though she follows him to the Dadar flat, she is not to be taken for granted anymore. As mentioned before, the society has a specific role assigned to women. They have created a strong system which women are accepted to follow without reasoning it. The woman who dares to question or overrule the prescribed norms is looked at as someone disgraceful. This is also reflected in the novel where when Jaya at the Saptagiri ajji’s home asks why the boys can’t take turns in clearing up the kitchen and everyone starts laughing at her. However, Jaya refuses to be like Sita who follows her husband to the exile. This itself breaks the tension between them and the years of frustration pours out. Mohan accuses Jaya for everything from the things he had to do to get the quarter, to the extent of being unaware of the short forms used in his office and claims that he had never stopped her from doing anything. This was what Mohan had felt but he had failed to see all the sacrifices Jaya had made for him and the children. Since time immemorial, society had always glorified the work done by men.

The work assigned to them had been made sure that it's valued and hence are paid. On the other hand, work done or assigned to women had been undervalued. They make sure that the work assigned to women doesn't sound like work. In this novel, Mohan feels that he is the only one who had sacrificed for the family. He seems to be unaware and when told, unable to accept that Jaya had sacrificed too for the family. Mohan fails to realise that it is his dream that they are pursuing leaving aside Jaya's own list of dreams like adopting a baby, participating in the anti-price campaign. Though Jaya tries to reason with Mohan, her feeble defences were nothing against her anger. He accuses her of changing her behaviour when he is in trouble. Jaya as always, uses silence to protect the argument from going further. With all the accusations showering upon her, she could not suppress it anymore. Her anger overflows, she could not hold it back anymore. Jaya becomes hysterical and begins to laugh. "I must not laugh, I must not laugh...even in the mist of my rising hysteria, a warning bell sounded loud and clear. I had to control myself, I had to cork in this laughter. But it was too late." (122). This horrifies Mohan and he leaves the house. Jaya and Mohan now know Suhasini is no more. The woman moulded according to the society in general and Mohan in particular was dead.

My wife...' the words ran like a refrain through his outburst. And I could see her, the woman I had seen in the mirror the day of our wedding – a woman who had not seemed to me, who had taken the burden of wifehood off me. A humourless, obsessive person. But Mohan's eyes, as he spoke of her, were agonised, the eyes of a man who'd lost a dear one. Suhasini was dead, yes, that was it, she was the one Mohan was mourning, she'd walked into the sea at last. No, the fact was that I'd finally done it – I'd kill her. No, that was not right either, we had killed her between us, Mohan and I. But in that dying she'd given me back the burden she'd been carrying for me all these years. I had finally to bear it myself, the burden of Wifehood (121).

Jaya is left all alone. She feels lost and becomes anxious. During this period she realises that all those years of fitting and adjusting herself to Mohan's desires and dreams had been a waste because she is left all alone now. Her efforts had never been recognized, her silence taken for granted and she is left with nothing but "emptiness

and silence”. Jaya is left with no option but to confront and articulate her fears and doubts. She experiences pain and anxiety and her life becomes surreal. But reality hits her and she gets a hold of her life. She decides to no longer live in silence as she says:

I am not afraid anymore. 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. The child, hands in pockets, has been with me through the years. She is with me still. (191).

The time she is left alone in the house she remembers the entire people in her life and draws inspiration and lessons from them. The person she meets in her life also plays a huge part in giving her the courage and realisation to embrace her true self. Kamat is her ally. He is a widower and lives above her Dadar flat. It is through him that she receives her mails as Mohan disapproves of her writings. Kamat is a person who respects her, treats her equally, listens to her and gives her constructive criticism on her writings. He is someone totally different from Mohan. Kamat enjoys cooking and didn’t believe in the assignment of gender roles. He advises Jaya to stop portraying women as a victim as it would lead only to self-pity without any constructive solution. He encourages her to write about real women and to do so with the passion which is concealed in her instead of focussing on pleasing others. He also challenges her to confront her fears as he says:

‘It’s so much easier to be the martyr who’d have doen so much if only...’, he had twisted his magnificent voice into a feminine falsetto, doing a much better job of mimicking than I had done, ““if only I had the time. But I’m a wife and mother fist, my home and children come first to me...blah blah blah.” Pah! The fact is you are scared’(148).

Kusum and Jaya are related through marriage. Kusum is a mad woman and is deserted by her husband. Everyone treats her as a burden. According to Ai she is someone who is “of no use to anyone”. At the end she kills herself by committing suicide. Jeeja is Jaya’s help. She represents the status of many women in India who suffers gender discrimination. Her husband is a drunkard who beats her up. He also

marries another woman because she is unable to bear a child for him. To top it off, Jeeja brings up the child of her husband and his wife after they pass away. She not only looks after the child but also takes the burden of his wife and children. This is a typical case scenario of many women who succumb to the traditional norms which glorifies the husband as god. No matter what crime the men do, they are still excused and literally worshipped whereas, women suffer silently every bit for what the society takes it to be a 'wrong'.

The chains of traditional marriages are too heavy to break. In the absence of any escape route, wives often seek consolation in obsession, masochism or mental slavery leading to physical decay, disease and death. The continuity of women's suppression, as unacknowledged martyrdom, becomes a part of a housewife's existence. She is expected to subordinate her own needs to those of her family. She is supposed to bear exploitation and sufferings with willing fortitude.(FNSD.106).

Mohan's mother is the epitome of the ideal wife in the context of the Indian society. Mohan's father is a tyrant who takes every single opportunity to accuse and torment his wife. She is the woman who eats food after all her family had eaten. Her husband comes home without any indication every night. Yet, she is expected to be ready with freshly cooked hot rice in an untouched vessel because he refuses to have the "Children's disgusting leavings". One night too the mother waits in anticipation as she had finished her second cooking and the rice was getting cold, when he comes home. As the husband sits down to eat, he finds that there is no fresh chutney. In a fit of anger he throws the heavy brass plate on the wall and walks out of the house. In the midst of all this, the children wake up but the mother calms the children and tells them to sleep off. Silently she picks up the plate and cleans the wall and sits down to cook again.

Despite all this, Mohan is still good to his father and respects him and sees his mother a tough woman. He fails to see the woman who is full of despair. Instead, he takes her silence as a sign of strength and not that of surrender. Women have always been considered as a sponge to absorb everything to herself without the slightest defence. Being Tolerant is made synonymous to woman by the society and is

considered as an inborn quality of woman. Thus, Mohan instead of sympathizing her mother, he sees her as the role model of a good wife.

Vimla, Mohan's sister claims that her life is different from her mother's. Her life is economically better. However, Jaya sees that her condition is no less than that of her mother because Vimla dies suffering silently without any help from her in-laws.

Ajji is a shaven widow who strictly follows the traditional code laid down for a Hindu widow. She is left with nothing for herself except for a pair of saris which she wore. Her room is almost bare with a bed which is kept in memory of her husband and two chairs for the male visitors to sit. Whereas, Ajji sleeps on a straw mat and sat on the floor.

Mukta, is a widow who is Jaya's next door neighbour. She lives with her daughter Neelima and her mother –in-law. She is economically independent but still follows the traditional fasts religiously as she cannot negate her superstitions. However, she wants her daughter to be free from all these and live a free life. Nayana, another help maid has four daughters but no sons. She is already pregnant with the fifth child and hopes that it's a boy. Though her husband had warned her that if it's a girl again she will be thrown out of the house, she refuses to it. She tells her husband that he can do anything, even marry another woman if he wants but she won't go away from the house. Women have been told that her husband is like a "sheltering tree" for them. Men are the symbol of protection and respect in the society. Without them, a woman's life is considered as of no value. No wonder despite the injustice, disrespect and violence mended out to them they tolerate it as long as he stays as her husband. The reason for preference of a male child is also distinctly laid out. Nayana tells Jaya, how her mother had hope that her daughter's life would be better but how she had ended up in the same fate as her mother. Nayana had already realised that it's not easy to be a woman. Therefore she says that it's better to have a son.

'Why give birth to a girl, behnji, who'll only suffer because of men all her life? Look at me ! My mother loved me very much, she wanted so much for me ...a house with electricity and water, shining brass

vessels, a silver waist chain, silver anklets...and what have I got? No, no, behnji, better to have a son.’(TLS.28).

Asha, is Jaya’s sister-in-law. Her husband, Ravi doesn’t have a permanent job and they always use to quarrel. Asha is someone who is not ready to be cowed down by the traditional institution of marriage. She goes back to her parental home every time they quarrel. She also gets the support of her father who doesn’t believe in the conventional notion of her daughter being a responsibility. Ravi like every men, feels that it’s no crime to make mistake as he is a man as he wants Jaya to tell Asha to go home back to her husband as a husband can do no wrong.

Women like Sapatagiri ajji, Kusum and her mother Venu, Mohan’s mother and her daughter Vimla are all representations of oppressed womanhood. They accept all kinds of verbal, physical, emotional and mental torture. Yet they bear it all with silence. Juxtaposed to these women are Jeeja and Nayana who also faces the same oppression but they move on with life instead of sitting giving up.

Jeeja had no hostility behind her silence. She accepts physical abuse at the hands of her husband, his drinking bouts and his second marriage with equanimity, as she could not produce a child. yet she goes on living and enduring. Nayana, the help maid, too comes across as a woman with objective clarity. She hankers for a male child, not because he shall support her later, but because a boy can at least have some personal freedom, some breathing space, some effortless individuality, which society denies to a woman. (WNSD.93).

Jaya now believes that Mohan and herself are not two bullocks yoked together anymore. They are two different individuals with different independent minds. Jaya doesn’t blame Mohan entirely anymore. She had also equally contributed to the whole situation. She remembers Krishna in the *Bhagwad Gita* who at the end of his sermon tells Arjuna “Do as you desire” (TLS.192).She didn’t understand the wisdom in these words when she was young. Yet, now she knows what it meant. She already had the knowledge and the experience, however at the end; it was for her to choose what she

wanted to do. She realises that life has many crossroads and choices. Jaya realises that she had been speaking “prakit” all this time instead of Sanskrit. Jaya represents those millions of women who are overcome by traditional norms and are suppressed knowingly. Women themselves have also contributed much to the victimization. They give in easily though they are aware of the injustice done to them.

At the end of the novel, Jaya realises that her individuality is equal along with that of a man. She accepts the fact that she had also contributed to her victimization and feels that it is up to her to whether fight this battle or suffer in silence. In order to do this, she feels that she needs to break her silence and establish her identity. She is aware that breaking off the bonds of family will only result in loneliness. Therefore she should look for happiness and fulfilment within the family but without her giving up on her identity. She knows that she will have to make adjustments but now she knows her limitations. She is hopeful that Mohan’s attitude will also change and move on from the traditional mindset of stereotyping. She is ready to face reality and says that “It’s possible we may not change over long periods of time. But 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” (193).

3.3. THE BINDING VINE:

The protagonist of Shashi Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine* is different from that of Saru of *The Dark Holds No Terror* and Jaya of *That Long Silence*. In her previous two novels, the protagonist achieves in releasing themselves from the bondage of tradition which had controlled their ways of thinking and behaviours. However, they do it within the preview of their own lives. Urmila, the protagonist of *The Binding Vine*, is different as she goes a step further by going outside her family and helping others to address and fight the patriarchal structures of the society. “Urmila is a different character in the sense that she possesses both courage and willingness to struggle against the opposite situation and finds out a way.” (TNSD.88) Urmila is an educated woman and is a teacher. She is a grieving mother who had lost her one year old daughter, Anu. Her family and in-laws try to get her out of this situation but all in vain. Urmila is unable to move on as she is haunted by her memories. Part of her also refuses to move on as she feels that doing so would mean betrayal.

“No, I must reject these memories, I have to conquer them. This is one battle I have to win if I am going to live on. And yet my victory will carry with it the taint of betrayal. To forget is to betray.”(TBV.21). She knows the responsibility she has towards Kartika but she fails him because she is filled with the memories of Anu. At such a time, when she is filled with guilt, anguish and is sensitive, she reads Mira’s poem and meets Shakutai. She feels for them and shares their sorrow and pain. She meets Shakuntai whose daughter is raped and is lying unconscious in the hospital. Shakuntai is from the lower strata of the society whereas Urmila is from the upper middle class. Though they are from two different economic and social backgrounds they bond through sympathy.

Mira is Jaya’s long dead mother-in-law whom she never met nor has Kishore. She succumbs to the burden of marriage at a very early age of 18 and is subjected to marital rape and dies “giving birth to her son at the age of twenty two”. (48). Through Akka, Urmi learns that Kishore’s father first saw Mira at a wedding and fell in love with her. From thereon, he became “a man in single minded pursuit of an object: marrying Mira”.(ibidem47). He succeeds in marrying Mira, which opens the door for Mira’s sufferings. Mira is repulsive of physical intimacy with her husband but she gives in as she has no other options. She vents out her pain and anger in her poems and diaries. Urmi discovers Mira’s poems and diaries and through it unravel the tragic story of Mira. Akka, Kishore’s stepmother, hands over a trunk to Urmi. From there, Akka hands over Mira’s jewellery to Urmi and says, “They are Kishore’s mother’s” (ibidem.48) but when she hands over the books and diaries she says, “Take this, it’s Mira’s”.(ibidem48). This shows that a woman loses her identity after her marriage as she is seen either as a wife or a mother. “The difference made by Akka symbolises that the poems and diaries are “self-actualization, whose identities are not dependent on men”.(FNSD.121).

Mira’s writing reflects the forced sexual activity she had to undergo in the hands of her husband. “It runs through all her writing – a strong, clear thread of an intense dislike of the sexual act with her husband, a physical repulsion from the man she married”(TBV.63). In the novel *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Saru also undergoes the pain and anguish of marital rape. In India, marital rape is common as culturally, it is accepted as a norm of marriage. Thus many women suffer silently in the hands of

their husband. Mira lives in fear and anxiety everyday and fears the night as she knows what is coming as her poem reads:

But tell me, friend, did Laxmi too twist brocade tassels round her fingers and tremble, fearing the coming of the dark-clouded, engulfing night? (66).

She even hates the word “love” and though the husband tries to involve her in the relationship not only physically but also emotionally she refuses to do so. She desires to be left alone and she says that it’s only when her husband is angry that she finds some peace as she stops talking to her and is left alone. She shares about her relationship with her husband as she says:

Talk, he says to me, why don’t you say something, why don’t you speak to me? What shall I talk about, I ask him stupidly. ‘What did you do today, where did you go, what have you been thinking about all evening?’ and so he goes on, dragging my day, my whole self out of me. But I have my defences; I give him the facts, nothing more, never my feelings. He knows what I’m doing and he gets angry with me. I don’t mind his anger, it makes him leave me to myself, it is bliss when he does that. But he comes back, he is remorseful, repentant, he holds me close, he begins to babble. And so it begins. ‘please,’ he says, ‘please, I love you.’ And over and over again until he had done , ‘I love you.’ Love! How I hate that word. If this is love it is a terrible thing. (66, 67).

Mira is given a new name at the time of her marriage, like Jaya of *That Long Silence*. It is obvious that she dislikes her new name and opposes it. She asserts herself that she is Mira. Nirmala, they call, I stand statue – still. Do you build the new without razing the old.

A tablet of rice, a pencil of gold can they make me Nirmala? I am Mira. (ibidem 92). Unfortunately, “this strong, assertion remains a private experience; it never becomes public in her lifetime,” (FNSD.122).

Mira is also alone at her new home and through her poems we know that she is alienated. She tries to speak of her feelings only to be branded as a mad woman. She pours out her anger in her poems: “They called me mad they, who cocooned themselves in bristly blankets and thought themselves warm when I spoke of my soul that boiled and seethed.” (TBV.99,100).

Thus, Mira’s feelings remains concealed in her poems to be discovered “ like a message being tapped on the wall by the prisoner in the next cell”.(115). Urmi wonders how and where Mira must have written this poem. She ponders whether she had her own space to pen down her thoughts. She says, “I can see her steadily, soundlessly getting down on the floor by the window perhaps, forgetting everything as she wrote”. (127). As a child, Mira is an intelligent girl and her father’s favourite. She opposes to her mother’s submission of herself to her husband. Her mother hands down the same wisdom to her to submit to her husband so as to avoid hurdles in her marriage but Mira rejects it. Mira is different from the woman of those times. “Don’t treat paths barred obey, never utter a ‘no Submit and your life will be a paradise, She said and blessed me.”(83). Mira feels that she is trapped like her mother in the bond of marriage with no escape.“Whose face is this that I see in the mirror, unsmiling, grave, bedewed with fear? The daughter? No, mother, I am now your shadow”(126).

Mira’s writing also contains her encounter with the famous poet Venu who later becomes the grand old man of Indian literature. On learning that Mira writes poetry, Venu says, “why do you write poetry? It is enough for a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is you poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men.”(127). This reflects the mindset of men and the restraints on women creativity in a patriarchal society. It speaks volumes about men’s imposition on women only to be breeders of the society. As N. K. Prasad says, “it is a scheme of depriving woman of imagination and the power of communication.” (FNSD.123).

Mira finally experiences the joy of anticipation for a child as she is conceives. The last few months of her life surmise to be of peace and tranquillity as she feels the baby growing inside of her:

Tiny fish swimming in the ocean of my womb my body trills to you;
churning the ocean, shaking distant shores you will emerge one day
lightning flashed through the front door and I who was stone quivered.
Bridging the two worlds, you awaken in me a desire for life.
(TBV.136).

Mira is however not even spared of this joy as she dies in childbirth. She represents millions of women who are forced into loveless marriage and suffers silently till death without a voice of their own.

Shakutai, a woman from the lower strata of the society also represents many women who face one tragedy after the other. Soon after marriage, the husband leaves for Mumbai in with the assurance of finding means of livelihood. Even after six months, there is no word from him. Thus she goes to Mumbai to find him. There she finds out that her husband is of no use and she starts earning for the family. She gives birth to three children, however, her husband leaves her for another woman leaving her all to herself to look after the children. In the mist of all this, Kalpana, Shakutai's eldest daughter is raped brutally leaving her in a condition where she is "neither dead nor alive'. The doctors after examination confirm that Kalapana has been raped but Shakutai refuses to accept it. She wants to believe that her daughter has met with a car accident. She says, "It's not true, you people are trying to blacken my daughter's name." (58). When She hears the word 'report' and begins to panic and begs "don't tell anyone, I'll never be able to hold up my head again. Who will marry the girl, we're decent people. Doctor". (58). Instead of looking for justice, the first instinct that comes to Shakutai is to withhold the report. More than anything she worries about what people will say. Our society is such that instead of punishing the accused, people point fingers at the victim most of the time. Shakuntai is aware of this. She knows that it will be her family who will suffer at the end. She is relieved that it has been reported as a car accident. Though Shakuntai has been abandoned by her husband, she still wishes to get her two daughters married and fears that this incident will close the doors for her daughter's marriage.

Mira too was a victim of physical abuse years ago but neither then nor now the mothers of these silent suffering victims stand by their

unfortunate daughters as they dare not to defy the norms of the society. While Mira's mother kept silent and stood helplessly at the misery of her daughter, Kalpana's mother hovers over the family name. (WSDN.93, 94).

Even the police officer seems to be adamant to report the case as a car accident when Dr. Bhasker speaks to him about his findings and urges him to change the first report. The police are supposed to be the protector of the society. They should be the one encouraging the victim to file a case against the accused. However, in the novel, the police officer takes it very lightly and is of the opinion that the girl will die anyway and therefore to leave the case as it is. He also explains his dislike of rape cases as it's full of complications. In fact, it is a tragedy that the police himself has already a degraded opinion about Kalpana. He pretends to care at first as he says, "But forget that and think of the girl and her family. Do you think it'll do them any good to have known the girl was raped? She's unmarried, people are bound to talk, her name would be smeared." Yet, fails to hide his true opinion as he goes on to say "For all you know she might be a professional, we see a lot of that." (TBV.88). This reflects the mindset of the society which is brainwashed by the patriarchal norms. It shows how it has penetrated even into the extent of the police to whom we look up to as the guardian of the law.

As Urmi and Shakuntai grow closer, she gets to know about Kalpana. Every now and then Shakuntai talks about Kalpana. Sometimes she is full of praises for her and sometimes she talks of her with cruelty as she blames her for everything. Shakuntai speaks with admiration for her daughter as she says:

She is very smart, that's how she got that job in the shop. Kalpana even learnt how to speak English. People in our chawl used to laugh at her, but she didn't care. When she wants something, she goes after it, nothing can stop her. She's stubborn, you can't imagine how stubborn she is "(92).

She further praises her daughter for her physical beauty. She tells Urmi that she is envious of her own daughter as she goes on to say "She's very pretty, my Kalpana

...She is not like me at all. When she was born, she was so delicate and fair, just like a doll, I wonder how a woman like me could have a daughter like that.” (93).

However, at times Shakutai cannot conceal her anger towards Kalpana and blames her for the misfortune. Though she is Kalpana’s mother she tends to think that Kalpana has also contributed in provoking the crime. Whenever, a rape happens, the society first sympathises the victim then blames her. Many people blame the woman for dressing inappropriately and for having a character that attracts such incidents. Shakutai also a product of the society cannot help but comments angrily: “Cover yourself decently, I kept telling her, men are like animals. But she went her way. You should have seen her walking out with head in the air, caring for nobody. It’s all her fault, Urmila, all her fault.” (116).

Urmil tries to convince Shakutai that it’s not Kalpana’s fault. Urmil wants to report this case to the higher authority but Shakutai pleads with her not to do so. She tries to tell Shakutai that it is the fault of the man who and not Kalpana and therefore he should be punished. Urmil is furious at the response from the family as well as the police and everyone involved. Urmil cannot bear the fact that Kalpana is lying in the hospital, at the jaws of death and the rapist is roaming freely. She tries to talk sense to Shakutai as she says “She was hurt, she was injured, wronged by a man; she didn’t do anything wrong. Why can’t you see that? Are you blind? It is not her fault, no, not her fault at all.” (147). But Shakutai chooses to remain silent. She is adamant in her belief that the situation is created by her. She tells Urmil that it is of no use blaming the rapist and that woman must know fear.

Here we find her reactions born of the values deeply rooted in her by the age-old patriarchal social set-up. She was not born with these values; rather they were embedded into her by the patriarchal norms. Strict codes of conduct have been framed for a girl’s speech and conduct so that she can’t invite men’s attention. A girl must observe the social norms regarding how she speaks, dress and carry herself in the society. A girl is supposed to speak less and if possible as the least words may send the wrong signal to men. Similarly her dress should be decent, i.e. the contours of her body should remain hidden. A girl is

always asked to behave herself in the society and she is not allowed to interact much with men. Any deviation from these norms invites the wrath of the family-members as it invites danger of her modesty getting outraged. (FNSD.116).

Kalpana's mother is helpless and only blames her daughter "And if you paint and flaunt yourself, do you think they will leave you alone" (TBV.146). The situation deteriorates to a point that even Shakutai wishes for her daughter's death as it would be easier for all of them. "but sometimes I think the only thing that can help Kalpana now is death". (178). Kalpana's photograph is also printed on the papers along with different opinions. Meantime, the hospital authority decides to shift Kalpana to the suburban hospital. She is getting no better and they are not sure how long she may go on in that condition. This enrages Urmi so she convinces Shakutai and exposes it to the media with the help of Malcolm. Though Inni and Vanaa are against her involvement with the case, Urmi pursues it and finally gains the attention of the government and reopens the investigation. Gradually, women from different walks of life begin to gather outside the hospital to protest against the hospital authorities and share sympathy is circulated. This make Shakutai feel that all the exposure is bad as being raped. She still fears the wrath of the society. However, slowly she realises the atrocity of the crime and she is overwhelmed when she sees people supporting her. She says, "the whole world is my friend" (179). Meantime, through investigation the police reveal that Sulu's husband Prabhakar is the culprit. Sulu unable to bear the shame immolates herself leaving her sister Shakutai behind. Sulu's life is no better than that of her sister. An affectionate and caring woman, she is ever ready to help her sister Shakutai and even helps bringing up Kalpana. Sulu lives in constant fear of being thrown out of the house by her husband because she couldn't bear him a child. He also starts avoids her as she started getting white patches on her skin. When Prabhakar lusts after Kalpana and put Sulu under pressure, she even goes to the extent of purposing Kalpana to become Prabhakar's wife. She is even ready to serve Kalpana.

Get me Kalpana, he kept telling her, you can stay on here, I don't mind. She came to me and I thought it was her idea, that's what she told me. I have no children, she said. If Kalpu marries him, she can be

mistress of the house, she doesn't have to do anything, I'll do all the work, everything". (293).

Shakutai also tells Urmil how Sulu, a creative and enthusiastic girl changed after her marriage with Prabhakar. 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...? Nobody should live like that, Urmil, so full of fears." (195). Sulu represents women who become submissive and live in fear after marriage. Sulu's husband Prabhakar openly expresses his desires for Kalpana and wants to make her his mistress. Sulu also plays along with him by asking Kalpana's hand in marriage for her husband. However, when Prabhakar learns that Kalpana is planning to get married with someone else, he couldn't bear it and rapes her. Sulu blames herself of her barrenness as the reason for her husband's crime, and she immolates herself. This shows how women have considered themselves to be the reason for every wrong doing.

Vanaa, Urmil's sister-in-law is an educated woman and a social worker by profession. She is submissive to her husband Harish and always repeats "Harish says" which is obvious that all her life and thoughts are controlled by Harish. Urmil also longs for a son however, when Vanaa tells Harish about it, he rejects it and quotes population figures and stops her. She even begins to think that Harish is right, which makes Urmil furious and she bursts out, "You, let him bulldoze you, you crawl before him..." (81). Urmil also disapproves Vanaa single-handedly coping the domestic chores along with her professional work. She feels that Harish is equally responsible for the housework as much as Vanaa.

"Why can't Harish help?"

"He comes home so tired..."

"You know Vanaa, what you're going to become, coping with everything the way you

are?"

"What?"

"A super-woman"

"Good! And doesn't that make Harish a superman?..." (81).

Urmila also finds out from her mother that it was not she who had sent her away to her grandparents. Inni tells her how one day while Urmila was still a baby, she had gone for some urgent work leaving her with their man servant. This enrages Urmila's father and sends Urmila away to live with her grandparents as he felt that his wife was unfit to look after the child. The sole idea of the woman as the care taker of a child has not changed over the decades. Women have come a long way, from being confined exclusively to the domestic chores to being career oriented women. But the assignment of her domestic duty and the responsibility of taking care of children are still attached to them. Even a small girl like Mandira, without doubt believes that her mother is responsible for the housework and the children. She does not like the idea of her mother going to work leaving them along with the maid. She tells Urmila, "When I grow up, I'm never going to leave my children to go to work".(72).

Urmila is of the opinion that women take parenthood too seriously whereas men don't feel so to the same extent. She tells Vanaa, "they brainwash us into this motherhood thing. They make it seem so mystical and emotional when the truth is that it's all a myth. They've told us so often and for so long that once you're a mother you have these feelings, that we think we do". (76).

Akka, is also suffers in the hands of the patriarchal set up of the society. She is made to marry a widower. She is told that the sole purpose of the marriage is for her to look after his son, to give his son a mother.

Stories like this are only a tip of an iceberg that describe the fate of many women who are made to live, and are forced stoically to accept marriage under the pressure of societal norms. To those women, marriage is the only goal in the life of a girl and the most difficult task on earth is to find a groom. Taking all these threadbare facts into consideration, Akka willingly agrees to marry Kishore's father, with the growing shadow of his dead wife." (WNSD.99).

Urmila, the protagonist is a strong headed woman. She is independent not only economically but also emotionally and mentally. "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 equation with others.” (SDFSF.33) When her daughter passes away, her family tries to help her move on. But she faces the pain and confronts all her fears. She knows what she is going through as she says, “We’re connected to our physical selves by the fragile thread of our wills. It’s only when tthat it’s all over. That hasn’t happened to me, not yet. I want to live. And I won’t break down. I’m in full control of myself”. (TBV.20).

Urmi is determined to deal the grief by herself. Among the two siblings too, she is the stronger one. The society constructs and imposes the idea of women as the weaker being and men as the stronger being physically and mentally. For decades we have been brainwashed by this stereotyping. However, in Urmi’s case it’s different as Amrut says, “People seeing us together always think I’m the tough guy and you’re my delicate sister; they little know it’s the other way round”. (22). Urmi is also a college teacher, and so she doesn’t use the money which Kishore sends her. She is determined to use her earnings and plans to use kishore’s money only when she has to. Besides all these Urmi also feels lonely as Kishore is a navy and has to be away from home for long periods. She becomes vulnerable at times and fears that Kishore might not come back to her. When he is about to leave her she feels like she would die but she doesn’t reveal it to him. She doesn’t let her emotions take control of her because she knows that it will make her submissive.

Now there is fear – the fear of Kishore never returning home, lost in the seas somewhere as one of his friends was; the fear of Kishore turning away from me, a distant look on his face; the fear of his not wanting to come back to me. yes, that’s the thing, that I am most afraid of. And I can understand them only too well, Vanaa and Inni; I want to submit too. But I know that if I walk the way of submission once, I will walk that way forever. Yet, I never ask him ‘why?’, when he goes away from me even in our few days together. I never reveal my hurt, my longing to keep him my side...”. (82).

Besides her emotional longing for Kishore, she also longs for Kishore to satisfy her physical desires. 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 complicate my life enormously. I often wished I could put my desires into a deep freeze and take them out, intact and whole” (TBV.164, 165).

Urmi befriends Dr. Bhaskar, and goes out with him. Dr. Bhaskar also reveals his feelings for her and at times she is tempted to get into a relationship with him. But Urmi knows where to draw the line. Unlike the other protagonist of Shashi Deshpande, Urmi is strong enough to abstain from having an affair.

Urmi after reading Mira’s poem understands her, her sufferings and plights she says “I’ve worked hard at knowing Mira, I’ve read her diaries, gone through her papers, absorbed her poems, painfully, laboriously translated them into English. And now, I tell myself, I know Mira”. (174). Urmila is determined to translate Mira’s poem from Kannada to English and publish it. When Vanaa learns about her plans to publish Mira’s poem she is furious as she felt that publishing it would mean destroying the honour of the family. Though Vanaa seem to sympathise for Mira, she couldn’t bear the thought of exposing her father’s deeds.

Urmi sees the difference between her life and the lives of other women. Besides, Shakutai, Kalpana and Mira, there is also Mira’s mother who doesn’t seem to think of her life as separate from his children. As a typical traditional Indian woman, she commits herself to her role of mother and wife.

I remember the day the astrologer came home. He read all our horoscopes, told us our futures and we listened as if they were stories about other people. Only my mother’s horoscope was not read. ‘Don’t you want to know your future?’ I asked her. And she said- I remember she was serious when she said this- ‘What’s there in my life apart from all of you? If I know all of you are well and happy, I’m happy too.’ Did she Really mean that? Will I become that way too, indifferent to my own life, thinking it nothing? I don’t want to. I won’t. I think so now, but maybe my mother thought me like she was my age. It

frightens me. No, it doesn't, I'll never think of my life, myself nothing, never. (101).

The protagonist compares her life with the lives of these women and realises that her life has been a good, while these women never got the chance. She tells Vanna, "Then I saw Kalpana, I met Shakutai, I read Mira's diary, her poems. And I've begun to think yes, I've managed, but I've been lucky, that's all. While these women... you understand what I am saying, Vanaa? They never had a chance. It's not fair, it's not fair at all". (174).

Though Inni and Vanaa are educated they still bend to the traditional patriarchal roles. Inni and Vanaa allow their husbands to dominate their thoughts and lives. The novelist also introduces Priti, the pseudo feminist. She tells Urmi excitingly about a judgement regarding a case. The husband had filed a case against the wife to reinstate their conjugal rights. The judge rules that the wife cannot be forced into sexual relationship against her will. Priti becomes excited over this and reacts, "Isn't it radical, absolutely earth-shaking, in this country, I mean? Can you imagine the consequence?" (37). However, Urmila is more of a practical person who sees the reality. She is of the opinion that all women cannot afford to go to court. She tells Priti that the judgement of the judge alone cannot change the society. She says, "One Indira Gandhi in charge of their own lives ...No, Priti, laws can't change people's lives." (38). Urmila firmly turns down Priti's insistence of making a film out of Mira's story. Thus, as S. Prasanna Sree says, "...this perhaps brings out Urmila's moderation even in her feminism. She values the sanctity of womanhood and marriage". (WNSD.104). The protagonist is a crusader for women's equality but definitely not a man-hater. She only wants women to be treated equally to men. She not only helps Shakutai, Kalpana and Mira but by doing so she also learns through them to regain her confidence and courage to go on.

Urmi realises that though Anu is no more, she still has Karthik. She realises that no matter the amount of pain and disappointments we face in life, we have to move on as the main urge is to survive. Thus, Mira despite her miseries wishes to go on living as she says, "Just as the utter futility of living overwhelms me, I am terrified by the thought of dying, of ceasing to be". (TBV.203).

Despite the series of misfortune that Shakutai faces, she goes on with her life. As she had once told Urmila, “But was I born with this courage? I learnt, I had no choice, I had to have courage or stop living”. (195) Shakutai knew that she had to go on living despite disappointments and burdens life throw on her as “you can never opt out, you can never lay it down, the burden of belonging to the human race”. (202).

3.4. SMALL REMEDIES:

Shashi Desphande’s novel *Small Remedies* was published in the year 2000. Her protagonist is still the educated middle class woman like Saru, Jaya and Urmi who faces problems in their marriage. Madhu the protagonist of the novel loses her son in a bomb blast. In order to help her overcome her sorrow Chandru, her husband’s best friend helps her and encourages her to accept the offer to write a biography on a famous classical singer. Taking into account the diverse Indian culture, Desphande includes characters from different communities and profession making the novel a colourful one. Siddhartha Sharma says, “Compared to the earlier novels *Small Remedies* has been wrought on a wider canvas. Taking into account the Indian composite culture the structure of the novel encompasses the plurality and diversity of this culture.” (SDNFS.64). *Small Remedies* portrays three generations of women through the three major characters of the novel. It highlights the changes in the lives of Indian women in different fields.

The novel is about the story of Madhu Saptarishi who has just lost her son in the bomb blast in Bombay in the aftermath of the Babri Masjid episode. Madhu is devastated by the death of her son and feels that death destroys everything around. As mentioned before, in order to make Madhu get over the death of her son, Som’s close friend Chandru exhorts her to write a biography of Savithribai Indorekar, the last doyen of the Gwalior Gharana. Madhu knew Savithribai in her childhood and now as she writes her biography she attempts to recollect the past and put it on paper. Madhu has been asked to present Savithribai as a heroine but she denies doing so as for her Savithribai had been a victim of the patriarchal society. Madhu feels that though Savithribai portrays a strong woman who violated many norms of the society which is

patriarchal in nature, she suffers for doing so. Savithribai led a sheltered life as a child and as a wife. She was born in a tradition-bound orthodox family where she was doted by her family especially her father. Savithribai narrates the story of her childhood to Madhu. She is treated as a “precious jewel” even though she is a girl child. In a society where a girl child is considered as a burden, Bai is fortunate to be born in a family where she is loved. Savithribai says,

I was my parents’ first child, a pampered child. My father was the eldest of the three brothers, so I was the first grandchild in the family. There were the daughters’ children, of course, but they didn’t count. They were not really our family. Everyone made a great fuss of me, not only my parents and grandparents but my uncles, my aunts – all of them. By the time I was two, I had almost my own weight in gold ornaments. (27).

Since childhood Savithribai is a girl who is independent. She challenges the notion of the father being the head of the family and the ultimate authoritarian of the daughter’s life. She is also more influenced by her mother than her father. Infact, it is her mother who influences her love for music. Savithribai appears to be physically fragile as Madhu notices:

A small sized woman. Even from my child’s perspective she seemed petite. Age and illness have so shrunk her that she’s a doll-sized woman now. . . . The skin is fine and delicate, even if it is crinkled like tissue paper. Her arms are slim and firm, but the hands, with their branching of veins, seem incongruously large for those delicate arms. (14).

However, she is authoritative in her attitude towards her servants, students and even Madhu. She imagines how Savithribai felt hurt when her grandmother asked her to stop singing during her performance at a family gathering. After her marriage, it was her father-in-law who helps her to pursue her interest in music. She recalls how her father-in-law discovered her listening to secretly to the musicians. She was apprehensive at first but then her father-in-law secretly encourages her which makes

her more ambitious. During that time Pune was a town famous for its reformist movements. Schools and colleges for girls were gradually mushrooming and Bai's father-in-law was a liberalist unlike her own father. However, there were limitations set for females.

He believed in girl's education and all the young girls at home were going to school, despite much muttered criticism from the women themselves. Nevertheless, there was a clear line of demarcation between what females could do and what they couldn't. Associating with musicians definitely lay outside the Lakshman Rekha. (218).

However, she couldn't bear anymore to pretend that she was satisfied with her domestic life. She takes a bold step and writes a letter to her father-in-law. She pleads him to allow her to learn music and with great fear and apprehension leaves the letter at his table. To her great surprise, he engages a middle-aged woman to teach Bai music. From thereon, her music lessons began.

But in the musty smelling room, sitting on the frayed carpet she spread herself, bai entered another world far removed from the world of food, cooking, festivals, rituals pregnancy and children that she had to inhabit as a daughter-in-law of the house. (219).

However, Savithribai is ridiculed by the women in the family and becomes the topic of gossip. She became the cause for contempt and jealousy and is treated like an untouchable among the women. But, she doesn't care for all these and moves ahead which shows her determination and fortitude. "But subtle cruelty of persistent hostility leaves deeper wounds. There's always the temptation to succumb, to be back to the normal path and be accepted. To resist the temptation speaks of great courage. (221).

It needed great courage and determination for woman like Bai who was from an orthodox family to break the barriers and establish a name in the field of classical literature. She also develops a relationship with Gulamsaab, the table player during her first course of learning and elopes with him. Madhu wonders, "Why did she leave

her home and that, with a Muslim lover? A step so great that even today it would require enormous courage. The stuff even movies still hesitate to take on". (166). She is already a married woman, yet she doesn't let the norms and morals of the society stop her from doing what she wants.

Breaking all the barriers of caste, religion and marriage codes, she started to live with him. How can a married Hindu wife, a mother of a girl - child stay with a Muslim without marriage when women were dictated and ruled by men? She is rebellious by nature and challenges the code of Manu. She proves that 'her life is her own.' She is competent to take decision in her own life. (FNSD.149).

Madhu as a child is aware of the certain roles assigned to men and women by the society. There are certain norms in the society which is accepted as normal. "In the conventional society of Neemgaon, where each family had its place marked out for it according to religion, caste, money, family background, etc., our families, Munni's and mine, were difficult to place, not conforming to the norms." (SR.138). Madhu recalls how as a child she could sense the discrimination of women in the society. Men could do as they please without being criticized but women were looked down upon if they step out of their assigned roles. Madhu's father with his unconventional ways made her family stood out from the society. He was a widower, bringing up his daughter on his own with the help of a man servant. He drank alcohol and smoked cigarettes and never observed any festivals or religious rituals. He also had a mistress which everyone in the town knew. All these oddities never invited any disapproval. Firstly, because he is a popular doctor and secondly because he is a man. Madhu says, "of course, being a man, he could get away with much. He could live the way he wanted, without open censure or disapproval". (139). However, it was different when it came to Savithribai. People disapprove of her as she elopes with a Muslim table player and even begets a child from him.

In Neemgaon she was 'the singer woman', and there was something derogatory about the word, yes, I can see that now, about the way they said then.To Babu, she was '*that bai*', – the words accompanied by

a movement of head which said ‘that woman next door’, as well as indicated a kind of rude contempt for her. (29).

Even Savithribai’s father-in-law had a mistress who was a well known Thumari singer. He visited her regularly and people knew about it. Yet there was no question of disapproval. On the other hand, Savithribai was contempt by the society and was treated like an outcast by her own kind. The following lines explain her experience as a reflection of her deviation from the social norms:

For Bai to develop a relationship with another man, a table player, a Muslim- this must have been not only unimaginable, but the height of criminality. Did anyone blame the father-in-law for this? As the head of the family...to indulge in his love of music, even to have a singer as mistress, was all right. But for a daughter-in-law to be learning music, and that seriously, as if she was going to be a professional! Surely there was outrage, surely there was anger in the family. Rules could be modified for the daughters, sometimes they were, purely out of affection, but daughter –in-law carry. The weight of honour of the family, its reputation, its *izzat*”. (151).

At Neemgaon, the Director of radio station was a regular visitor. When Bai got contracts in the radio, there was rumour that the Director of the radio station was her lover. Though Savithribai denies of any lover in her life, it was well known by the people of Neemgaon that the Station Director was her lover. Unlike Madhu’s father and her father-in-law, Savithribai had to face discrimination for her actions because she was a woman. According to the society which is purely patriarchal, she was an immoral woman as she deserted her husband and was living with her lover. When Savithribai appeals to her Guruji to take her as a student he at first rejects her appeal many times because, “he thought music was no profession for a respectable married woman. Because he, a traditional man, did not encourage her to step out of her traditional role”. (130). Savithribai may not know the phrase “gender discrimination” but she knew the inequality prevailing in the society. She was aware that it took women more time and effort in any field to reach the top as she remarks, “Nowadays they become Ustads and Pundits even before they have proper mustaches.”(224).

Savithribai tries to conceal her relationship with Munni, her daughter and Ghulam Saab. This shows that she is aware of her past actions and is anxious about it tarnishing her image. She even gives the name “Indorekar” which is neither her maiden name nor her married name but the name she adopted as a singer. This also shows her possessiveness over the child, but she disowns her when it came to her hard earned identity as a popular singer. She loves her child but when it came to Munni’s identity, she is selfish and keeps her out from her life. Madhu wonder as to how a woman who dares to walk out of her family and marriage fears to admit that the child is borne out of wed-lock. Yet again, we cannot put the blame entirely on her. It is not easy in a patriarchal society to disclose such facts especially in the older generations. Madhu wants to make Savithribai immortal. As a mother who sacrifices everything for her daughter but it was not to be as Savithribai refuses to mention Munni.

Madhu is left quite confused at times about Bai’s courage or lack of it. She had, Undoubtedly, led the most unconventional life anyone in her society would ever Imagine. But behind these acts of bravado was a woman who wanted to conform, to be accepted by the society. (WNSD.149).

Contrast to Savithribai and Leela, Deshpande also creates characters like Munni who is desperate for the approval of the society. While her mother leaves her family and marriage against the norms of the society, she leaves her mother to create a new identity which the society would conform. Meenakshi Indorekar a.k.a Munni, Savithribai’s daughter lives a life shame and unhappiness as she is considered as an illicit child. As a child she rejects her father completely and makes up a story of her father living in Pune. She becomes a rebellious child and lives in the world of films so as to distant herself from reality. She faces mental torture from the other children as they tease her “was it Ghulam Saab, the station Director or the man “who lives with your [Munni’s] mother?” (SR.77). Gradually, she disassociates from her mother and starts her life with a new identity. Once Madhu meets her in a bus and she calls out her name but she refuses to be recognised by that name and tells Madhu that her name is “Shailaja Joshi”. In the quest for a new identity she leaves behind her name given by her mother and all connections with the past and starts a new life with a new

identity. Unlike her mother, she is a conformist who needs the approval of the society. As a child, she had undergone immense shame and pain because her family was different and didn't conform to the norms of the society.

Another major character in the novel is Leela, Madhu's maternal aunt. She is a woman of great strength and kind soul. She is a woman way ahead of her generation and the next as well. She was "the rebel in a wholly conventional, tradition-bound family." (ibidem.44). She is an independent woman and a communist. She participated in the Quit India Movement and was against Gandhi's Ahimsa and Satyagraha as she opines that allowing oneself to be beaten up was ridiculous. As she grows older, she regrets some of her actions and finally quits the party as she felt that the party's stand in a particular event was improper. She still believed in the communist ideologies which declares gender equality but she is of the opinion that the party is a victim of male chauvinism which ignores merit in favour of gender. Leela, is different from the women of her times as she marries Vasant, a man who belonged to a different caste. After her husband's death, she works to become economically independent and educate her brother-in-law. While living in the chawls, she works for women suffering from TB. There she meets Joe, her second husband who was a doctor and had a clinic for TB patients.

The black sheep of the family. A widow who remarried. And, what was worse, Married a Christian man. These were the things the family spoke of. Leela's other activities did not matter to them, none of her achievements registered. (45,46).

Joe was a widower with two children and spoke flawless English and was well versed in literature. On the other hand, Leela neither spoke English nor did she know anything about literature. However, they fall in love and decide to get married. Leela was broad minded as she accepted inter-caste marriages. She had even offered Madhu's parents to stay at her house when they eloped. She was against the inequality based on caste and class. Leela was even against her family for their claim of superiority. Though she is a faithful communist supporter, she faces the hard realities of gender discrimination practiced even in the communist party. Despite her hard work and endless contribution to the party, when the time came, men junior to

her was given the higher position, ignoring her. Thus, Leela learns that hard work and ideologies was nothing compared to gender. In an incident, the widow of a deceased sitting member was given a ticket to contest the elections. This disappoints and makes Leela lose her confidence in the party as she says, “It seems you’ve got to become a widow for them to remember that you exist.” (224).

Madhu, the protagonist is a victim of double standards practiced in the society. As a child, Madhu was brought up by her father a male servant as her mother passed away. However, she never felt the lack of a mother in her life. To her mothers were devoted to their household duties and scolding their children all the time. The image of a mother was gathered from the movies which she watched who were self-sacrificing and professed endless love for their child. On the other hand, the women surrounding her life is a contrast to this image as Savithribai neglects her daughter, Ketaki’s mother favours her sons, Sunanda is manipulative and Som’s mother is demanding.

Motherless child that I am, motherhood is an unknown world to me. The mothers that I see in my childhood are drab creatures forever working, forever scolding their children; certainly they’re not women to arouse a sense of deprivation in me. ‘Poor Child,’ they say sometimes, absentmindedly, when I visit their homes. ‘Poor child,’ they say and I know they’re referring to my not having a mother. But my father is Enough for me; I don’t want anything more. For obvious reasons that I now understand, mothers don’t figure in Munni’s stories. This, in spite of the importance of mothers in most of the movies. It’s the stepmother, the enemy of lovers, who figures in her stories. I get some images of motherhood in the movies I see myself, through the songs that speak of ‘*maa ka pyar*’. But real life shows me something entirely different. Munni’s mother who ignored her daughter; Ketaki’s mother, stern, dictatorial and so partial to her sons; Sunanda, sweetly devious and manipulating; Som’s mother, so demanding- none of them conform to the white-clad, sacrificing, Sobbing mother of the movies”. (183).

However, everything changes when she begets a son. Her world changes and her whole world start to revolve around her son. Her life as that of a traditional mother is complete with her son as she says, “What can you give me my Lord, I who have everything?” (SR.22). Through the marriage of Madhu and Som, Deshpande gives us a picture of the mindset of men in our society. Madhu is a modern woman who is brought up without any conservative constraints by her father. When she grows up she becomes economically independent and lives alone. At first, Som comes to her place with Chandru and Tony and hangs out at her place without being judgemental. Infact Som shares with Madhu, his feelings for Neelam his girlfriend then. After marriage, once Madhu wakes up with fear after a night mare and innocently discloses that she slept with a man when she was fifteen. The man none other but her father’s friend who had come to console her. Although the man later commits suicide , Som is unable to come with the terms with her act. Thus, their relationship begins to disintegrate. Som starts questioning Madhu’s chastity and asks:

‘Tell me the truth,’ Som says over and over again. He dismisses the truth of our life together, of our love, our friendship, our life as parents of a beloved son. What he wants is something separate and distinct from these things, something which really is, though he refuses to recognise this, a minute part of a whole. To him, that part is the whole. (255).

Our society is obsessed with the so called chastity and purity of woman. A woman is considered as a property to be owned and enjoyed by the owner. Until then, she is expected to remain untouched. She is not supposed to indulge in any sexual acts until she marries. Whereas, in case of a man nobody can question him. As such, Y.S .Reddy says that, “Our society has been so conditioned as to categorise women as immoral on the slightest deviation on their part from the normal course of behaviour”. (FPNSD.132).

Madhu shares with Som expecting him understand her fears and to share the truth. Had she not shared this fact, their relationship would have been normal. Som sticks to the single act of sex and holds grudges against her, though he himself had a serious relationship with a woman before he got married. Madhu reflects, “Purity,

chastity, an intact hymen- these are the things Som is thinking of, these are the truth that matter”. (SR.262).The protagonist realises the fact of Chandru’s words as he says “Men and women can never be friends. Men can be brothers, fathers, lovers, husbands, but never friends”. (254). The relationship between Som and Madhu went from bad to worse as they became almost strangers to each other.“We are like two travellers embarked on a terrible journey, rocketing at a dangerous speed, on the verge of going out of control, yet unable to help ourselves”.(258).

Madhu notices how Som changes drastically. He became, “...this sad and angry man., distraught, possessed by a madness that seems to have no end”. (257). It reaches a point when Som even starts to bring up names of those people who could have been her lovers. Meantime, Madhu retreats into silence. She is filled with grief at his suspicion and his anger. Though at times she feels for him, she it angers her at times as she says:

In my despair I think of tearing off my clothes and saying to him: look, look at me, look at this. This is the woman you pursued and married, this is the body you slept it and enjoyed all these years. If you think the truth lies in this body, if you imagine that the truth is what this body has done, look carefully at it. It has changed from what. It was when you married me, the breasts are sagging a little, there’s some more flesh on the hips, the thighs and the waist than there was, there are folds on the abdomen, wrinkles on the neck. But these are aging changes, a process your body shares with mine. Nothing else has changed. Why then does it seem so changed to you? (256, 257).

Even in terms of their conjugal relationship, Madhu could feel the difference. Som though he sleeps with her, she could feel savage in his love making. This frightens and infuriates Madhu. However, even this stops gradually. Madhu remembers:

...he ceases to touch me, he is careful to make no physical contact with me. One night, his arm falls across my body. I wake up feeling the weight of the arm, I lie still, wanting to move away from under it, but

afraid to wake him up. He wakes up himself, becomes aware of my body under his arm and draws it back with a sharp sudden jerk, as if my touch sears him. (257).

Slowly Madhu starts to understand that the truth which Som keep asking was his quest hears from Madhu that it didn't happen and that she was a virgin when he married her. The male ego cannot accept the fact that his wife had slept with someone else before him. Every thought, every ideology of the society is a product of patriarchy which advocates and glorifies the chastity of a woman. Madhu realises that it was her disregard for this ideology, her act of going outside her assigned role, which Som couldn't accept. Madhu says, "I begin to understand the truth that he could, perhaps, have borne: that I had been raped, forced into the act, that I was a victim, not a participant". (260). However, she refuses to give any of these as it was not the truth.

Besides all these, when Madhu gets a small job at *City Views*, she faces gender discrimination at work. Dalvi, the most senior employee who is in charge of everything hates her. He takes every opportunity to criticize her and is hostile to her. Yet, Madhu could feel his lecherous moves.

The eyes dart over my face, drops down to my body, they linger over my breasts, his hands brush lightly, and seemingly by accident, but I know with deliberate intent, against my body, my face. When he comes close to me, in what seems like intense anger, the short distance between us crackles with his desire, his lust (85).

Dalvi views Madhu as a pampered female who is working to pass her time against the hard working males who are working for a living. However, Madhu doesn't let this thing bother her and goes on with her work.

There are also woman like Ghulam Saab's wife. After years of living with Savithribai, he returns home to her after years. She has no other option but to take him back. Years of abandonment had made her a bitter woman but she couldn't do

anything. “But years of living the life of an abandoned wife, of living on the charity of others, of bringing up children on her own, had embittered her.” (274).

Madhu observes all this women around her. Savithribai ignored her class in search as she strived to become a singer, Leela broke her caste and class and went ahead by marrying twice to people who belonged to other caste and class. She also worked for the weak. They definitely did as they desired and lived their lives according to their wish. But they paid dearly for it. Madhu realises that she needs to live and face reality too. She says:

But when all is gone, there’s still life itself, life pursuing its own ends of survival, of growth. Ultimately it’s the body that dictates to us, coercing us into its purposes of living and growing. Survival is all, survival is what matters above everything. (201).

3.5. *A MATTER OF TIME:*

The protagonist of *A Matter of Time* is different from Shashi Deshpand’s early protagonist. Unlike Saru, Jaya, Urmi and Madhu, when disaster strikes she takes it calmly. She gathers herself from her utter desolation and bitterness linked with patriarchal pressure and emancipates herself to a new independent woman. *A Matter of Time* deals with the predicaments faced by women of three generations through Kaliyani, Sumi and Anu. The story is about Gopal and Sumi and their three daughters-Aru, Charu and Seema. They represent the urban middle class family. Almost after 23 years of marriage, Gopal, a history lecturer in a local college, walks out of his family without any prior warning or particular reason. This leaves Sumi perplexed and unable to react verbally. The next day she tells her daughters about it, “almost as exactly repeating Gopal’s words, leaving out nothing”(AMT.9). Sumi is shocked with Gopal’s action and goes into silence. She experiences the trauma of a deserted wife. She feels, “I can’t find my bearings, there are no makers any more to show me which way I should go.” (36).She is alone and helpless with her three daughters. However, she tries to make things seem normal for her daughters. But “Sumi, despite her facade of normality, has a quality about her – a kind of blankness-

that makes them uneasy”. (10, 11). Despite all these, Sumi soon gathers herself and helps her children to move on from the tragedy as “like a stunned bird coming back to life, there is a frenzy of movement, a tremendous flurry of activity, a frenetic shaking of feathers. Sumi cannot be still.” (28).

After Gopal leaves the house, Shripati, Sumi’s father brings them to the “Big House” which was her parental home. Though deserted by her husband for no reason of hers, she decides to face the facts and move on. She doesn’t contemplate a divorce because she opines that it is of no use.

Divorce frees a woman legally but the memories attached to the marriage cannot be erased easily. The social stigmas associated with divorce in the Indian society haunt her and she has to continue to struggle and suffer at various levels- economical, emotional and psychological. A woman may get relief from the painful wrong marriage through divorce, but it will not always re-establish her socially, psychologically or financially. Moreover, it can turn out to be the beginning of another phase of troubles as the divorcee has to further bear the onslaughts of a harsh society which does not allow her to be free and happy. (WNSD.109).

However, fortunately, Sumi gets full support from her family and relatives who serve as her pillar to withstand all the pain, sorrow, isolation and humiliation. Sumi and Gopal enjoyed a happy married life in the early years. Their marriage was a love marriage and enjoyed intimate love physically as well emotionally. Remembering it, Gopal states “And I knew then that it was for this, this losing yourself in another human being that men give up their dreams of freedom”.(223).

However, this bliss seems to fade as Gopal’s fear of being unable to do justice as a husband and father takes over. Besides he also feels isolated and lonely from his wife and children. He is unable to explain about his reason of deserting his family to Kaliyani, Ramesh, Premi or even his wife Sumi. He only assures Sumi that she was in no way responsible for his acts and that it was purely his decision and that she shouldn’t blame herself for it. Premi, Sumi’s sister is furious both by Sumi and Gopal

for not valuing what they had just discarded. When Premi goes and meet Gopal, he only replies “I can give you so many answers, but I’ve begun thinking that the plain truth is that I just got tired.” (133). Kaliyani, Sumi’s mother suspects that Gopal has done it for the sake of money. His humiliation by his students which led him to his resignation does not seem to be the only reason too. Kaliyani, in desperation begs Gopal to take back Sumi as she says, “what have you done to my daughter, Gopala don’t do this, don’t let it happen to my daughter...” (46). Sumi is aware that Gopal believes that “Marriage is not for everyone. The demand it make-a lifetime of commitment –is not possible for all of us.” (69). She also remembers that Gopal had once told her that if anyone of them wanted to be free, they would let go. But now Sumi feels that it is unfair as she tells him, “And I agreed. I was only eighteen then and you were twenty six... But it meant nothing to me then. How can you think of separating of wanting to be apart, when you are eighteen in love?...I thought we would always be together.”(ibidem.221). Sumi is but unaware of the changes taking place in him until leaves. She tells Gopal:

Then you began to move away from me. I knew exactly when it happened. And I knew I could not stop you, I could do nothing. When you left, I knew I would not question you, I would just let you go.(221).

At first when everyone is trying to reason with the sudden departure of Gopal, Sumi thinks that he may have taken Sanyas. But then if he is doing so he should wear saffron clothes and wander around from door to door with a begging bowl. Sumi couldn’t find any of these characteristic as she says:

I have begun to think that what Gopal has really done is to take Sanyas. I’m surprised none of you have thought of that. But look what’s happened – it’s not he who’s going around with the begging bowl, it’s I who am doing that. (123).

Many women in our society face desertion from their husbands due to different reasons including stoic purposes. The question arises if it is justifiable for a man to leave his family even for religious purpose leaving the wife alone to bear the

burden of looking after her children. Sumi does not seek for any answer from Gopal at any point of time. She suffers the most because of this incident, but unlike the others she keeps quite. Instead of searching for the reason, she focuses her life on moving on. Her only desire was to ask him one question which however, remains unasked:

....If I met Gopal I will ask him one question, just one, the question no one has thought of. What is it, Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in the age of acquisition and possession walk out on his family and all that he owns? Because,...it was you who said that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How then can you, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back on everything in your life? will you be able to give me an answer to this? (27).

Sumi does not want to talk to anyone about Gopal's desertion too as she says,

And what do I say, Devi? That my husband left me and I don't know why and maybe he doesn't really know, either? And that I'm angry and humiliated and confused...? Let that be, we won't go into it now.(107).

Gopal's desertion upsets everyone, especially Sumi. But this incident also helps her to discover her inner strength. Since her marriage to Gopal she had been a good wife and mother. As Keerthi comments, "her occasional insights into the human conditions, her interpretation of Draupadi's reveal a sharp mind but one that had deliberately shut herself off." (BARB.21). Sumi, despite her humiliation and pain, moves on and recognises that all human beings need a space and sets Gopal free. When all her family and relatives are questioning and cursing Gopal she decides to calm down and face the reality. Her pride and ego also prevents her from exposing her feelings and emotions, her vulnerability to Gopal. This also prevents her from requesting Gopal to come back. She conceals her feelings of pain and hurt and looks composed on the outside.

It has been important for Sumi to contain her feelings about Gopal's desertion, not to let them spill over. Only in this way has it been possible for her to cope with the reality. It seems to have worked, for the picture she presents to the world is one of grace and courage, to be admitted rather than pitied. Unchanged, except for a feeling- which only those who know her well are aware of – of something missing in her (172).

Sumi, is also a educated modern women. She refuses to take any financial help from her parents, Premi nor Ramesh. Though she was a teacher working on temporary basis, she is determined to stand on her own feet and live independently. Thus, gradually she prepares herself to face the future.

Sumi thinks- retracing my steps, picking up things, thinking-is his it? But she has turned resolutely away from even her immediate past, she is preparing herself for the future, for the job which she is soon to start on.” (122).

She looks for a permanent job and learns to ride the two wheeler. She even considers to move out of her parental home and stay independently with her daughters. After a period of house hunting she realises the impracticalities of shifting from a big house which was empty to a expensive congested house. She meets the disapproving comments from women like Shankar's ,mother with stoicism. When Sumi meets Shankar's mother, she tells her,

‘When are you going back to your husband’... ‘you should be with him’. Look at his state! It's all right to stay with your parents for a while, but that's not your home...Go back to your husband, he's a good man. If you've done wrong, he'll forgive you. And if he has – woman shouldn't have any pride. (161).

In our society, a woman's identity is made through her husband and her sole goal in life is taught to be her devotion to her husband. Sumi thinks about how even today, the fate and destiny of a woman's life are measured by her marital status.

People look down on a divorcee, if a marriage goes wrong the women are blamed. Though a man may wander off, and have mistresses and treats his wife unjustly, it is enough for a woman to live with him and to be called his wife. Many women are still dependent on their husbands emotionally and economically as well. For instance, Sudha, Gopal's sister was active when her husband was alive. But when her husband passes away, she becomes sickly, self-centred and almost non-existent. In contrast, Sumi after her husband walks out from her life, discovers her strength and creativity. She writes a play for the school which is successful. Inspired she plans to write the story of Surpanakha of *Ramayana* from a different perspective.

Female sexuality, we're ashamed of owing it, we can't speak of it, not even to our own selves. But Surpanakha was not, she spoke of her desires, she flaunted them. And therefore, were the men, unused to such women, frightened? Did they feel threatened by her? I think so. Surpanakha, neither ugly nor hideous, but a woman charged with sexuality, not frightened of displaying it – it is this Surpanakha I'm going to write about. (191).

Sumi is also while moving ahead with her life, takes responsibility of her daughters. Her constraint doesn't stop her from showering her daughters with motherly love, care and concern. She teaches her daughters to be brave and courageous. When Aru and she met with an accident, she forgets about her own injuries and takes care of Aru. She desire her daughter's life to be on that is easy and comfortable. She hopes, "I want her to enjoy the good things in life, I want her to taste life, I want her to relish it and not spit it out because she finds it bitter." (220).

Sumi portrays optimism as her approach to her adversity is matured and she doesn't allow these things to pull her down. At the age of forty, Sumi is ready to start her life afresh. She has a new job at a new place where she wants to go with Seema. She also visits and tells Gopal about it and departs on a good note. Unfortunately, one morning Sumi and her father set out on the two wheeler to the bank. They meet with an accident and dies on the spot, leaving her grief stricken daughters. Despite the tragic end, we can be sure that Sumi was a woman who was brave and portrayed a modern progressive woman. She defies the traditional orthodox outlook of the society

and doesn't waste her time in self pity. Instead she overcomes all the hurdles, and starts a new life. She also doesn't reserve any grudges against her husband nor does she think that her marriage and husband is the end of everything in her life. She is a woman whose outlook in life is positive. Her life before her death shows immense courage and maturity at the time of adversity shows that she had reached a stage of self sufficiency.

All these days I have been thinking of him as if he has been suspended in space, is nothingness, since he left us. But he has gone on living, his life has moved on, it will go on without me. So has mine. Our lives have diverged, they now move separately. (85).

Kalyani, Sumi's mother is a representation of woman who is a victim of the traditional patriarchal set up of the society. Her life is of a tragic one since her birth. Kalyani's mother Manorama fails to beget a son. In order to keep the property within the family and fearing that his husband might marry another woman, marries off Kalyani to his own brother Shripati. They beget three children out of this marriage – Sumi, Premi and Madhav, a mentally retarded child. Even though he is a retarded son, it pleased Manorama and Shripati. Unfortunately, once while they wait for the train to Bangalore, Madhav gets lost never to be found again.

How deeprooted is the desire for a son, is to be witnessed in Kalyani-Manorama relationship. For Manoraman, Kalyani is a great disappointment as she gives birth to two baby-girls. She wins the favour of her mother when she gives birth to a baby-boy though a mentally retarded one. But that too proves short-lived as she loses her only son in a confusion at a railway station.” (SDN.61).

After that Shripati sends Kalyani along with her two daughters to live with her parents. Shripati returns home only after Manorama, his sister and mother-in-law urges him to come back. However, he stops talking to Kalyani and though they live under the same roof, they live their separate lives as strangers. Sumi says:

Is it enough to have a husband, never mind the fact that he has not looked at your face for years, never mind the fact that he has not spoken to you for decades? Does this wifedom make up for everything, for the deprivation of man's love, for the feel of his body against yours, the warmth of his breath on your face, the touch of his lips on yours, his hands on your breast? (AMT.167).

This shows the vulnerability of women in a male dominated society. Kaliyani like most women would, accepts her life as her fate and even signs her name as Kalyani Bai Pandit. But Sumi sees that for Kalyani, to have someone to call her husband is enough. They silently accept the injustice meted out to them and suffers just to keep their marriage going. "But her kumkum is intact and she can move in the company of women with the pride of a wife." (167). In matters of property too Kalyani is totally deprived of it. Sumi is shocked to find out that it is her Shripati who had inherited the property of Kalyani's grandfather. Kalyani had every right to own the property but it was denied to her.

Aru, Sumi's daughter is rebellious by nature. Her father's action infuriates her and she strives to find justice for her mother and herself. When she meets Gopal, she asks, "Why did you marry? Why did you have children?" (65). Further, it frustrates her to see the condition of her mother and grandmother as she declares, "I'm never going to get married". (76). Aru is also shocked to find that women are not mentioned in the family tree. Despite the equal efforts contributed by women while carrying out the duties of the family, they are ignored totally. She is surprised again when while talking with Surekha, the feminist and a lawyer, about suing her father for maintenance as Surekha tells Aru:

Do you know that Manu doesn't mention any duty to maintain a daughter? The duty is only towards a wife, parents and sons. (204).

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CHAPTER IV

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVEL AND NAGA WOMEN WRITERS

Gender discrimination and inequality is a worldwide phenomenon. Women being considered as the weaker sex are oppressed everywhere. Despite the geographical, linguistic, traditional diversity, women are categorised as one all over the world. They are segregated because of their sex. As such the mainland India is entirely different from Nagaland, small state in India: from population to geographical difference, from race to cultural difference, from language to lifestyle. But it is common in the fact that women are considered as subordinate sex/citizen in both the place. Though there may be variations in some aspect, we cannot deny the fact that women in both the society are subjugated to certain patterns of male domination. In order to ascertain these similarities, a comparative study of Shashi Deshpande's novel with selected fictions of Naga women writers is vital.

The protagonist of Shashi Deshpande namely Jaya, Saru, Madhu, Urmi and Sumi are all educated modern women living in a period of transition. The protagonist of Easterine Iralu and Avinuo Kire are also educated modern women and lives in a society where the atmosphere is intermingled and blurred between tradition and modernity. During such a time, women are sandwiched in between and they suffer silently. But these women are way ahead of their ancestors who accepted their sufferings as their fate. These women break out from their cocoons and find ways to emancipate themselves from the clutches of patriarchy.

Some of the major similarities identified in the writings of Shashi Deshpande and Naga women writers are: Identity crisis, Conflict within marriage and family, Silence, conflict between tradition and modernity, quest for self.

In order to understand this chapter, a brief explanation of Comparative literature is necessary. The theory of comparative literature explains that it is the comparison of two or more literature, taking into consideration some aspects such as language, culture, religion, economic, social, political and historical factors of the societies which are to be studied. Thus, it includes the study of International

literatures, National literatures and regional literatures. Therefore, it is the study of inter-relationship between two or more literary works where the similarities and dissimilarities are studied with an absolute absence of prejudice. Thus,

Its scope encompasses the totality of human experiences into its embrace, and thus all Internal relationships among the various parts of the world are realized, through the critical approach to literatures under comparative study. It helps to vanish narrow national and international boundaries, and in place of that universality of human relationships emerges out. (TCL.1).

Sl.no	Similarities	Name of the Novels
1.	Identity crisis	(i). <i>The Dark Holds No Terror</i> - Shashi Deshpande (ii). <i>That Long Silence</i> -Shashi Deshpande (iii). <i>A Terrible Matriarchy</i> - Easterine Iralu (iv). <i>The Fallen Bird</i> - Avinuo Kire
2.	Role of conflict	(i). <i>The Dark Holds No Terror</i> - Shashi Deshpande (ii). <i>The Binding Vine</i> - Shashi Deshpande (iii). <i>A Matter of Time</i> - Shashi Deshpande (iv). <i>Small Remedies</i> - Shashi Deshpande (v). <i>A Terrible Matriarchy</i> - Easterine Iralu (vi). <i>Fallen Bird</i> - Avinuo Kire
3.	Alienation through marriage.	(i). <i>The Dark Holds No Terror</i> - Shashi Deshpande (ii). <i>That Long Silence</i> - Shashi Deshpande (iii). <i>A Matter of Time</i> - Shashi Deshpande (iv). <i>Promise of the Camellias</i> - Avinuo Kire
4.	Rape	(i). <i>The Dark Holds No Terror</i> - Shashi Deshpande (ii). <i>The Binding Vine</i> - Shashi Deshpande (iii). <i>The Power to Forgive</i> - Shashi Deshpande
5.	Silence	(i). <i>The Dark Holds No Terror</i> - Shashi

		Deshpande (ii). <i>That Long Silence</i> - Shashi Deshpande (iii). <i>A Matter of Time</i> - Shashi Deshpande (iv). <i>Small Remedies</i> - Shashi Deshpande (v). <i>The Binding Vine</i> - Shashi Deshpande (vi). <i>A Terrible Matriarchy</i> - Easterine Iralu (vii). <i>Life on Hold</i> - Easterine Kire (viii). <i>The Power to Forgive</i> - Avinuo Kire (ix). <i>The Fallen Bird</i> -Avinuo Kire (x). <i>Promise of the Camellias</i> – Avinuo Kire
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IDENTITY CRISIS:

Shashi Deshpande's protagonists Saru and Jaya, Dielieno, the protagonist of *A Terrible Matriarchy* by Easterine Iralu as well as the protagonist of Avinuo Kire in her short story *Fallen Bird* faces identity crisis at one point or the other. Since childhood, a girl is taught what to do and what not to do. Traditionally, in mainland India as well as in Naga culture a woman's sole destination or goal in life is generally to marry. Right from the time she is born, she is taught and moulded so that she becomes capable of marriage. On the other hand they are given education which enlightens them on equality, freedom and rights as human beings. Traditions have been practiced since time immemorial and have become part and parcel of our lives. Even today, in our everyday activities we inculcate them. At this juncture, women become victims to identity crisis.

Many studies and researches conducted in various parts of the world prove that the preference is almost universal, though seemingly it is more strongly felt here, in India. In Hindu religion, it is believed that the birth of the son will free the father of all the sins committed. The novelist points out that woman have been trained at family level for future unequal and biased treatment in the larger social arena. (TCIWNSD.114).

In *The Dark Holds No Terror* by Shashi Deshpande, the protagonist undergoes identity crisis. She is from an orthodox Hindu family; as such as a girl she is given less or no importance in the family. From a very early age she is made to feel her place in the society. As a child she is given instructions restricting her from indulging herself in certain activities. She is told not to play in the sun as it will make her skin dark. On asking why, she is told that nobody will marry a girl with dark skin. She is told that she can't be compared with Dhruva because he is a boy.

Don't go out in the sun. You'll get even darker.

Who cares?

We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married.

I don't want to get married.

Will you live with us all your life?

Why not?

You can't?

And Dhruva?

He is different. He's a boy. (TDHNT.45).

Her mother also tells her that she can never be "good looking" as she is too dark for that. This makes her believe that she is ugly and often finds herself looking in the mirror telling herself, "I'm ugly, I'm ugly" (56). She cannot enter the puja room when she reaches adolescence and is made to sleep on the straw mat during her menstruation period. Besides she is also given a special cup and plate and served at a distance because during that period her touch is considered as pollution. The treatment of Dhruva by her parents is immensely different from her. Even her father rarely speaks to her but with Dhruva he spends hours in conversation and even took him for bike rides. Birthday celebrations for Dhruva are held with much pomp and gaiety but her birthdays are given less importance.

There is always a puja on Dhruva's birthday. A festive lunch in the afternoon and an *Aarti* in the evening during which Dhruva, as an infant, sat solemnly on Baba's lap, as a child, his cap on his head, fatuous smile on his face, while I helped my mother do the *aarti*. My birthdays were almost the same . . . a festive lunch, with whatever I

asked for, (It was always *shrikhand* for me, creamy, saffron-tinted and nutmeg flavoured, an *aarti* in the evening; but no puja.”(168).

After Dhruva’s death all the pujas and celebrations stopped completely. Saru becomes almost a non entity in the house. Her birthdays are not celebrated anymore and are passed in silence. Thus, she cherishes and values even the tiniest, cheapest gift from her friend Smita. When she gets through her exams and tells her parents that she wants to pursue medicine, it enrages her mother. Her mother sees Saru as only a burden and doesn’t want to waste money on her education. Her mother says:

What gives her the right to choose? Have we no say in the matter? And when it comes to the point, I know you’ll have to spend for her wedding as well. We can’t ever evade that responsibility. (144).

All these makes Saru think if she is only a responsibility. Meeting Manu seems to be one of the greatest events in Saru’s life. Once she rejected herself as a child but now she could sense it and is ready to accept and embrace her being a girl.

As a child my fantasies, my dreams, had no relevance to the fact that I was a girl. The fact had not meant to me then it would later. But as I grew up, they became the dreams of a total female. I was all female and dreamt of being the adored and chosen of a superior, superhuman male. That was glory enough . . .to be chosen by that wonderful man. I saw myself humbly adoring, worshipping and being given the father-lover kind of love that was protective, condescending, yet all-encompassing and satisfying. (53).

She soon marries Manu despite her mother’s opposition. She finds heaven on earth with Manu. As long as Manu is working and Saru is studying, everything is calm and good between them. Even the corridors smelling of urine and dark dingy rooms are acceptable and feel like heaven. However, the moment Saru is recognised as a doctor, their relationship changes. Saru finds herself stuck in the web of patriarchy. She marries Manu to defy the traditional bondages only to find herself

trapped in another. Manu sexually abuses her at night as a way of asserting his masculinity. She realises her place in the society as she says:

And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same things that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter. He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband. $A+B$ they told us in mathematics is equal to $b*a$. But here $a+b$ was not, definitely not equal to $b+a$. It became a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsided, unequal, impossible.(42).

Despite her education, her successful career she cannot emancipate her from the clutches of the traditional patriarchal society. She thinks:

Yet she knew she could not go on, either. If only she had belonged to another time, where a woman had a choice but to go on! Human nature may not change, but isn't there such a thing as a frame of mind, a way of thinking, which is shaped by the age you live in? It was so much easier for women in days to accept, not struggle, because they believed, they knew, there was nothing else for them. And they called that Fate. (70).

A Terrible Matriarchy written by renowned Naga author Easterine Iralu is a coming of age novel of a girl called Dielieno. We get a glimpse of the Naga society through her eyes. It is set in a colony in Kohima town around the 60s and 70s. Dielieno belongs to a big family but with low income and being the only girl child in the family she is loved by all. However, she had to leave her parental home and stay at her grandmother's place in order to become the 'ideal woman'. Staying with her grandmother she grows up observant of the differences and with which she is treated because she is a girl. The novel opens with a negative tone as Dielieno says, "My grandmother didn't like me." (TTM.1). Her grandmother denies her a chicken leg when she asks for one but gives it to her brothers instead. She is told, "That portion is always for boys". (1). That denial sets the tone for the rest of her life. At first she didn't understand but soon she finds out at an early age that girls are denied most of

the things in life like love, leisure and fun. Her grandmother takes her brothers in her lap and showers her attention but she never gets the chance to do so. Instead she is sent off for some errands every time.

When Leto and I went to her house with a basket of vegetables that mother had send she sat down and put Leto on her lap. "Come here, my darling, let me see how big you've grown. My, my, you are a big boy now." I could see Leto didn't want to be carried. After all, he was turning thirteen next month. But he let her have her way. I readied myself to be carried next but instead she said to me, "Go bring in another piece of wood and put it on fire, it's by the shed outside." I ran off and ran back hoping now I would be held and told that I have grown bigger. But she had forgotten all about it and had hobbled to the almirah to give a lump of jaggery to Leto. My brother saw me return and gave me a bit to lick it. "Enough, enough, it's for you," said grandmother and closed the almirah with a loud bang.(4,5).

Dielieno also overhears her grandmother complaining to her mother about the fact that she had send the boys to fetch water. She is told, "Send the girl next time, that is a girls' work. No man in my days has ever fetched water." (3) Dielieno is the youngest in the family. From a very tender age she starts to feel that she is the odd one in the family. She says, " I sometimes felt that I was an afterthought, and maybe Father and Mother didn't know what to do with me." (2).

Dielieno is denied of any fun and infact denied even acting her age. Once her grandmother sees her playing with her own uncle. She hits her on the calf with her walking stick. Grandmother explains that a girl should not mingle so easily with men and should be taught at a very early age. She is not even called by her name but her grandmother refers to her as 'that girl.' When she starts living with her grandmother she finds out that she had to suffice with one biscuit for her tea in the morning and is denied hot water for bath.

Drink up, we have so much to do," said grandmother.

I scaled my mouth with the hot tea because I was too scared to tell her that I was not used to drinking hot tea.

"Better bathe her before you start cooking," said Grandmother to Bano.

"I'll make some hot water then," replied Bano.

No need for that, she shouldn't be spoiled by warm water."

"But mother, it is very cold this morning," said Bano looking surprised that Grandmother should suggest that I bathe in cold water.

"She had to get used to it," was all that Grandmother said. (13,14).

For her meals she is given two pieces of meat and is expected not to ask for a second helping. However, she knew that it won't be the same if her brothers are around. She would have always served extra gravy and meat to them. Dielieno wishes she was a boy like her brothers so that she can be favoured. She says, "Oh, at those times, how I wished I were a boy for then Grandmother would love me and take me on her lap and give me all the meat I wanted to eat." (16). She also recognises partiality when her brother Leto comes over to grandmother's house. She is in a bad mood and speaks to Dielieno harshly but speaks to Leto as though she is completely another person. "I went out to do as she bid. At the door I stopped and tried to listen because I was sure she was going to say something harsh to Leto. Her face had that look. But she began to coo." (18).

Dielieno is denied sympathy when she pricks her fingers, when she goes to the outhouse at night or go to fetch water early in the morning. Like Saru's mother, Dielieno's grandmother too denies her education as she is a girl. It takes a lot of coaxing before she finally agrees. For grandmother girls shouldn't go to school but should go to the fields and learn field work. That way they will be busy all the time and won't get into trouble. Further she opines that education is a waste on girls. But she says it's ok for boys to get into trouble every now and then. When Dielieno starts school she is given more work as to make her stop going to school but she persists to work harder. Grandmother disapproves girls going to school as she is of the opinion that education gives girls fancy notion about themselves. Dielieno gets promoted to higher class because of her hard work but this enrages her grandmother more. When Dielieno is compared with her brothers who are not doing well, grandmother takes their side saying that they are boys after all. She says:

They are boys. Boys will be boys. They will be all right. They should be taught to be manly. In my father's day, boys never did any work because they had to look after the village and engage enemy warriors

in warfare. The household that did not have a male heir was considered barren. They were always in constant danger if there was war. The women would only have one man to protect them. That is why we love our male children so much and give them the best food. And we should. (37).

One day, Dielieno stays back an hour late at school to learn. Instead of appreciating it, her grandmother hits her with the cane again. As she sobs, Bano explains to her that it is not because grandmother hates her but it is to bring her up to be a good woman. Dielieno responds, “Well I don’t care about being a good woman. I shan’t ever be a good woman, whatever that is.” (39). As a young girl, while gossiping, she is told by Bano about the position of women in the society. She learns as to why a girl child is not preferred in the family.

Bano said that he was angry his wife had given birth only to daughters. He wanted a boy to carry on his name. I asked, “Aren’t the girls doing that?” But Bano replied that girl-child are never considered real members of the family. Their mission is to marry and have children and to be able to cook and weave cloth and look after the household. If they got married, they would always be known as somebody’s wife or somebody’s mother and never somebody’s daughter. That way they could not carry on their father’s name. I thought hard about it but could not think of anything to replace that system, so I gave up. (26).

As she grows up, she often told: “Don’t rush around, girl, that is not the way young girls should behave.” (51). Grandmother also refers to women’s menstruation as the curse as she asks Bano if Dielieno has got it yet. Dielienuo wonders what she means by the curse. When she gets through her high school exam, and wants to pursue further studies, her grandmother argues that school is enough for a girl and says:

That is all very well, but a woman’s role is to marry and bear children, remember that. That is her most important role. Men don’t like to marry educated wives. Then, if you find no one to marry you, you will

be alone in your old age and have no one to bury you . . .I hope you will think of my words and reconsider your foolishness. (206).

Even at home, when Dielieno tries to express her resent over her grandmother, her mother advises her to behave like a woman. Here too, she is given advices so as to please a man. She is told, “Men don’t like women who are aggressive and outspoken. They like their wives to be good workers. You are a good worker, Lieno, but you must try to be more docile.” *In The Dark Hold No Terror*, Saru is often reminded what would please a men. Thus she says, “Everything in a girl’s life, it seemed, was shaped to that single purpose of pleasing a male.”(TDHNT.163).

Dielieno’s experiences in life make her realise her position as a woman in the male dominated world. She tells her mother, “You say that grandmother loved me but I know that she held it against me that I was a girl and not a boy. I used to feel I was punished for being born a girl. For many Years, I hated it so much, I wished that I was a girl.” (ATM.272).

Jaya the protagonist of *That Long Silence* is brought up in a family where she is taught to be herself and to have confidence in herself. Her father names her Jaya which stands for victory. He makes her feel special and expects her to succeed in life.

‘You are not like others, Jaya,’ Appa had said to me, pulling me ruthlessly out of the safe circle in which other girls had stood, girls who had performed pujas and come to school with turmeric-dyed threads round their wrists and necks, girls who, it seemed, asked for nothing more than the destiny of being wives and mothers. While I, Appa had said, and I agreed, would get the Chatfield Prize, or Ellis Prize, go to Oxford after my graduation . . . ‘You’re going to be different from others, Jaya,’ Appa assured. (TLS.136).

Unfortunately, everything turns out to be different for Jaya. Since the day she marries Mohan, her life changes entirely from her name to her character. She alters completely to the whims and wishes of her husband and becomes a totally different person. After marriage Mohan gives her the name “Suhasini” and along with it

demands transformation in Jaya's character. A character which a typical traditional patriarchal society demands. Jaya remembers her first month of pregnancy. She becomes intolerant to the smell of oil and spices. Without hesitation, she asks Mohan to cook which surprises Mohan to a great extent. This also leads to their first quarrel. Jaya confesses it as something unforgettable which had led her to shed her ignorance and nativity. When Mohan becomes furious, she shows her own anger and fights back. Soon Mohan recoils himself into silence. Jaya realises that it has shattered him as he says, "How could you? I never thought my wife would say such things to me. You're my wife...' he had kept repeating." (82). More than anything, Jaya sees the distaste on Mohan's face. She is told that anger makes a woman 'unwomanly'. Jaya learns that "A woman can never be angry; she can only be neurotic, hysterical, frustrated. There is no room for anger in my life, no room for despair either." (147, 148). Mohan gives the example of her mother. Mohan's mother is a victim of gender discrimination who suffered the oppression of her husband. Instead of empathizing with his mother, he upholds her as the 'ideal woman.' Jaya notices that the woman in Mohan's family is devoted to their role as women.

'My Mother never raised her voice, against my father however badly he behaved to her,' he had said to me once. I had learnt to control my anger after that, to hold it on a leash. Terrified of his disapproval, I had learnt other things too, though much more slowly, less painfully. I had found out all the things that were womanly and unwomanly. It was when I first visited his home that I had discovered how sharply defined a woman's role was. They had been a revelation to me, the woman in his family, so definite about their roles, so well trained in their duties, so skilful in the right areas, so indifferent to everything else. I had never seen so clear, so precise a pattern before, and I had been entranced by it. (83).

Mohan's sisters often look down upon Jaya for not performing the role of a dutiful wife which makes her feel guilty. Thus she says, "These women of Mohan's family were right, I had decided. I would pattern myself after them. That way lay well, if not happiness, atleast the consciousness of doing right, freedom from guilt." (84).

Jaya is a writer. Once she wins a contest however instead of appreciating her, he blames her for writing stories which will make people think that it's their story. Jaya stops writing what she is passionate about and writes middles "light, humorous pieces about the travails of middle-class housewife" (148, 149) which Mohan and he editor approved of. She even transforms her looks to please Mohan. She cuts her hair and dress as Mohan suggest and spend hours brushing her hair and creaming her body. She cannot even voice out her desires and wants for the fear of being judged. For instance, once while they get ready to go to the movies, Mohan tells her not to hurry because at the most they will miss the advertisement. Jaya wants to see the ads but for fear of being judged she conceals her desires and agrees with Mohan.

...but I never dared to confess it to him. What if he too said, 'what poor taste you have, Jaya!?' Instead I replied cravenly, 'yes, no need to hurry', trying frantically, deviously to get there on time.(3).

Jaya was expected not to end up being mere housewives and mothers like the other women. But she is one now. Her relative tells her that "a husband is like a sheltering tree." (TLS.32). She becomes the 'ideal wife' as desired by the traditional patriarchal society. Thus she says she, "crawled back into my hole. I had never felt safe there. Comfortable. Unassailable" where her life revolves around her duties, "to change the sheets; tomorrow, scrub the bathrooms; the day after, clean the fridge..." (148). As Jaya stays at the Dadar house she gets to comprehend her life. As she goes through her dairies she finds an utterly different person whose life revolted only around her husband and family. There is nothing left of herself. She ponders at the changes she has undergone as she says:

I'm scared of cockroaches, lizards, nervous about electrical gadgets, hopeless at technical matters, lazy about accounting . . . almost the stereotype of a woman: nervous, incompetent, needing male help and support. But what puzzles me is this. I can remember a time when I was not so full of fears, when the unknown, when darkness and insects did not terrify me so. When did the process of change begin? (76).

Avinuo Kire's *The Fallen Bird*, a short story also highlights identity crisis felt by the protagonist. She is an educated woman who was once inspired by feminist thoughts. After marriage she chooses to retain her maiden name not because she once liked the idea of being a feminist but because when her brother is born, an elderly person congratulates her parents and says: "‘Finally! A male to carry on the family name and give you pride!’" (FB.43).

At thirteen when she decides to keep her maiden name. After marriage, her mother-in-law is unhappy and told her that she is breaking the tradition. Her own father disapproves of it and considers it as a dishonour to her husband. But she confesses that at the end it didn't matter as her children will never bear her name. She remembers her death brother, Keneisevor. She cannot forget the day he was born. Her mother cried out of joy and her father's mood that day is something she still remembers vividly. She narrates:

The next morning, your father came home to take you all to the hospital to see your new brother. There would be no school that day. Your father was in a jubilant mood and took down the detachable covering of the family's soft top Maruti Gypsy which you always begged him to do but which he consented to only during family outings into the woods. On the way to the hospital, your normally reserved father called out to people he knew, while you and your sisters waved at strangers as the sun poured all its gold into the open Gypsy. Father stopped to buy you each tetrapaks of Mango frooti and Uncle Chips, and glucose powder too, for mother to mix with water and drink. Surely everyone in Kohima town must have envied your family's glorious undiluted joy that day. (44, 45).

Thus, the protagonist gradually yet unintentionally realises her position in the society.

A feast is also organised by her parents in the name of the new born baby and everyone congratulates and celebrates for the baby boy. The protagonist remembers the day he died too. She says, "Your mother wailed like a deranged woman and clung

to the tiny wooden coffin. The women had to literally prise her fingers loose from the coffin when the time came to be lowered into the earth.” (46). From there on her mother never fully recovers. Her father took long walks into places she didn’t know. Thus she became, “a mother to your sisters.”(ibidem.46). She starts to do the household chores and looks after her father and her siblings. It made her angry sometimes and once she reminds her mother that she is still left with three daughters. However, it only made things worse.

Like Saru, she meets her husband and she finds happiness in him. She starts teaching in a school and she enjoys it but gives up “because you are taught that a wife’s place is with her husband.” (46). A woman’s career is not given importance and is always considered as a secondary source of income. If in any case, one has to make an adjustment, it is expected of a woman or wife to do so. In the case of Jaya too, she is passionate about writing but gives up her writings for the sake of her husband. In fact her sale career becomes her husband. In *Fallen Bird* too, the protagonist gives up her job because her husband gets posted at a different district and she is expected to accompany him. The protagonist of the novel *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Saru contemplates leaving her job for the sake of her husband too.

Despite her sacrifices, the protagonist of *Fallen Bird* discovers that her husband is having an affair. When he falls sick, she takes care of him as a devoted wife. She hates the fact that he falls in love with her again after he falls sick but she didn’t have a choice. She still remembers the day she gave birth to her son. She says, “Your mother experienced a brief spell of renewed life and came to take care of you and your new baby. She cooed and cried over him and you felt like baby Kenisevor had returned.” (48).

When her mother falls sick, she takes care of her which her sisters are unable to do. Yet when she dies, she doesn’t leave any words of endearment for her daughters like the movies. She is the one who bears all the burden of doing the last rites for her burial. All these experiences make her lose herself. She felt indifferent even with her husband and children. She says, “No one, including your husband knew who you really were, sometimes not even you.”(48).

ROLE OF CONFLICT:

Role of conflict generally means a situation where a person is expected to play two roles. It can be for a short period or for a long period of time. Mothers in olden days were limited to domestic works. However, today many women have come out of that single role as wife and mother and pursue their career. These women face challenges everyday of maintaining two roles. Many women are allowed to pursue their career but it doesn't relieve them from their obligations of carrying out their roles as mothers and wives. Working women are constantly reminded of their roles as mothers and wives and are expected to give priority to that role. If there are any signs of neglect then she is considered as selfish or arrogant. At work, a woman is looked down upon if any signs of neglect at work are detected. Thus we notice that many mothers are not given the key roles in Indian companies.

...a popular survey that involved 1,000 women working in Delhi, and it's neighbouring areas, found that only 18-34% of married women continued working after having a child. (www.theindusparent.com).

Thus, women who chooses career are to play double roles. In the novels of Shashi Deshpande, *The Dark Holds No Terror*, *The Binding Vine*, *A Matter of Time* and *Small Remedies* highlights such problems. Avinuo Kire's *Fallen Bird* also touches upon this problem. Not only as a wife and as a mother but as a daughter too, a girl is expected to work at home as well as pursue her studies and career. This instance is vividly portrayed in *A Terrible Matriarchy* by Easterine Iralu. The analyses and comparison of these novels will be done to bring to the forefront the various predicaments faced by women as they try to balance between the role assigned by the society and the roles they desire to play.

There are women, particularly, from among the upper middle class who deviate, to certain extent, from the ideals of Indian womanhood. They aspire for own status and independence from husband's income. Role of conflict are very common to be found among them in large cities and modern metropolis. Yet husbands of many of such women

do not want their wives to work. They feel it to be low dignity and cause of treat to traditional authority structure in the family.(WCS.219).

The Dark Holds No Terror, portrays the life of Saru, a doctor by profession. She marries Manu and begets two children. When they marry and starts living in the chawls, Saru is still a student. Manu has been the bread winner then. They had peace at home despite the unhygienic environment. The moment Saru becomes a doctor, her economic independence makes Manu insecure. Gradually as Saru is recognised as a doctor, Manu becomes jealous along with it their marriage starts to shatter. Once there is an explosion in a nearby factory and Saru goes out and attends the patients and is soon recognised as a successful doctor. From there on, there is a knock everyday at the doctor looking for her. Saru as a young woman is thrilled with her new job and is enthusiastic. But Manu's behaviour slowly starts to change. He feels totally ignored by Saru which Saru fails to notice. In her new role as a career woman, Saru is uncomfortable in her home and wants to shift to a new home which is decent and beautiful. Saru also starts earning more and she feels that Manu's earnings now barely cover her needs. Saru's profession keeps her away from home for long hours and at times reaches home late at night which makes him sulk. His ego is hurt by Saru's success and feels inferior. On one occasion when a lady comes over to interview Saru for a women's magazine she asks Manu, "How does it feel when you wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?" This infuriates Manu more. Manu portrays men with typical male attitude which believes that a woman's place is at home and that she should earn less than her husband. Thus, "though he is normal by day, he turns a treacherous rapist at night and tries to assert his masculinity through sexual assaults upon Saru." (WSDN.53).Saru realises that, "And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter." (TDHNT.42).

This shatters her belief in love and views love as a dirty word. She however, tries to save her marriage and even offers her resignation from her profession. After much thought she tells Manu, "I want to stop working. I want to give it all up . . . my practice, the hospital, everything." (79). Saru prefers to play the role of mother and wife so that he won't resent her anymore. Saru remembers an incident where she is

told that a typical man considers that the man should be at the centre and woman always on the periphery. When asked where she would like to be Saru says “I will be down among the audience, applauding all of you madly.” To this Vidya says, “See that you stay there . . . or else Manu won’t like it.” (156).

In *The Binding Vine*, Urmi the protagonist of the novel is an educated, economically independent woman. Her Husband is a navy who stays away from home for long stretch of period. She is also a teacher at a college and prefers to use her own money even though her husband sends her. When Anu her daughter dies, she is left alone to pick up the pieces and move on as he had to leave because of his work. As she tries to move on and involves in voluntary work of helping Shakutai, she is often reminded of her son Kartika whom she still has the responsibility to take care of,

Kartik opens it, Inni standing just behind him. Their faces change from anxiety to relief something comes alive in me at the sight of them. Little shoots of feeling, of pain, begin.(TBV.62).

One day as Vanaa tells her that her mother , Inni worries about her visits to the hospital and of locking herself in the room when she is home, Urmi flares up as she says, “And am I suppose to go on and on in the same way forever – go to work, do shopping, the cooking . . .” (104).

Shakutai, is another major character in the novel. She is from the less privileged category of the society. She narrates the story of her marriage. Soon after her marriage, the husband leaves for Mumbai promising to come back for her. However, after six months, she decides o go there herself as she couldn’t burden her father anymore. When she reaches Mumbai, she finds out that her husband has no job. She tells Saru, “Not that he couldn’t have got one, but he didn’t want to work; not all the time, anyway. He would temporary jobs, then idle for months.” (110). Thus she starts to work to earn for a living. However, he leaves her soon for another woman leaving her with the four children. She is left to be the bread earner of the family as well as plays the role of the mother.

The woman's personality seems to change the moment we enter her room; she becomes confident, authoritative. (61).

When Kalapana is raped, she alone takes up the burden of blame and shame as she says, "I know what they're saying. What can you expect they say, of a girl whose mother has left her husband? Imagine!" (147).

Vanaa, is Urmi's sister in law. She is also a career woman and a mother of two children. The predicaments of working women are also highlighted through her character. Once the maid, Hirabai leaves her two children alone. The younger daughter, Pallavi, gets fever. Mandira, the elder daughter panic and when her mother arrives home, she accuses her mother for neglecting her duty as a mother.

Mandira brings her, holding by her hand, as if Vanaa is reluctant to enter. 'she's very sick, come and see how hot she is, she has high fever . . .' . . . Mandira, aggressive, unable to control herself, physically forces Vanaa's hand on Pallavi's face.. (70, 71).

Even a small girl like Mandira thinks that the sole responsibility of her children is the mother. She is aware of the assigned roles of the society where it is surmised that men alone has the right to pursue their profession whereas, the place of a mother is at home. Mandira says;

You know, Urmi auntie, when I grow up, I' m never going to leave my children to go to work.(72).

All these incidents make Vanaa break down. She tells Urmi that her expectation of finding happiness in marriage and children is wrong. She wonders if she is a terrible mother as her husband blames her for not been tough enough with the children and Mandira blames her for neglect. She also worries about Mandira and wonders about her accuses.

And this thing – Mandira’s latest – it really worries me. She keeps saying I shouldn’t be working. I don’t know who filled her head with this . . . (74).

Vanaa though has a career of her own, she doesn’t neglect her house work. For instance, when she is at work she takes the help of Urmi to take Shakutai home. She whispers to Urmi, “I’d have gone with her, but that’ll make me very late and I promised Mandira...” (60). She looks after the children and also makes sure that dinner is ready when her husband comes home. She also makes sure that the house is clean and thinks it her responsibility.

And there was the day I found her, her sari hiked up, the end tucked to her waist in a work like manner, showing she was girded for action, clearing their bedroom cupboards and lofts so that painters could move in. ‘Why can’t Harish help?’ ‘He comes home so tired...’
‘You know, Vanaa, what you’re trying to become, coping with everything the way You are?’ (81).

Though Vanaa doesn’t normally shows her predicaments and carries out her work both as a wife , mother and a career women at times she cannot hide it as she says:

Urmi, why is it nobody thinks of blaming Harish? He’s never around, but it’s never her fault. If you ask me, it’s all Akka’s fault. It’s she who filled me up with Ideas of a career. (75).

In the novel *A Matter of Time*, Gopal walks out of Sumi leaving her alone with the burden of their three daughters. She is stunned by the behaviour of Gopal yet she moves on. She goes back to her parental home. She however, denies the financial assistance either by her parents, Premi, her sister who is a doctor and Ramesh, Gopal’s nephew. She works as teacher on temporary basis and is ready to stand on her own feet and assert her identity. as a strong Though she undergoes different emotional and mental trauma because of her separation from Gopal, she does stop being a good

mother to her three daughters. She doesn't let her emotions spill and works to gather herself and present herself person.

Sumi's tone, even light, gives no indication that she is worried by the prospect. Certainly the anxiety about money, like the by-now familiar incubus of loneliness, is almost a relief after the earlier inexplicable, haunting fears. But the thoughts of money keep ticking in her mind almost all the time: Charu's exams, all the fees need to be paid, the scooter need overhauling, the moped is on its last legs, Seema needs new clothes- and so it goes on and on. (AMT.194).

In Avinuo Kire's *Fallen bird* we also see How the protagonist leaves a job which she loves for the sake of her marriage. She is highly qualified but her husband gets transferred to another place and thus it's her who has to sacrifice her job. She says, "You also had a job teaching English at a local school that you enjoyed, but your husband got posted to a different district and you had to resign because you were taught that a wife's place is her husband." (FB.46).

In *That Long Silence* by Shashi Deshpande, we also see that Jaya is passionate about writing. However one day her story wins a contest. Jaya is excited but Mohan accuses her of shaming him. He tells her that people will surmise that it's their story and tells her, "...how could you write such ugly things, how will you face people after this?" After that Jaya stops writing for the fear that her stories might resemble Mohan's mother or sisters. She is scared of Mohan's disapproval. At first she writes under a false name and uses Kamat's address. Then she writes middles which are light humorous stories of middle class women which Mohan and the editors approve of. Jaya leaves her passion for writing serious issues of women for the sake of her husband and to save their marriage.

And, looking at his stricken face, I had been convinced I had done him wrong. And I Had stopped writing after that.(TLS.144).

In *A Terrible Matriarchy*, Dielieno conflict between her studies and her domestic chores. She is made to stay at her grandmother's house in order to teach her

to become the 'ideal woman.' Against her grandmother's wish, she manages to go to school. Dielieno, however being a girl is expected to do her household chores before and after her schools. Her grandmother doesn't even care to lighten her burden but instead gives her more work in order for her to quit school.

School was the best thing that could have happened to me. There were sacrifices I had to make. Grandmother did not want me to go to school so she tried to make life even more difficult by making me get up an hour earlier. In that extra one hour I had to fetch water alone and make fire... I liked going to school so much. But I did not like going early to the water spot by myself; it was very dark and I could not see anyone ahead of me.(ATM.32).

One day her teacher makes her stay back for an hour after school to teach her. When she reaches home, her grandmother whacks her with her cane stick.

I fled to my room and quickly threw my school bag on the floor. I buried my face in my hands and hot scalding tears wet my pillow as I sobbed my heart out. It was bad enough to appear a fool at school but to be beaten by Grandmother when I had done nothing wrong was too much for me." (39).

As she grew older and went to higher class, she had to find ways to study more. Dielieno says:

There were more things to do now that I was bigger. I struggled to finish my task and find enough time to do my homework and study a bit. Vimenuo and I worked out a way to get to school earlier and come home forty to forty-five minutes after school was over. (166, 167).

When her mother becomes sick she is called home to look after the house. Though she is happy to be home, she is had to juggle between her domestic work and her studies.

I had even more work at home. At Grandmother's it had helped that two of us shared the workload. At home, I was alone and mother could not do very much. The boys' clothes were difficult to wash and my back ached from the great amount of washing. (177).

Dielieno further narrates her struggle during her matriculation examination. Her mother gets weaker and she as the daughter of the house carry the workload of the house. She says;

I struggled to look after the house and find the time to study. Sometimes mother would feel strong enough to do some housework when I was at school. On those days I had enough energy to stay up late at night and study. But If it was one of mother's bad days, she would get a terrible headache and not be able to do any work. Then, I would have to fetch the water, cook and clean the rooms. I washed clothes every other day. Because if I did not do it for four days it would become too much to wash. So I forced myself to get some washing done even when I felt tired. (202).

ALIENATION THROUGH MARTIAL CONFLICT:

The novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* opens with Saru, the protagonist returning to her parental home after fifteen years, alienated from her husband. Saru, is a "two- in- one woman" who is a successful doctor during the day and a "terrified trapped animal" at night.

In the earlier years of marriage, there is peace and harmony in the relationship. However, the moment Saru is recognised as a successful doctor, Manu starts to change. One day there is an explosion in a nearby factory. Saru rushes to help and from that day, people came to her house for medical advice. As it went on, Manu became different in his attitude. He became jealous of Saru's success and recognition.

And there came a day when hearing a knock at the door, Manu said, 'Open it Saru, it must be for you'. I could not see his face , I was washing up the tea things then, but his tone was certainly odd. An

affected indifference . . . yes, but now I know that is what was in his tone then. (TDHNT.41).

However, Saru is young and she is exhilarated with the dignity and importance showered on her. She is inexperienced and enjoys the thrill to examine her patients and advice them. Meantime she is oblivious to Manu's feelings.

And now, when we walked out of the room, there were nods and smiles, murmured greetings and namastes. But they were all for me, only for me. There was nothing for him. He was almost totally ignored. I didn't notice this then. Nor, if I had, would I have known that he minded. For her revealed nothing. (42).

Saru found herself distancing away from Manu and his love-making. Saru thinks at first that it's because she is tired that makes her refuse him. At times despite her refusal, he is abrupt and rough with her and she is left with no option but to give in. Manu takes her refusal for sex as a refusal of himself. Once they met a couple when they are out shopping. As they talk, the husband mentions how lucky Manu is to have a doctor wife who can do all the expenses for their holidays. They all laugh at it and Manu seem to be his usual self on their way back home. But at night while she is in deep sleep, everything changes. She narrates:

I woke up to darkness and an awareness of fear. Panic. Then pain. There it was for the second time what I had just lulled myself into believing was just a nightmare. The hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of horribly familiar body. And above me, a face I could not recognise. Total non-comprehension, complete bewilderment, paralysed me for a while. Then I began to struggle. But my body, hurt and painful, whelmed me. My mind, fluttering, threw itself despairingly on the walls of unbelief and came back staggering, bruised and spent. (112).

On another occasion, a woman comes to interview Saru for a women's magazine. ON learning that Manu is a teacher in a college, she asks him how it feels

when his wife earns not only the butter but the bread as well. This makes things worse for Saru. So the attack at night goes on. "He attacked me like an animal that night. I was sleeping and I woke up and there was this . . . this man hurting me. With his teeth, his whole body." (201).

However, in the morning he becomes an entirely different person. He behaves as if nothing happened. This stops Saru from confronting Manu. One morning, Manu is even surprised and shows concern at the marks he has made the previous night. She feels that one day she will be walled alive within it and die slowly and painfully. She cannot bear his brutality anymore and even thinks of approaching a lawyer. But she couldn't. She scorns at the word 'love' and thinks sex is a dirty word. Saru, in order to save their marriage even offers to resign from work and become a full time housewife but Manu disapproves of it. On hearing through a childhood friend about her mother's death, Saru feels like visiting her father. This is further aggravated by Manu's behaviour. Thus she returns to her parental home which she had vowed not to return fifteen years back. She expects sympathy and seeks for refuge from her father. She regrets her choice for a love marriage and laments: "It's my fault again. If mine had been an arrange marriage, if I had left it to them to arrange my life, would he have left me like this"? (218). She remembers about a friend's sister who returns home from a disastrous marriage. She was showered with sympathy and care as if she was, "an invalid, a convalescent." (218). Saru observes that the girl's face didn't carry despair nor shame but only a look of passive suffering, "For the failure had not been hers, but her parents'; and so the guilt had been theirs too, leaving only the suffering for the girl." (219). Saru realises that a wife should never be ahead of her husband. She should pretend that she is not smart, competent, rational and strong as she really is.

Jaya of *The Long Silence* suffer alienation because of her conflict with her husband. All her life she listens and does as Mohan's wishes. A smart and independent Jaya turns into "a soft, smiling, placid, motherly woman. A woman who lovingly nurtured her family. A woman who coped." (TLS.16). Jaya's husband, Mohan is an engineer. Unfortunately, he is caught taking commission and since enquiry is on, he goes into hiding. Thus, Jaya and Mohan goes to the Dadar flat. As Jaya stays there she is deprived of her daily routine of cleaning the house and looking after her children. There she gets the chance to ponder over her life. Moreover it is

Mohan who blames her and the children for what had happened. He says, “It was for you and the children that I did this. I wanted you to have a good life, I wanted the children to have all those things I never had. (9).

This makes Jaya opens Jaya’s emotions as she is filled with anger. She remembers how she emulates Mohan’s mother and sisters and tries to adjust and compromise though it destroyed her individuality. Outwardly, she is a happy housewife with a loving husband with all the material comfort. However, the real picture is different. Jaya is a suppressed wife who has totally given up her individuality for her husband and family. She is a writer but she even gives up writing things she is passionate about and instead writes stories about everyday housewives which Mohan agrees to. She is bewildered to discover her diary which reveals the time she wasted on the trivialities of what she bought, how much she paid and on the coming and going of the servants, the dates the children’s school begun, etc. Jaya is suppressed at every stage of her life and she compromises to the role of the ‘ideal wife.’ She compares her relationship to “a pair of bullocks yoked together...” (8). S.Prasanna Sree explains:

The image of a pair of bullocks yoked together suggests that yoked bullocks should share the burden between themselves, but no one knows whether they love each other or not. The image of the beasts performing their assigned duties mechanically undermines the relationship of husband and wife, who are united in marriage for love, but not for leading a mechanical life which results in ending up in mutual hatred and distrust.” (WNSD.75, 76).

Once as they talk, Mohan starts to attack her with questions and accusations. He accuses her of being unconcerned about him and the problem he was in. He says that since the day she found out about his trouble, she has been indifferent, about not knowing the abbreviations of M.D, C.E. which he uses in the office. He further tells her that she has no clue what he had to undergo in order to get the quarter. When after much deliberation, Jaya tells him that she gave the writing for her, he tells her that it was he who spoke to the editor of *Women’s World* for her column” Seeta.” Jaya realises nothing can stop him now.

It was like a deluge. Ramukaka's Meera, who had been in Poona the year the Panshet dam had burst, had told us, hearing that the river was rising, some of them had gone, filled with a pleasurable excitement, to see it. 'But the river was rising so fast, we had to run back. It was as if it was chasing us. A few minutes more and we would have drowned.' There had been incredulous anger in her tone, the angry amazement of one Betrayed by something she had thought innocuous. (TLS.120, 121).

Mohan goes on to say that he had been patient with all of Jaya's whims and wishes and accuses her as he says, "As long as I had my job and position, it was all right; as long as I could give you all the comforts, it was all right. But now, because I'm likely to lose it all . . ." (TLS.121). All these accusations makes Jaya hysterical. She tries to stop herself but she couldn't. She burst out into hysterical laughter as she could not hold it any longer. This horrifies Mohan and he leaves the house.

...I thought, I will explain to Mohan. *I'm sorry, I will say, I didn't mean to laugh, I wasn't laughing at you, I was laughing at everything-marriage, us, this whole absurd exercise we call life...* Sitting on the bed, smoothing the stuff of my housecoat on my thigh, I tried to put words together while in my ears I could hear the savage pounding beats of my heart. As the pounding slowed down, receded, I heard footsteps. Mohan was coming back in. I had to talk to him, to explain away everything. My body went rigid, I could feel a chill along my upper arms, my forehead, as sweat broke out. But the footsteps moved away. I heard the front door open and then a bang as it closed. *He's gone.* (122,123).

In *A Matter of Time*, Sumi is deserted by her husband, Gopal. They have been married for almost 23 years. However, without any reason, Gopal walks away from Sumi, leaving her without any reason and with their three daughters: Anu, Chandru and Seema.

One evening, while Sumi is watching a film on T.V. about circus, “without the dirt, smells, the fear and despair of the real thing, but sanitized, bacteria free” Gopal tells her he wants to talk to her. And without any preamble says what he has to. He waits for Sumi’s reaction, but within moments both realize that there’s nothing more to be said and he leaves as quietly as he had entered. (OFE.21).

Gopal’s desertation makes her experience anguish and isolation and is emotionally shattered. At first she is unable to comprehend what had happened. But slowly reality seeps in.

She finds herself alone in bed, the pillow by her side cold and smooth, the other half of the bed unrumpled, the blanket still folded. So it is true what he told her, he meant it, he’s already done it. (AMT.9).

Over the days, she gathers herself and goes about performing her duties. But “...despite her facade of normality, has a quality about her – a kind of blankness- that makes them uneasy”(ibidem.10-11). They shift to Sumi’s parental home and despite her stoicism, she still hopes that Gopal will come back. Once she rushes out as Aru comes home in Gopal’s scooter expecting Gopal. Even at her parental home she lives in semi-darkness. She wants to face loneliness and not be disturbed by the voices of other humans muffle during the day and the sound of breathing and rustling in the night. She thinks, “And the truth is that it is not loneliness that is her enemy right now, it is the sense of alienation.” (23).

Kaliyani, Sumi’s mother also suffers alienation. In order to retain the property within the family, her mother marries her off to her own brother, Shripati. From this marriage she begets two daughters and a son who is mentally retarded. Unfortunately, they lose him at the railway station. Shripati had gone to do the reservations, while leaving the baby boy on his mother’s lap. When he comes back, he is gone. Shripati immediately starts to search for his son. He leaves Kaliyani with the daughters and goes in search of his son for two months. Meantime, Kaliyani is send back to her parental home. Kaliyani’s mother, Manorama, however pleads with her brother to return home to his wife and daughters. Though he comes back home, he stops

speaking with his wife. Despite living under the same roof as husband and wife, they live as strangers. From the day, he loses his son till his own death in the tragic accident, he does not talk to Kalyani but stays in his room. Kalyani tolerates all these. She seems to find solace in the thought that she is a wife of someone with her kumkum intact and not a widow.

Madhu, the protagonist of *Small Remedies* also faces alienation due to marital conflict. One night she has a nightmare. She wakes up frightened and in order to unburden herself she innocently shares her story of having slept with her father's friend at the age of 15. From then on, Som becomes insecure and suspicious. He starts questioning her about her past and even brings up names of those he imagines to be Madhu's lover. Slowly Som changes his attitude towards Madhu. She says:

I know it is Som who has changed. I can't recognize this sad and angry man, distraught, possessed by a madness that seems to have no end. This is not the genial, generous, affectionate man I knew, not the man I married! From where has this man emerged? It's like the mobs that come it seems from nowhere, to loot and kill, sowing seeds of hatred and revenge. And then, their work done, they disappear, dissolving into the mass in which there are no looters, no killers, only fathers and husbands, sons and brothers. (SR.257).

Som and Madhu continues to sleep together, but Madhu feels "something savage in his lovemaking." (ibidem.257). However, even this stops gradually. Like Saru and Manu of *The Dark Holds No Terror*, they are normal during the day but at night, the nightmare begins as Som starts: "Tell me the truth, tell me the truth." (258).

At first she thinks it might be because of the personality differences between them. Som shares every bit of her activity with her but Madhu usually keeps things to herself. But later on she realises that the truth that it is because Som couldn't bear the thought of Madhu as a participant and not an unwilling victim. She feels that Som would have tolerated if she had been raped instead. All this leaves Madhu alienated from the marriage where she had once witnessed the perfect family "...like a model

house, correct to the last brick, to the last tile on the roof.” (103). But now she feels alienated from it as she says:

Som and I are locked in a silent, fearful struggle that exhausts us. We are like two travellers embarked on a terrible journey, rocketing at a dangerous speed, on the verge of going out of control, yet unable to stop, unable to help ourselves.” (257,258).

Avinuo Kire’s *Promise of Camellias* is about Vime who gets into an arranged marriage. Though in the initial years of marriage they are happy, they discover that they are entirely two different individuals. Vime is from a humble background whereas her husband is a government officer from an influential family. Vime hopes that in time, their liking for each other will grow into love. But as time went by, their expectations of each other are not fulfilled. As an important officer, he gets visitors regularly and wants a sophisticated wife who can play the role of a hostess, one he can “show off.” (TPTF.74) However, Vime feels uncomfortable even around the house help. The husband is interested in politics and world affairs and she tries her best to fit in but doesn’t work out. After a year she cannot tolerate anymore and tells him so. She tells him to do as he wishes but not to include her as she cannot cope with it anymore. Meantime, even her in-laws suggest them to start a family and tells her that it would solve the problem between her and her husband. But unfortunately, it is not possible for them to have any children because of her husband’s “insufficient sperm motility.” (74) .This worsens the situation as he also starts having affairs and becomes a drunkard. On their 8th anniversary, she wakes up alone. She is later informed that her husband will be going down directly to Dimapur. Vime is aware that her husband is not alone, yet she doesn’t do anything. She says, “I used to feel hurt and humiliated during the early years, but now I realise it is more trouble to complain.” (76). She becomes alienated and silenced and thus becomes attached to sadness. Vime is also informed by her childhood friend Anuo, who is aware about his extra marital affairs. Anuo works in the same department as her husband’s and she fills her with the details of her husband’s affair but she takes it calmly. Soon after that, her husband leaves her.

RAPE:

Rape is reported to be the fourth most common crime committed against women in India. Over the years, the number of rape cases has only increased in a place like India. Cases of rape had been unheard of in small State like Nagaland in the past decades. However, today it is a common crime and despite the condemnation by the society, it is still rapidly increasing. Besides, even marital rape in India is a common issue. Since marital rape is considered legal in India, the report of marital rape is low. On the other hand:

It is believed that women in India are 40% more likely to experience rape from their husband than by a stranger. It is also estimated that 10% of women in India experience sexual violence. (www.wikipedia.com).

The novels of Shashi Deshpande as well as Avinuo Kire's short story, vividly captures and highlights the issue of rape and the psychological trauma of the rape victims. Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *The Binding Vine* project the issue of marital rape which many Indian women endure silently. Further, her novel *The Binding Vine* and Avinuo Kire's short story, *The Power to forgive* also depicts the life of rape victims.

Saru, the protagonist of *The Dark Holds No Terror* is an example of victim of marital rape. During the early years of her marriage, she feels heaven on earth. Once, Saru had denied embracing herself but now with Manu, she is insatiable for love. She says,

Each act of sex was a triumphant assertion of our love. Of my being loved. Of my being loved. Of my being wanted. If I ever had any doubts, I had only to turn to him and ask him to prove his love for me. And he would . . . again and again and again." (TDHNT.40).

As time pass, Saru becomes a successful and popular doctor. Manu starts to feel insecure. Manu is a teacher at a local college whereas Saru is a doctor. This imbalance in the binary of roles assigned to men and women, upsets Manu. His ego

and pride is bruised and cannot accept the fact that Saru is earning “...not only the butter but most of the bread as well.”(200). The stereotyping of the male role as the breadwinner of the family is an booster which feeds the male ego. When this role is glorified, men are automatically held at high esteem. Nevertheless, when there is a role reverses, most men cannot accept it. Manu like the typical male chauvinist feels under threat. In order to assert his masculinity, Manu starts to rape Saru at night.

Sex is supposed to be a pleasurable activity. But in a situation where the woman is merely an object of the man's gratification, is forcibly violated, or is disallowed self-expression during love making, the chances of being sexually abused are great. For the Indian woman, it is often a common experience. The taboos surrounding any discussion of sex also make it impossible for her to talk about it (even with her husband) or to seek counsel. Sarita finds herself in such a dilemma in spite of being an educated woman , and a doctor. (SDFSF.43,44).

Gradually, Manu starts abusing her at night while she is asleep. At first she is confused and finds it surreal but soon she finds out that it is the reality.

The hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horribly familiar body. And above me, a face I could not recognise. Total non-comprehension, complete bewilderment, paralysed me for a while. Then I began to struggle. But my body, hurt and painful could not do nothing against the fearful strength which overwhelmed me, my mind, fluttering, threw itself despairingly on the walls of unbelief and came back staggering, bruised and spent .And then, mercifully, the end, the face still hovering over mine, changing as the body relaxed, becoming the familiar known one of my husband. (112).

However in the morning Manu behaves normally. He is cheerful and caring as if nothing happened. This goes on and Saru becomes alert and predictable of such nights. She is anxious and cannot bear it any longer. Out of desperation, after much hesitation and thoughts she even suggest her resignation from her job to which Manu

disagrees. Saru becomes the two- in- one woman who, in daytime wore a white coat and an air of confidence and knowing, and at night became a terrified trapped animal.” (134).

Mira, the mother-in-law of the protagonist of *The Binding Vine* also faces similar problem. Mira’s story is revealed through her poem and diaries as it “It runs through all her writing- a strong, clear thread of an intense dislike of the sexual act with her husband, a physical repulsion from the man she married.” (TBV.63). At an early age of eighteen, Mira is married off to someone she does not love. Her marriage opens the door to her sufferings. Every day she becomes anxious and fears for the night to come as she laments:

But tell me friend, did Laxmi too twist brocade tassels round her
fingers and tremble, fearing the coming of the dark-clouded, engulfing
night?(66).

Like saru, Mira begins to hate the word love as it is uttered by her husband. *The Binding Vine* also portrays the story of Kalpana, a rape victim who lies in the hospital unconscious, “neither death nor alive” all through the novel. Through police investigation it is revealed that Prabhakar, Sulu’s husband is the culprit. Sulu, Shakutai’s sister offers to take care of Kalpana. As Kalpana lives with her, Prabhakar lusts after her and often attempts to molest her. Sulu even offers Shakutai for Kalpana’s hand’s in marriage with her husband. Sulu is barren and also has a skin disease. Thus she is scared of her husband as she fears that he will kick her out of the house. She tells Shakutai, “If Kalpu marries him, she can be mistress of the house, she doesn’t have to do anything, I’ll do all the work, everything.” (193). Even Shakutai thinks it’s a good offer considering that Prabhakar is not a drunkard or wife beater or a waster. But Kalpana refuses and she gets ready to marry a boy of her choice. This enrages Prabhakar and he rapes her.

In the short story *The Power to Forgive* by Avinuo Kire, the protagonist is also raped at the age of twelve by her own uncle. Sixteen years after the incident, as she rummages through the file, she sees a newspaper clipping which was headed “FATHER FORGIVES MAN WHO RAPED DAUGHTER.”(TPTF.2). Memories

and emotions rushes in despite her resistance. It clings to her like “...an overpowering rotten smell, effectively erasing all other remembrances.” (2). These memories had destroyed all her good memories in the past and even now as she gets ready for marriage, it threatens to destroy her happiness.

She still distinctly remembered the nauseating smell of him – a mixture of sweat together with a faint eggy sourness – and the hot wave of heavy panting. She was alone in the house and her uncle had left hurriedly after committing the heinous deed. (3).

She finds happiness in her daily chores of fetching water and washing clothes beside the river along with the other girls. But this happiness is short-lived as she is overcome by her wishes to be carefree like the other girls. Her mother often reminds her “people will think you have no shame” and laments over the incident and the fate it has brought to the family. She feels betrayed by her father as he had forgiven the rapist and cannot bring herself to forgive him. She is also haunted by nightmares of the rapist. She is no longer the person she was before.

Once a gay and cheerful child, she had now become withdrawn and reserved. She is still the dutiful daughter to her parents but it ended there. Her relationship with other people could be described as cordial at best. Though always polite, she was unable to forge close friendship . . . She often broke out in cold sweat whenever she came across anyone who resembled her uncle. Her biggest fear was the thought of meeting her uncle now, after all these years. (6).

SILENCE:

Women had been taught to be silent no matter what goes through her life. “Silent suffering women” are glorified in many areas like literature and religion. Thus, it has become the ideal to measure a “good woman.” Even today, as the world progresses, it is still expected of women to be silent sufferers. The novels of Shashi Deshpande, Esterline Irulu and the short stories of Arinuo Kire highlight this phenomenon. Though they come out of their silence in the end, they recoil to it in the beginning.

In the novel, *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Saru is silent even when her husband attacks her night after night. She wishes to confront him but is unable to do so. Saru's husband, Manu is a sadist. He is only a teacher at a local college whereas, Saru is a successful doctor. This hurts Manu's male ego terribly. At first Saru is confused and thinks it is only a nightmare. But as truth uncovers, instead of confronting Manu, she recoils into silence.

When the silence became so unbearable that she felt she would do anything to shatter It, she would say . . . why aren't you speaking? What can I say? And she thinking . . . If only I could get away. Get out. But where? (TDHNT.99).

In *That Long Silence*, the protagonist Jaya learns to suppress her feelings and desires after she marries Mohan. Once during the early years of their marriage, Jaya had shown her anger. This disappoints Manu to a great extent and he tells Jaya that anger makes a woman 'unwomanly.' He further tells her, "My mother never raised her voice against my father, however badly he behaved to her" (TLS.83) which silences her. Furthermore, her family and relatives conditions her into thinking that "a husband is like a sheltering tree" (32). She is told that the happiness of her family entirely lies in her hands. This she learns to silence the "frenetic emotions" in her which is like "a disease, a disability" (97) Jaya feels that communication between herself and Mohan is impossible and this leads her to remain silent as she says, "It was so much simpler to say nothing. So much less complicated." (99).

Besides Jaya, other women characters in the novel are also silent sufferers. Her mother-in-law silently suffers the oppression of her husband. She cooks twice for every meal because her husband prefers to have his meal hot and does not want the "children's disgusting leavings." (35). Mohan tells Jaya about a night when his father had come home when the food was luckily ready and hot. However, when he is served, he is angered as there was no fresh chutney. He throws the plate on the wall, splattering the food everywhere and he walks away. Her mother calmly tells the children to sleep off and begins to cook again silently.

Vimla. Jaya's sister-in-law tells her that she is different from her mother. But she herself couldn't even tell her own family members of her sickness. It is obvious that Vimla is not treated well by her in-laws as her mother-in-law is sceptical about her sickness. Jaya is of the opinion that Vimla and her mother share the common fact that they both died in silence.

'Why didn't she tell us? Why didn't she write to me?' Mohan had cried out; but Vimla never gave us an answer, even to that question. She sank into a coma and died a week later, her silence intact. (39).

Jeeja, Jaya's house maid is no better. Jaya remembers that before her husband died, she often told her, "Don't ever give my husband any of my pay." (ibidem.51). This already gives Jaya an idea about Jeeja's life. Some days she would come bruised, some days she didn't turn up at all. Jaya knew it was her husband's doing but Jeeja never complained. There was no anger in her silence too. Once when Jaya asks her she tells her that she doesn't have anyone to blame. Her husband was not a drunkard when they got married so she couldn't blame them. When he lost his job he started drinking. To make things worse, Jeeja couldn't have children so he married someone else. Therefore, Jeeja tells Jaya that she cannot blame the husband or the woman. Unfortunately, both the husband and the woman die leaving their son to Jeeja. Thus the son, Rajaram and his wife and children becomes Jeeja's responsibility which she bears silently.

In *A Matter of Time*, Gopal deserts her wife Sumi without any reason. As Gopal walks away, Sumi doesn't stop him nor asks any questions. She is too shocked to react and stays silent. When she wakes up in the morning, the truth sinks in. Though she acts calm and tries to make it normal for her daughters, she undergoes emotional and mental turmoil inside her. As they shift to the big- house, Sumi's parental house, Kalyani cries out, "no, my God, not again." (AMT.12). Sumi remains calm and composed despite her anger and humiliation. "She accepts Goda's dumb sympathy, Devaki's fierce loyalty and Ramesh's stupefied bewilderment, as if they are all same to her." (20). Sumi feels alienated and feels that there is no one to advice her to which way she should go. Her family and relatives worry about her but she chooses to remain

silent. When Devaki cries and tells her, “And maybe I’m crying because you don’t. You don’t even talk about it, Sumi.” (107). Sumi replies, “...what do I say, Devi? That my husband has left me and I don’t know why and maybe he doesn’t know either? And that I’m angry and humiliated and confused ...?” (107). when Sumi meets Gopal for the first time, she chooses to remain silent about her emotions. However, they talk about other the things like Shankar’s family since “silence is even more dangerous, more treacherous.” (83) Though Sumi desires to ask him just one question which however remains unasked.

. . . if I meet Gopal I will ask him one question , just one , the question no one thought of. What is it, Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in this age of acquisition and possession walk out of his family and all that he owns? Because,...it was you who said that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How then can you, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back on everything on everything in your life? Will you be able to give me an answer to this? (27)

Sumi does not seek for explanation from Gopal though she is the one who suffers anger and humiliation. After much comprehension, she find peace in the thought that, “...the reason lies inside him, the reason is him.” (24) Kaliyani, Sumi’s mother is the epitome of a silent suffering woman. Since her childhood, she faces discrimination in the family but she chooses to remain silent. She is a disappointment to her own mother, Manorama as she is a girl child. As she grows up, her mother marries her to her own brother Shripati as to keep the property within the family. Kaliyani begets two daughters and a son from her marriage with Shripati. The birth of a baby boy brings much happiness to the family though the child is mentally retarded. However, she loses the boy in the railway station which is the beginning of Kaliyani’s tragedy. Shripati stops speaking to her. Though they live under the same roof as husband and wife they live as strangers without speaking for years. Even her parents deny her the ownership of their property. But Kalyani bears it all silently and resigns to it as her fate.

In the novel, *Small Remedies*, Madhu’s revelation to Som that she had slept with another man at the age of fifteen, enrages Som. He is unable to accept the fact

and he keeps questioning Madhu about it. Madhu is shocked by Som's reaction as she had shared with the intention of unburdening herself. But Som who is a male chauvinist continues to interrogate Madhu.

'Tell me the truth,' Som says, over and over again. He dismisses the truth of our life together, of our love, our friendship, our life as parents of a beloved son. What he wants is something separate and distinct from these things, something which really is, though he refuses to recognize this, a minute part of a whole. To him, that part is the whole.(SR.253).

He even starts dropping names of those he suspect Madhu had an affair with. Out of desperation, he even adds the name of Tony, her own step brother. This leaves Madhu silent as she says, "...I retreat into silence. I will no longer answer him, I will say nothing, I will deny nothing." (256). This silence makes things worse. She feels helpless. She thinks of confronting Som but she cannot. She only wishes to say:

In my despair I think of tearing off my clothes and saying to him: look, look at me, look at this. This is the woman you pursued and married, this is the body you slept with and enjoyed all these years. If you think the truth lies in this body, if you imagine that the truth is what the body has done, look carefully at it. It has changed from what. It was when you married me, the breasts are sagging a little, there's some more flesh on the hips, the thighs and the waist than there was, there are folds on the abdomen, wrinkles on the neck. But these are aging changes, a process your body shares with mine. Nothing else has changed. (256, 257).

Though they continue to sleep with each other, she can feel his anger through his savage lovemaking. Gradually, even this disappears and she is left alone with only his urge to "tell him the truth." Madhu undergoes a lot emotional and mental turmoil as she cannot comprehend male psychology.

The protagonist of *The Binding Vine*, Urmi's husband is a navy and stay away from his wife and children for long period of time. This makes Urmi lonely and detached from Kishore.

Shakutai, is a woman from the lower class. Her daughter Kalpana becomes a rape victim. On learning about it, she pleads with the doctor not to report the case as a rape case as it will only invite unwanted attention from the society. Kalpana lies unconscious in the hospital but Shakutai chooses to remain silent.

‘If a girl’s honour is lost, what’s left? The girl doesn’t have to do anything wrong, people will always point a finger at her. Doctor,’ she turns to him, ‘even if it is true, keep it to yourself, don’t let anyone know of it, I have another daughter, what will become of her . . .?’” (TBV.59).

Shakutai since her marriage is a victim to gender oppression but tolerates it silently. After she got married, her husband leaves for Mumbai promising to take her back. After waiting for two months, Shakutai decides to leave for Mumbai as there is no news from her husband. There she finds out that her husband does not have a real job so she starts working for a living. However, her husband leaves her for another woman. Despite all these, Shakutai takes up the responsibility of their children silently.

Sulu, Shakutai's sister also bears the oppression of her husband silently. She use to be a creative, lively and enthusiastic girl but after marries Prabhakar, she becomes quite and lives in fear. She cannot give her husband any children and so she lives in fear that her husband might leave her anytime. She also gets a skin disease which makes him stop having any physical contact with her.

Sulu was frightened, she was always frightened because she had no children. She was afraid he would throw her out, take another wife. And then she started getting these white patches on her face, her arms, her neck. He stopped touching her after that. She told me this only

yesterday, she kept everything to herself, she never told me her troubles... (192,193).

When Kalpana, Sulu's niece goes to live with them, Prabhakar openly exhibits her interest in her. He tells Sulu that she can stay in the house if she gets Kalpana for him. Thus, Sulu afraid of being kicked out from the house approaches her sister Shakutai for Kalpana's marriage with Prabhakar. She is willing to make Kalpana the mistress of the house and tells Shakutai that she will serve her. Through the police investigation she finds out that Prabhakar is the culprit. Unable to bear the shame and humiliation she immolates herself.

Mira, mother-in-law of Urmi gets married at the age of eighteen to someone she didn't love. Mira's suffering is written all over her poems and diaries. It reveals the turmoil of sexual act every night. Her distaste and fear of the night approaching is vividly written in her poem.

But tell me, friend, did Laxmi too
twist brocade tassels round her fingers
and tremble, fearing the coming
of the dark-clouded, engulfing night?(65)

At her husband's home she is ridiculed and isolated whenever she speaks of herself. She remembers her mother who had advised her to submit to her husband so that she can live happily but she cannot agree with. She longs for freedom to assert her true self but she is uncertain. She can only hope and think:

"Huddled in my cocoon, a somnolent silkworm
will I emerge a beauteous being?
or will I, suffocating, cease to exist?" (65).

Urmi's mother is a educated woman, however she is also a victim of male oppression. When Urmi was still a baby, she goes out for some emergency work, leaving the baby with the male servant, Divankar. This angers her husband and feels that his wife is not capable of bringing up the child. Without a second thought or further consolation with his wife, he sends Urmi to live with her grandparents despite

his wife's pleading. Thus, Urmi's mother is deprived of her own child for years but she bears with it silently. Even, Urmi blames her mother and hold grudges against her for sending her away to her grandparent's place but her mother chooses to stay silent.

A number of women suffer silently in Easterine Kire's *A Terrible Matriarchy*. The protagonist of the novel Dielieno undergoes emotional, mental and physical hardship staying with her grandmother. She is made to get up early in the morning hours to fetch water,

I took the water pot and put it into a carrying basket which reached down to my knees and went out the back door. The cold wind went through my thin clothes and I walked fast because it was worse if I slowed down." (ATM.14).

She is also made to stay outside at night until all the chickens are counted despite her fear, "I did not want to go back to the chicken shed which was dark and cold." (20). She is also made to take bath with cold water and is given limited food to eat. Her grandmother discriminates her openly by showing love and affection to her brothers. She takes them on her lap, gives them jiggery, money and supplies them meat apart from serving them the best portion of meat whenever they visit her. Dielieno's grandmother even whips her with her cane stick if she doesn't behave like she thinks a girl should behave. Despite all these, Dielieno learns to endure everything in silence. Once she complains to her father about grandmother hitting her but it seems to be of no use as he father justifies her grandmother's action. He tells her, "It is for your own good, your grandmother would never do anything to you that is not for your welfare." (6).

Grandmother speaks to Dielieno harshly but coos her brothers no matter what mood she is in. She also refuses to send Dielieno to school. She opines,

It is all right if boys have a spot of trouble now and then, but with girls, it is different. You would never be able to get rid of her once she has caused trouble. I really do not approve of girls getting educated. It only

makes them get fancy notions about themselves and they forget their place in the family.(23).

After much persuasion, grandmother finally agrees to send Dielieno to school but she burdens her with extra work so that unable to bear it, she will leave school. However, Dielieno never raises her voice against her grandmother but works diligently and silently. Nino, Dielieno's grandmother bears the oppression of her mother-in-law silently. According to Dielieno, she cannot even wear a new blouse without it being covered by an old shawl she is scared of her rebukes. Besides, Nino, there are other two daughter-in-laws but they live far away. Thus, she is the only one who has to face grandmother's frustration every day. Nino is also supposed to have been the prettiest girl in the village during her time but now there are no such signs of her beauty. She is always anxious and frightened of grandmother.

Mother, with her face and clothes wrinkled, how could she possibly have been pretty at my age? I thought she was born with that worried expression on her face. It was like she wanted to please and yet did not quite manage to and that set a constant, anxious look on her face. The person she feared most was grandmother and I hated grandmother with a Vengeance because nothing my mother ever did seemed to please her. (3).

Nino, cannot even speak to her husband about grandmother mistreating Dielieno. Like Urmi's mother, Nino too complies with the decision of her husband as he decides for Dielieno to stay at her grandmother's place. Like Urmi's father, Dileienos father also blames Nino of not being capable of raising her own daughter. While, she recoils to silence.

Mother was right. You are not raising her properly. She will leave tomorrow for mother's house and I don't want to hear any more arguments about this. (10).

Bano, Grandmother's niece lives with her since her birth. Bano's role at grandmother's is almost like that of a slave or servant. She is docile and never

disagrees with grandmother and does things just the way she desires. She even gives up her schooling for grandmother's happiness.

I often heard your grandmother and grandfather fighting over my going to school. So, I took the decision to stop going because I could see that it was the cause of all this arguments. Your grandfather still wanted me to go but I said I was tired of school. It was not true but I realised it was what I was expected to do. There are times in life when you have to sacrifice some things that you really like in order to bring peace into the family. (78).

When Bano get a proposal for marriage, grandmother refuses it without even informing Bano. While eaves dropping the conversation of grandmother and Sizo, she learns about it but she knows that it is not in her hands to decide. "It is not up to me, Lieno, it is up to your grandmother and what she decides." (99). Unfortunately, for Bano this remains the first and the last marriage proposal for Bano.

Nisano, Vini's wife suffers greatly because of his drunkard husband. Right after marriage, Vini doesn't indulge in alcohol for a few months but soon starts drinking. Even on the night Nisano gives birth to their son, he is sloshed and cannot help in any manner. He also gets involved with the thugs of the town like Rocky and Bai. Nisano suffers vini's tantrums and violence when he is drunk. Though she takes the help of Leto and Dieleino, she silently suffers emotional and verbal abuses hurdled towards her. She says:

Last night he accused me of trapping him with the baby. He said he really didn't want to marry me but he had been forced into it. (240).

Life on Hold by Easterine Kire is a love story of two childhood friends Nime and Roko. However, their love story is unfulfilled as Roko joins the underground movement and Nime marries Abeiu. After her marriage, they settle in Dimapur. Nime being a responsible daughter visits her parental home every weekend especially because of her father's mental condition. But Abeiu is unhappy about it and tells her to visit her parents only every six weeks. Nime thinks of working and earning for her

expenses but even this is refused. Instead he accuses her of visiting Kohima to meet Roko. Like Madhu she wants to shout but she keeps calm he goes on accusing her.

I've never been his mistress, Nime wanted to shout, but instead she said, "We were childhood friends, But we have lost all contacts with one another now.(LOH.65).

Two days after her father's death, Abeiu also comments that she can now cut down on her trips to Kohima. Nime also listens silently when her husband lends her brother money on the condition that his house is mortgaged to Abeiu. Nime has to listen to his verbal abuses as he would often comment "your father's daughter" (81). Abeiu is also partial to his son as which worries Nime but all she can do is watch silently.

The three short stories by Avinuo Kire in her book *The Power to Forgive* portray women who recoil themselves into silence under suppression. *The Power to Forgive* is the story of a rape victim. It tells of a twelve year old being raped by her paternal uncle. As a minor, she is silenced by her uncle as he commits the crime and as he leaves he murmurs something to her which she cannot comprehend. Soon the news spreads like wildfire and the whole Naga village rises up against it. Even after 16 years have passed, though she had learned to accept the truth, it still haunts her. She seems to move on and is happy but this happiness is often disturbed by the memories of this incident. She longs to be carefree like the other girls in the village. Her mother instead of being supportive reminds her of the taboo attached to their family and emotionally remains detached from her. She does not receive any kind of emotional, mental support or counselling from her family. She only suffers in silence.

She sensed judgement through her mother's furtive glances, her thinly pursed lips her grimaces. She thought no one understood the meaning of silences more than her mother; in time she too had learned the language well. She would repeatedly agonise over the events that had unfolded that fateful day; over whether she ought to have been more alert, more wary, fought harder. But above all, her most agonising thought was whether life would have been simpler if she had kept that

one day of life her secret. She often wondered whether things would have been different had her mother discovered first. Somehow she knew she could not get over the violation of her body; she could bear her shame in private. It only became intolerable when society “shared” the shame. (TPTF.4,5).

She even feels betrayed by her own father as he forgives the culprit. Even he seems to be detached from her as when he comes to her room; he sits at the edge of the bed. He tells her about “forgiveness, justice and family honour” (5) and leaves. She remembers the day her father, without consulting her forgives the rapist. She says:

The taut stirrings of a strange and alien emotion bubbled deep within her the words; feeling much too complicated for a child of twelve. Frustrated at not being able to express what she felt, she burst into helpless tears. (5)

It angers her but she remains silent because she is never given the chance to speak about herself. Though the rapist is ex-communicated and is sent to jail, he gradually picks up his life and lives a normal family life. This definitely is unfair to her but all she can do is say aloud, “As if *he* had been the victim.” (5)

In the story *The Fallen Bird*, the protagonist is a modern educated woman. As a child she gets to know of her position in the family as well as the society. She notices how jubilant her parents become as her baby brother Keneisevor is born. However, the day he dies, her mother becomes almost a non-entity in the house and she takes the whole burden of house. Once unable to bear it she had told her mother, “Don’t forget that you still have three children!” (46) but it only made her bitter and even her father is unhappy about it and makes her apologise for it. When she marries, she is happy, yet it is short-lived. She is a teacher at a local school but though she enjoys it she gives up as her husband gets transferred without question. Later on as they have children and moves to Kohima, she finds out that her husband is having an affair. Even after that, she stands by him and looks after him without any complain.

In the *Promise of the Camellias*, the protagonist gets into an arranged marriage. At first they like each other and hope that it will turn to love. Unfortunately, they turn out to be two completely different individuals. The husband is an important officer who gets regular visitors. As such the husband wants a sophisticated wife. The wife tries her best but cannot cope with his lifestyle. The relationship slowly begins to deteriorate. It becomes worse as they are told that they cannot have children because of her husband's infertility. Soon the husband starts to have affairs but she does not confront him. He also becomes a drunkard. On their 8th anniversary, she is alone as her husband goes to Dimapur. She knows even then that he is with another woman but she chooses to keep quiet. Anuo, her childhood friend and her husband's colleague also informs her that her husband is having an affair but she does not react. Soon the husband leaves her and she returns to her parental home silent.

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CHAPTER V

ATTITUDE OF WOMEN IN A MALE DOMINATED WORLD

There has been a progressive change in every field over the last few decades. It is no doubt true that women have also progressed in many ways. However, since our society is rooted in tradition, it becomes almost impossible to overthrow our tradition all at once. On one hand the age old tradition is practiced and valued highly and on the other hand the modern practices tries to establish itself in the system. This leads to clashes between the tradition and modernity. In such a situation women are the most affected group. Women are suppressed and oppressed through traditional practices but they long to progress along with the rest of the world. At such a juncture it becomes crucial for women to negotiate between the tradition and the modern. In a male dominated world, it is impossible to change the patriarchal set up all at once. Women in a place like India and Nagaland cannot follow the system of radical feminism. At the same time women cannot remain silent to all the oppressions imposed by the traditional patriarchal society. Thus they tune their attitude and negotiate their way.

Shashi Deshpande's novel aptly portrays the way modern women confront traditional set up of our society. The protagonist of her five novels: *The Dark Holds No Terror*, *That Long Silence*, *The Binding Vine*, *A Matter of Time* and *Small Remedies* achieves to attend their individuality but without negating their family or the society. Saru of *The Dark Holds No Terror* is a victim of the traditional patriarchal society. Since her childhood, her mother imposes the ideals of patriarchy. Her mother like most woman imposes on her the traditional teachings which would nurture her to become the "ideal woman." Saru develops a hatred for tradition and infact she defies it by going for further studies and marrying Manu, a man from the lower caste. She also becomes a popular doctor. However, Manu turns out to be a sadist who abuses Saru sexually at night. Confused and unable to bear it, she seeks refuge at her parental home. At her father's house, she gets time to introspect what has gone wrong.

All these years, Saru had tried to run away from reality. She had even run away from her parental home defying reality. But at the end she has no choice but to face it. She had surmised that achieving a position in the society will free her from all

the traditional bondages. She studies hard and becomes a doctor. She goes against her mother's wishes and marries Manu, a man from the lower caste. She also indulges in affairs with other men. But all these don't give her solace. She even cuts her hair to fit into the crowd. However, she finds out that she is still trapped in the patriarchal web. She finds out that being better than her husband professionally leads her only to alienation and sufferings. She says:

A+b they told us in mathematics is equal to B+A. But here A+B was not, definitely not equal to B+A. It became a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsided, unequal, impossible. But is that the only reason, or would it have happened in any case, what happened to us later, he being what he is and I being what I am? I have a feeling I will never know the answer to that one." (TDHNT.42).

Saru in the novel represents contemporary women, who are well-educated, career oriented and ambitious. Brought up in a traditional atmosphere, she studies hard to break away from the traditional injustice which suffocates her. Her success in her career helps to break away from the traditional environment. For a little while she lives under the illusion that she has succeeded in defying the traditional patriarch society but wakes up to the bitter fact that she has been riding in the vicious circle of patriarchy all this time. Saru thought that education and going against traditional norms which her parents rigidly practiced would help her overcome the gender injustice she faced. She ran into the arms of Manu, a boy from the lower caste as a sign of defying the traditional norms which was patriarchal and also looking for happiness and protection, however she had to face brutality from her husband when she didn't follow certain norms. When she was not happy with her husband she returned to father's house looking for affection, sympathy, support and protection.

At her father's home, her interaction with her neighbours makes her to wonder how these women endured all their pain silently and finds it stupid.

Everything kept secret, their very womanhood a source of deep shame to them. Stupid, silly martyrs, she thought; idiotic heroines. Going on their task, destroying themselves in the bargain, for nothing but a meaningless modesty. (107).

However, she realises that like other women, she can never voice out her feelings. All this time she had fought with her mother who represents the traditional ways but she realises that despite her modernity she was at bar with her mother because both of them were victims of patriarchy and couldn't defy it completely.

She retreated into the kitchen to dress up, she sat in this dingy room to comb her hair and apply her kumkum, she slept in her bed like an overnight guest in a strange place. And I have so much that my mother lacked. But neither she or I have that thing 'a room of our own.' (136).

This makes Saru feel alienated as he says, "We are alone. We have to be alone." (208). Saru also meets her childhood friend, Nalu and Smitha. These two friends live extreme contrasting lives. Nalu is a teacher, independent and confident while Smitha is dependent on her husband and is submissive. Smitha even gives up her maiden name and is called Geetanjali because her husband is fond of Tagore. Saru compares her life with both of them. She doesn't like the way Smitha lives though she tries to portray that she is happy and content. Nalu is always bitter and complains about her brother's family, her mother, college, students etc. She seems unhappy because she is a spinster but on the other hand Saru thinks, "But that would be as stupid as calling me fulfilled because I got married and I borne tow children." (121).Saru also notices the perfect partnership between her father and Madhav as they make no demand on each other. Saru understands that despite our loneliness' we seek interdependence too. At the end of the novel, Saru's father urges her to confront reality. He says, "Don't turn your back on things again. Turn round and look at them. Meet him." (216). Though Saru thinks that Manu is responsible for destroying their marriage, she also accepts her share of blame. Madhav also makes her realise that she should also think about her life too. She regains her self confidence as she says,

All right, so I'm alone. But so's everyone else. Human beings . . .they're going to fail you. But because there's just us, because there's no one else, we have to go on trying. If we can't believe in ourselves, we're sunk."(220). Saru's father questions her, "Are you not sufficient for yourself? It's your life, isn't it?" (217).She realises that she cannot

peace and happiness in Manu or her father but she is responsible for herself. She is now aware that she is more than the “guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife . . . persons spiked with guilts.(220).

When Saru receives a letter from Manu about his arrival, she is taken aback and she wishes that he turn away after knocking at the door. However, she steadies herself as her profession reminds her of her courage to confront reality. She tells her father, “Oh yes, Baba, if Manu comes, tell him to wait. I’ll be back as soon as I can.” (221).

This shows that Saru is ready to confront reality and assert her individuality. She sets out to attend her patient which shows her decision not to compromise with her career. To defy the traditional patriarchal society completely would land her in loneliness and detachment from her family. She is left with no choice but to face the realities and except the realities in order to live a peaceful life. Saru feel that she has to face the situation courageously and it is she who has to decide for herself. Saru is a representation of modern women in India. Like her, they cannot rebel against the traditional set up nor do they remain victims. However, they try assert their individuality yet compromise with the existing reality.

The present day Indian woman is neither like the typical Western liberated woman nor like an orthodox Indian one. Deshpande does not let herself get overwhelmed by the western feminism or militant concept of emancipation. In quest for wholeness of identity, she does not advocate separation from the spouse but a tactful assertion of one’s identity within the marriage. (FNSD. 87,88).

Jaya, the protagonist of *That Long Silence*, silently slips into submission after her marriage. She changes outwardly as well as inwardly in order to please her husband. But while staying at the Dadar flat, deprived of her daily routine she ponders over her life and realise that all her life has been revolving around her husband and children. Thus, when Mohan blames her, she cannot take it anymore. It drives her to the edge of hysteria and while Mohan argues, she laughs out loudly. This

astonishes Mohan and he walks out from the house. she is left to herself in a traumatic state for many days. She also gets the news that Rahul has disappeared while holidaying which makes it worse for Jaya. However, everything turns out well at the end as she gets a telegram from Mohan saying, "All is well." Rahul too returns home safely. During the period when she is alone, she articulates her inner thoughts, fears and her voluntary submission and suppression in the last 17 years. She says:

Well, I've achieved this. I'm not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I'm Mohan's wife, I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that has refused to be Mohan's wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible. The child, hands in pockets, has been with me through the years. She is with me still. (TLS.191).

Jaya takes the decision to stop being submissive to Mohan and assert her individuality within the role of a mother, wife and friend.

She can be herself, by erasing her conditioning and freeing her from her inhibitions. The haunting riddle of the ultimate purpose of a woman's life within the family can be solved when she learns to assess her worth as an individual and shun to be guided by the pre-fixed norms about it. Jaya realise that in order to attain self-hood, a woman must transcend silence, negation and self- alienation. (FNSD.109).

Like Saru she does assert her individuality but does not go against the system totally. She does not deny the role of her being a wife and a mother but she finds the other parts of her embraces it altogether. Like many women who get carried away by the notion of the "ideal wife" Jaya too succumbs to the suppression of her real self by following the footsteps of her in-laws. Saru does not blame Mohan entirely but accepts her own share of contribution to the situation and condition of their marriage. Her friend Kamat had once warned her not to wallow in self-pity which many women does and contributes to their victimisation.

I'm warning you-beware of this "women are the victims" theory of yours. It will drag you down into a soft, squishy bog of self-pity. Take yourself seriously, woman. (TLS.148).

Remembering this Jaya accepts her fault and blames herself for the situation she is in. She realises that all this time she has been speaking "prakrit" all this while. Jaya is ready to assert herself, her own individuality and is alert "I have only to do this now and authority will seep into Mohan once more" (192) but at the same time she does not deny her family. Like Saru, she knows that breaking the bonds of the family will only result in anguish and loneliness. She is aware that her happiness and self-fulfilment lies within the family itself. Along with this realisation, she is also hopeful that Mohan will change his attitude as she says:

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. and if there is anything I know now it is this: life has always to be made possible. (193).

The protagonist of *The Binding Vine*, Urmila is one step ahead of Saru and Jaya. While Saru and Jaya fight their own battle, Urmila extends help to other woman. Urmila had just lost her one year old daughter, Anu which makes her sensitive to the sufferings of other women. Urmila meets Shakutai who is the mother of the rape victim Kalpana and becomes close to her. Shakutai is from the lower strata of the society, yet Urmila supports and helps to raise her voice against the injustice done to her daughter. Shakutai is an example of victim of gender discrimination. She is deserted by her husband and she is left alone with the responsibility of the children. Besides, being from the lower strata of the society, she is always very cautious because people tend to point fingers at her for any unwanted incident. She panics when she is told that her daughter has been raped. She insists and pleads with the doctor not to report the case as a rape case but as an accident. She feels,

If a girl's honour is lost, what's left? The girl doesn't have to do anything wrong, people will always point a finger at her . . . even if it

is true, keep it to yourself, don't let anyone know of it, I have another daughter, what will become of her . . .?(TBV.59).

Like the typical mindset of the people in a patriarchal society, even Shakutai blames her daughter for the incident. Though as a mother she often talks of Kalpana with love and admiration, she blames her for the rape. This enrages Urmi and she tries to tell Shakutai:

Shakutai, for God's sake, stop this, stop blaming her. Why do you blame her, how is it her fault? . . . She was hurt, she was injured, wronged by a man; she didn't do anything wrong. Why can't you see that? Are you blind? It's not her fault, no, not her fault at all. (147).

Urmi tries to reason with Shakutai as she says, "Kalpana was – is young, an age when her existence is still a miracle to her. And therefore she walked out of that ramshackle building with gaily painted nails and lips, brightly coloured clothes and sleek, shining hair, loudly proclaiming the miracle of existence. All young people do it." (148, 149).

One day, the hospital authority decides to shift Kalpana to another hospital as there is no sign of recovery. Urmi tries to talk to Vanaa but she is unable to help. Fortunately, Urmi meets Malcolm, her old college friend who is now a journalist. She convinces Shakutai who agrees to tell Malcolm. Through Malcolm's help the story of Kalpana's rape gets exposure. The case is reopened and the police start the investigation afresh. Even the hospital authority decides to keep Kalpana and continue the medical treatment. Despite Inni's and Vanaa's opposition to her involvement with the case, Urmi is determined to help Shakutai. The police investigation reveals that Prabhakar, Shakutai's brother –in-law is the culprit. On learning this, Sulu immolates herself, leaving Shakutai shattered. Urmi stays with her till the end.

Urmi also discovers the poems and diaries of her death mother-in-law, Mira. Through her poems and diaries she learns that she was a victim of gender oppression. She translates her poems which is written in Kannada to English and is determined to publish it. She wants to give voice to the unspoken sufferings and pains of Mira.

Unlike Priti who wants to make a film out of Mira's story for entertainment purpose, Urmi's purpose is genuine. Urmi feels that Mira's poem are "... like a message tapped on the wall by the prisoner in the next cell." (115). It is ironical how Urmi begins to read Mira's poem as a hunter to find out the real Mira. But the role changes soon, "It is Mira who is now taking me by the hand and leading me..." (135). Urmi's decision to publish Mira's poem makes Vanaa furious as she feels that her family's honour is at stake. However, she talks to Vanaa with much conviction and is hopeful she will be able to convince Kishore too. Urmi's husband Kishore is a navy who stays away from home for long period of time. Her longings for Kishore haunts her but she keeps it to herself. Often Urmi feels insecure and longs for him but is unable to express her feelings as she feels that this will lead to her submission.

Now there is fear- the fear that Kishore never returning home, lost in the seas somewhere as one of his friends was; the fear of Kishore turning away from me, a distant look on his face; the fear of his not wanting to come back to me. Yes, that's the thing, that's what I am most afraid of. And I can understand them only too well, Vanaa and Inni; I want to submit too. But I know that if I walk the way of submission once, I will walk that way forever. Yet I never ask him 'why?', when he goes away from me even in our few days together, I never reveal my hurt, my longings to keep him by my side. . . (82).

Urmi after pondering over the relationship between Papa and Inni, Baiajjis and Aju, Vanaa and Harish, Vanaa and her daughters, Shakutai and Kalpana realises that all these relationship are filled with love and compassion. But this does not stop them from being cruel to each other because of their ego and self centred interest. Urmi begins to appreciate her life as she compares it to Shakutai, Kalpana and Mira.

After Anu died, the voice stopped. Then I saw Kalpana, I met Shakutai, I read Mira's diary, her poems. And I've been lucky, that's all. While these women ... you understand what I'm saying Vanaa? They never had a chance." (174).

Urmi realises that though Anu is gone, she still has Karthik. She also hopes that she will be able to reach out to her husband with time. Urmi is now aware that no matter how hard our ties are or how painful our experiences are, we can never give up. We have to go on living. She learns from Shakutai that the main urge is to survive, to live on, even if it comprises of our daily routine. “I don’t want any more. I’ve had enough, I’ve had enough,” Shakutai cried out. But in the morning I found her getting on with her chores. You can never opt out, you can never lay it down, the burden of belonging to human race.” (ibidem.202). Urmi also agrees with Mira who says, “Just as the futility of living overwhelms me, I am terrified by the thought of ceasing to be.” (203).

A Matter of Time brings out the story of Sumi, who is deserted by her husband, Gopal for no reason of hers. Sumi, shocked by Gopal’s action lapses into complete silence at the same time tries to feel things normal for her daughters. Sumi is emotionally shattered but she keeps it within herself. She remains calm despite the different reactions from Kaliyani, Devaki, Goda and Ramesh. She seems to be lost without Gopal, “With Gopal going it was as if the swift-flowing stream of her being had grown thick and viscous- her movements, her thoughts, her very pulse and heartbeats seemed to have slowed down.” (AMT.28) Yet Sumi gathers her strength and redefines her life by discovering herself. Sumi is practical as she sees futility in expecting an explanation from Gopal. Instead Sumi prepares to start her life afresh:

. . . retracing my steps, picking up things, thinking – is this it? But she has turned resolutely away from even her immediate past, she is preparing herself for the future, for the job which she is soon to start on. (122).

Sumi starts looking for a permanent job and learns to ride the two-wheeler, at the age of 40. She even considers moving out of her parent’s home but later changes her mind.

Till Sumi picks up the thread of her life and shows her will-power and independence, she appears to be a spineless woman and indifferent moron, too dull to grasp the situation. (WNSD.115).

A divorce or separation from one's spouse will leave any woman emotionally shattered for a lifetime. In our society, a woman's identity is through her husband. A divorce is considered fatal for women in our society. Like Kaliyani, Sumi's mother, many women are ready to undergo any hardship or suppression provided they have someone to call their husband. Sumi, is different because instead of sulking and brooding over her fate, she takes control of her destiny and redefines her life. She takes the bad situation that she is in and turns it into a positive one. Sumi does so because after Gopal leaves her, she discovers her creativity in writing. She writes the play "The Gardener's Son" for the school function which turns out to be a grand success. This boosts her confidence and inspired and she plans to write another story on Surpanakha in Ramayana from a different perspective. She says:

Female sexuality. We're ashamed of owing it, we can't speak of it, not even to our own selves. But Surpanakha was not, she spoke of her desires, she flaunted them. And therefore, were the men, unused to such women, frightened? Did they feel threatened by her? I think so. Surpanakha, neither ugly nor hideous, but a woman charged with sexuality, not frightened of displaying it- it is this Surpanakha I'm going to write about. (AMT.191).

This shows Sumi's positive outlook in life. Sumi also feels that the relationship between a man and a woman should be equal. Sumi's matured approach to her separation from Gopal is also admirable. Sumi gets a job as a permanent teacher and prepares to go with Seema. Unfortunately, she meets with an accident and ends her life. Sumi depicts the life of women with modern and liberal outlook. She defies the traditional orthodox opinion of a woman deserted by her husband, as she overcomes her anger and humiliation gracefully. Saru, Jaya and Urmi works within their marital relationship to establish their individuality, while Sumi does so after a broken marriage. However, it is noteworthy that until the end she still remained a dutiful daughter and a responsible mother.

Avinuo Kire's protagonist of *Promise of the Camellias* Vimenuo enters into an arrange marriage on the behest of grandmother Sebu. In the early years of the

marriage everything seems to be good, however, they start drifting apart because of differences in choices of lifestyle and character. Though Vime gives in to the whims and wishes of her husband, she cannot tolerate it anymore and she decides not to force herself into doing what didn't appeal to her.

I tried, I truly did. But after a year or so of being married, I could not stand it any longer. I told him that he could entertain and go out as he pleased. Only without me. I just want to be left home in peace. (TPTF.74).

Their relationship starts to worsen as they are told that it won't be possible for them to have children because of her husband's "insufficient sperm motility." (TPTF.74). In no time her husband starts having extra marital affairs and even becomes public. He also begins to drink more and despite the appeal from Vime's father, he continues to do so. Through her childhood friend Anuo, she learns that her husband is having an affair with a woman from the same office. Vime use to be humiliated and hurt about her husband's affairs in the early years, but now she feels it is no use complaining. She is a changed woman now as she says, "I am no longer the naive girl I use to be. I am aware that my husband is as guilty as this other woman." (76). Anuo being a good friend even offers to pay a visit to the woman's house. But Vime rejects this offer and instead inquires if the woman is young and beautiful. Her friend mistakes this as a sign of jealousy and tell exaggerates by telling her that the woman looks like a cow. Vime is certain that her husband has finally fallen in love and soon enough, her husband leaves her.

Vime cries when her marriage comes to an end. Though she had been unhappy in the marriage she says, "... it was the only kind of marriage I had known. I had become attached to my special sadness." (77). People around her sympathise with her and curse her husband. But she appreciates him for having the courage to end it. Like Madhu, she also takes this situation to turn into her favour. She doesn't argue or ask for an explanation from her husband for deserting her. In fact after a brief mourning she goes back to her life. She goes back to her parental home and starts life afresh like Madhu. Vime goes back to working as a "gardener-cum-florist" (77) which she loves doing. Both this women shows strong personalities. They are

different from the other protagonist because despite their bitter experience in life, they waste no time in rediscovering their individuality which they have lost while nurturing their marriage.

Madhu in *Small Remedies* is also a grieving mother who lost her son in a bomb blast. In order to get over it, her friend Chandru sets her up to write a biography of Savithribai Indorekar, doyenne of Gwalior Gharana. Savithribai is a famous singer who has a controversial history behind her, and also Madhu's old neighbour as well as her friend Munni's mother. Savithribai unlike the woman of her times is a rebel. Though she is brought up in a traditional orthodox family, she rebels against the traditional rules abiding woman.

Right from her childhood, Savitribai is girl of independent nature. She seems more Influenced by her mother than her father. She challenges the notion that father is the Head of the family and he (father) has the sole authority to decide the daughter's Life. (FNSD.149).

Music was not considered to be a profession for women in those times. Infact her grandmother even stops her while singing in a family function. But with the help of her father-in-law, she learns music. Even the way she approaches her father-in-law shows her immense courage. Further, if it was her father it would have been understood but it was her father-in-law whom she had approached. Though Saavithribai is ridiculed by other women, it doesn't stop her from getting what she wants.

To be set apart from your own kind, not to be able to conform, to flout the rules laid down, is to lay yourself open to cruelty. Animals know this, they do it more openly, Their cruelty of persistent hostility leaves deeper wounds. There's always the temptation to succumb, to be back to normal path and be accepted. To resist the temptation speaks of great courage. (SR. 220,221).

She also elopes with her lover Ghulamsaab – a table player and they beget a love child, Munni. In Neemgaon, it was also rumoured that she had an affair with the Station Director. She was often referred with contempt by the society where she lived.

In Neemgaon she was 'the singer woman', and there was something derogatory about The words, yes, I can see that now, about the way that said them . . . to Babu she was 'that bai', by which he meant 'that women'- the words accompanied by a movement of the head which said 'the woman next door', as well indicated a kind of rude contempt for her.(29).

Despite controversies and the scandals, she does what she desires, giving a deaf ear to what the society say.

Leela, Madhu's aunt is also a very strong character. Madhu had always seen Leela in the domestic sphere. But through Hari, she gets a more vivid picture of Leela. Leela disliked the superior class of her family which they claim and wondered what made them special. She also didn't find anything worth in their family's landholdings. She also did not believe in the caste system and when Madhu's parents marry, she gives them shelter. She is also a rebel as she remarries after her first husband passes away. She marries a Christian which was a taboo for many women in those times. She was also a member of the communist party and believes in its ideology but she did not hesitate to speak when the need arose.

Madhu is a victim of male suppression. One night she wakes up from a nightmare. In order to unburden herself, she reveals the secret that she had slept with his father's friend when she was just fifteen years of age. Som is unable to come to terms with this fact. He is totally shattered.

But it's the single act of sex that Som holds on to, it's this fact that he can't let go of, as if it's been welded into his palm. Purity, chastity, an intact hymen- these are the things Som is thinking of, these are the truth that matter. (262).

Though before marriage Som had a full -fledged relationship with another woman, he expects his wife to be untouched. Madhu is a modern woman with liberal upbringing. At first, Som, Chandru and Tony hang out at her place without being

judgemental. But the moment she becomes a wife, her husband begin to judge her. This is the typical mindset of a patriarchal society which believes that a man can do as he desires but a woman is expected to be bided by certain rules. At first Madhu is confused but later she realises that it made it worse for Som to accept that his wife was a willing partner in the act. Madhu says, "...he could, perhaps, have borne: that I had been raped, forced into the act, that I was a victim, not a participant." (154).

The women surrounding her life are women with strong personalities. Savitribai has done what she desires all her life. She ignores the traditional role given to her as a woman and follows her heart. In spite of all the discriminations and contempt for her actions, she achieve her dreams to become a successful classical singer. She also leaves her husband and elopes with her muslim lover. However, while narrating her life story she conceals all these facts about her. She even denies her daughter Munni.

It shows Savitribai's anxiety over her past's reckless action, which she considers a blemish on her character and responsibility. She keeps herself aloof from her illegal daughter Munni, lest it should tarnish her image.(FNSD.152).

Though Savitribai becomes an ideal for Madhu, she disapproves of Bai who disassociates from her daughter Munni. She gives her "Indorkar" which she adopted as her singer name. Savitribai seems hardly seem to give her love and affection to Munni as a mother which makes Munni rebellious. Even if she loves her child, she gives her up for the sake of her reputation. She does not think for Munni, for her identity and happiness. Madhu wonders how a woman who had the courage to walk out from her family and marriage is unable to use the same courage in accepting her relationship with Ghulamsaab and her daughter Munni. For her reputation sake she sacrifices her married life, Munni and Ghulamsaab. During the last years of her life, she is left alone.

Leela is also a woman different from the traditional Indian women. She breaks away from her family because in order to work for the public. Leela is bold enough to remarry a Christian unaffected by society's opinion. Both Leela and Savitribai reject

the traditional concept of the role of women and do as they desire. This inspires Madhu to stand up for herself and accept the reality. Through Leela and Savitribai she learns that one is alone in the quest for one's self-realisation.

Living at grandmother's, Dielieno in *A Terrible Matriarchy*, learns about the ways of the world and her position as a girl. However, she is not bogged down by it neither does she lament in frustration about her destiny but she fights back in such a way that she survives from the harsh realities of the society and becomes a stronger person. Dielieno is a survivor. She learns to avoid getting exhausted by all the errands she is expected to run. When she is asked to bring the yarn basket from the kitchen she says:

I ran to get it from the kitchen. But on my way back I deliberately slowed down, trying to take as much time as possible over this one task because by now, I had learnt that when one errand was over, there was always one other to do.(ATM.17).

She realised that since she is not a boy she will never get enough meat from her grandmother so she and Bano makes up for their craving for more meat by stealing a piece or two from the pot and eating them before getting caught. She is young but recognises between the people who genuinely gives her love and affection and those who only use her. She performs errands for her grandmother joylessly but she does it for Bano without any second thought. She even sacrifices her joy of telling her school stories to Bano just to keep her in good mood. Even when it came to Vimenuo, her best friend whom her grandmother disapproves, she takes the courage to ask permission from her grandmother to attend the funeral service of Vimenuo's father.

Dielieno always feared that she will be taken out of school by her grandmother if she didn't perform her household chores properly. This makes her to work harder whenever she is given any task and sits down to study after dinner because that is the only time she gets for herself. She gets up early in the morning to fetch water, all along fearful of encountering a spirit as she remembers the stories told to her by her elders connected with the water source. In spite of it all, she stubbornly works hard

and refuses to give up because she didn't want to displease grandmother. When Dielieno was promoted to the higher class, it made matters worse for her grandmother disapproves of it. On the other hand, she was bullied in the class by girls and teased by the boys but doesn't affect her love for school. Even at school she is denied lunch money by her grandmother and had to run home, eat and come back.

When she gets admitted to college her grandmother again condemns it and says that men do not like it if their wives are too educated.

A woman's role is to marry and have children, remember that. That is her most important role. Men don't like to marry educated wives. Then, if you find no one to marry you, you will be alone in your old age and have no one to bury you. Look at your grandmother Neikuo. Does she have anyone to bury her today? No, no one at all. She has to be good to my grandchildren in the hope that one of you will bury her. See what a terrible thing it is not to have children to bury one? I hope you will think of my words and reconsider your foolishness. (24).

Grandmother's sole intention is to make her into the 'ideal woman' so that she will have someone to marry her off. All the trainings and hard work which started as early as when she was five years was for nothing but just to prepare her for a husband. According to grandmother, the ideal girl was one who didn't waste her time in school and getting a mind of her own. She would be someone who would be skilled in all kinds of household work so that her husband's family won't find any fault in her. Despite all her words to stop Dielieno from studying, she still decides to continue with her studies and says that she doesn't care about being a good woman and she shall never be one. The women around Dielieno are far from being ideal. Her mother lives her life in fear of her grandmother, Bano uses white lies to get her way out of grandmothers shouting, Nekikuo lacks financial independence, Pfunuo made a mistake of getting pregnant before marriage, The women at the water source, Benuo and her sister and the women in the drinking house are all not ideal women according to the society. They were either full of fear, dependent and submissive or vulgar and loud. Dielieno rejects both the types of women. However, she learns all the household works and practices it which will make her into the ideal wife which the society

demands but at the same time studies hard and excels in her studies so that she will be independent.

Her grandmother thinks she is an impudent girl, her aunt Bino opines that she is too outspoken and unfeminine. Dielieno doesn't fuss over make up or her hair anywhere in the novel. However she looks after her mother and keeps the house clean when her mother is bed ridden. Her character defies what the society has defined as being feminine which is to look and behave like a girl. She breaks the family taboo and starts working as a teacher in her old school for a while and becomes financially independent. She marries her brother Bulie's friend who loves her independent mind. Dielieno defies her grandmother's concept and the society's concept of the ideal woman and emerges as a strong, independent woman who will yet not fail to be a citizen, good daughter, wife and mother.

Life on Hold a novella by Easterine Kire narrates the life of Nime, a young Naga girl who falls in love with her childhood friend, Roko. Unfortunately, Roko influenced by the Naga Nationalism joins the underground movement which stops him from meeting Nime. On the other hand, Nime also knows that Roko being a member of the underground, she will never be able to marry him. Soon Nime is arranged to be marry Abeiu. Nime had been brought up in a free environment without any gender discrimination. As a child she is smart and intelligent and physically strong too. She indulges in games meant for boys like wrestling with her friends Roko and Setuo. Like Jaya of *That Long Silence*, Nime is brought up without making her feel the burden of being a girl. But her marriage changes everything for her. Soon after the wedding, they settle down in Dimapur. Nime's father, Pusalie is mentally ill; therefore she visits her parental home in Kohima every weekend. After a while, this becomes a problem to Abeiu as he tells her that it is economically unfeasible. He suggests her that she may visit once every six weeks only. Nime offers to work so as to earn for her own expenses but this is also turned down by her husband. Nime longs to help her family physically and financially but she knew she cannot share it with her husband as he will rebuke it. Abeiu balmes her for visiting Kohima to meet her boyfriend Roko. He says:

“Is that all you think of?” She heard the cold anger in his voice, “Kohima, Kohima! how do I know you’re not going off to meet that gun-happy boyfriend of yours?” (LOH.65).

Nime recoils in shock to her husband’s accusations. She keeps calm and tries to explain that Roko is just a childhood friend. Meantime, Nime’s father is killed in a tragic firing between two factions in a hotel where he used to sit and chat with his friend. As Nime is trying to recover from the death of her father, Abeiu comments that since her father is no more she can cut down on her visits to Kohima. When Nime’s brother Zeu requests Abeiu for financial assistance for some work he turns him down saying that he does not have the habit of lending money to relatives. He instead makes a contract with Zeu that he would lend money for six months on the condition that mortgages his house to him. Abeiu also verbally and emotionally abuses Nime by saying, “your father’s daughter” (LOH.8) whenever she does something foolish. When Abeiu is troubled by the National workers by demanding two lakhs, he puts the blame and frustration on Nime as he says:

“This is what people like your boyfriend do, they don’t earn anything but have no qualms about taking away from those who earned it by the sweat of their brow!” (84).

Abeiu also shows favourism to his son but hardly shows any interest to her daughter. Nime fears that Abeiu will spoil their son. She wishes that her husband stops the obvious discrimination between the daughter and the son. As she watches her husband and son, “a sudden thought of her life with this man who neither cherished her nor her daughter made her feel desolate.” (ibidem.97). Nime often feels alienated and surreal about her life.

Now she was married to this man she hardly knew, in a house that was not her. Was this her life? Sometimes she felt as though she was living someone else’s life. She knew there were no other women who would dream of having the life she lived. Why then did she feel so empty? Her children were the only source of joy she had, and when they were not around, life seemed so meaningless. (94).

However, she takes hold of her thoughts, of her life. She diverts her fears and thoughts and tells herself that those things are not important. She tries to find happiness in the things she has and ignore what is not willing to accept her. She things about all the things she is blessed with like food, clothes and a good mother-in-law. She is also happy that Zeu had paid off his father's debts finally.

One night Nime wakes up sweating profusely as she dreams of Roko's lifeless body. the next morning as she goes through the newspaper she is almost certain that Roko has been killed. She tells her husband about it though he is indifferent to the news. However, Nime who is otherwise a meek and submissive wife, tells her husband with great boldness that she would like to go to Kohima if Roko had been killed. Nime rushes to Kohima and meets Setuo, who narrates to her about his last meet with Roko and hands over the letter which is meant for Nime. Setuo also tells her that while leaving Roko told him to tell her that he was sorry. Nime breaks down as she says, "Oh Roko, Roko. I'm sorry too but sorrys won't bring you back." (LOH.104). At the end, Nime stops crying and asserts herself as she says:

"No I won't cry, I have cried enough. I am going to grow hard. That's how you survive. I'm no longer a girl, Setuo. I'm 33 years, can you see the grey in my hair on this side?" She tilted her head to the left and pushed her hair out so that a few strands of grey stood out in the light. "Girls cry, mothers cannot afford to. Not over every puny- loser wrestler!" (104).

The protagonist of *Fallen Bird* by Avinuo Kire, also undergoes through a period of self-realisation. Since her childhood she experiences the feeling of being a secondary in the family because of her being a girl child. Though her parents loved her and her sisters, it was obvious from the way that her baby brother brings happiness to her parents as well as the community that they preferred a baby boy. A big feast was organised just days after the birth of Keneisevor. Like young Saru, the protagonist of this short story notices the way he parents treat her and her brother. "Finally! A male to carry on the family name and give you pride!' the grave old man who was held at high esteem by the entire community had exclaimed." (TPTF.43,44).

On the day Keneisevor was born, her father had been in a jubilant mood and had behaved in a way different from his old self.

Your father was in a jubilant mood and took down the detachable covering of your family's soft top Maruti which you always begged him to do but which he consented to do only during family outings into the woods. On the way to the hospital, your normally reserved father called out to people he knew, while you and your sisters waved at strangers as the sun poured all its gold into the open Gypsy.(45).

She even remembers clearly the day his brother died. Like Saru's parents, her parents too never recovered from the sorrow of the death of her brother. She remember, "Your mother never fully recovered and your father took for long walks alone into secret place." Her mother starts neglecting her family because of her deep anguish. Thus the narrator of the story takes up the whole responsibility of the family. She too unable to find happiness at her parental home find happiness in her marriage. But it doesn't last for long. She works as a teacher but gives up soon as her husband gets transferred to another town and she had to follow him because one is taught that "a wife's place is with her husband."(46).

Despite all her sacrifices, he gets into an affair with another woman. Soon he is diagnosed with cancer but she being a devoted wife looks after him. Her life seems to be like a robot programmed to do as she had been instructed to do. "No one, including your husband knew who you really were, not even you." (48). Often she is reminded that she has a life too, but she doesn't bother. "And so, you waited for life to consume you, just as it had done your mother." (49).

One day, a migratory bird lands on her roof as it couldn't fly anymore. The protagonist gives shelter to this bird and takes care of it. However it refuses to have any food and dies in a few days.

Her confused state of mind and self-absorption is further highlighted with the bird symbol the fictionist brings to into the story. The strange

migratory bird that comes to her, unable to fly and starves to death, is symbolic of her dead-alive state of mind. (CENPFR.188)

She finds the bird dead one morning on the cold floor. As she buries the bird, she says a prayer then realises that the prayer is meant for her too. Her prayer makes her realise that though life seems hopeless, deep inside her she longs “for things which are not.” At the end she is positive about her life as she says, “It wasn’t all bad.” (TPTF.51).

The Power to Forgive portrays the scene in Nagaland vividly. It is a patriarchal society as well as a Christian state. In cases such as rape too, the father takes the authority to decide what is right for another person in the family. Sixteen years even after the rape incident, the protagonist still is unable to forgive her father for forgiving the rapist. “FATHER FORGIVES MAN WHO RAPED DAUGHTER...In a supreme act of Christian forgiveness.” (2). She feels betrayed by her father as she was not even consulted before he declared his forgiveness. Though she tries to move on, her life is not the same anymore. She wishes to be like the other girls who live without the burden of any such memories. Even her mother is emotionally detached from her.

Mother had become a scared woman, always careful to maintain an emotionally detached relationship with her own daughter, fearful that intimacy would allow for indulgent exchanges.(4).

As in any patriarchal set up, women is always blamed for anything that goes wrong in the family. The protagonist’s paternal grandmother too blames her mother for the incident. “Eavesdropping through bamboo walls, she gathered that Grandmother had blamed her mother for what had happened to her. “You stood there without defending me while your mother accused me of being a bad mother!”” (7). Her relationship with her father changes too after the incident and got worse with time.

An invisible barrier between father and daughter had been erected the night her father informed her of his decision. It was the last that they ever discussed what had happened. She had been angry and resolutely

avoided speaking to him the first few months, and he had let her be. In time, as she entered adolescence, she became too ashamed to ever broach the painful topic.(10).

As she gets ready for her marriage with Pele, she refuses to let her father walk her down the aisle. She wants her brother to do so instead. This she thought is a way of punishing her father for what he has done. Her father reacts calmly when he is told about it and it makes she wonders if he is even affected by it. She finally decides to confront his father and tell him all the years of grudges she had kept within her. On the eve of her wedding, she finds the right opportunity to confront her father as they are left alone at home. As she approaches her parents room anxiously, she sees her father weeping. This makes her go back to her room unsure of what to do. As she sits in her room, she is hopeful that her marriage will mark a new beginning in her life. She also accepts her blame like Saru, for her contribution into her victimization. She realises that she had been responsible for herself and that she cannot entirely blame her parents. As an act of leaving the past behind, she takes out the newspaper clippings from under her mattress and burns it.

For the first time she felt no dread of words staring back at her. She had encouraged herself to play the victim for too long. It was now time to let go. She walked towards the kitchen and threw the incriminating paper into the fireplace. She did not bother to Look as the flames consume it in mere seconds. . . with every brisk, purposeful step she took, the carefully constructed wall around her heart seemed to lighten; Each brick loosened and crumpled, one by one. (12).

The protagonist forgives her father. Her outlook towards life changes too. Once she had been afraid to meet her uncle who had raped her. But now she is ready to face him as she had decided not to ruin her life because of him. “For the first time since forever, she is finally free.” (12).

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Despite the cultural differences, women have been considered as the ‘other’, the ‘second sex’ and have been given the second class treatment all over the world. On the other hand, women have also left no stones unturned to demand equal rights so as to live at par with men. Today, much has progressed and in many places, women are given equal opportunity to progress. In a place like India too, we have witnessed women in the field of administration, sports, literature, music, etc. Girls are given education and a good number of women are working women. Infamous social evils such as Sati, dowry, jauhar have also decreased to a large extent. Naga women have also seen much progress as today women are outnumbering men in education and employment. However, both the mainland India and Nagaland strongly depend on their cultures and traditions which hamper the growth of women. On one hand, the traditional set up of the society demands women to fulfil her assigned roles and on the other hand there is a pull to break out from their chains of traditional roles. Thus a conflict of tradition and modernity occurs, leaving women at the crossroad. This thesis has analysed five of Shashi Deshpande’s novel: *The Dark Holds No Terror*, *That Long Silence*, *The Binding Vine*, *Small Remedies* and *A Matter of time*. These five novels very aptly portray the predicaments faced by mainland modern Indian women. In order to illustrate the predicaments of modern Naga women, the novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* has been taken along with three short stories by Avinuo Kire from her book *The Power to Forgive*. This thesis not only highlights the constraints faced by modern women but also analyse the way they confront the traditional predicaments.

Since this study deals with women predicaments as they struggle to attain equality with men, the first chapter gives a precise introduction about feminism. It also explains the different types of women movement and how the mainstream feminism started. It further explains how women movements started in India and in Nagaland too. Feminist Literary Criticism is formed by feminist theory and gives voice to women through literature. Indian women writers have contributed impressively over the years so as to give a voice to women. Shashi Deshpande is a writer who has aptly illustrated the reality of modern women in India. She not only

writes about the traditional obstacles but tries to break the traditional barriers which bind the Indian women. Easterine Kire in her novel *A Terrible Matriarchy* also sketches the traditional set up of the Naga society and the way her protagonist very cleverly survives the harsh hands of patriarchy. Supplementing this, Avinuo Kire's three short stories unveil the untold hardship faced by Naga women today and the way they come out of these problems.

The second chapter highlights the present position of women in the society. Globalization has been one of the factors which have changed the mindset of the people. However, the tradition has a major impact on the mainland India as well as on the Naga society. The term tradition is a comprehensive one and includes cultural practices, religion, social and familial relationships. In order to get an idea of how this tradition came about or how it has existed it is vital to study the history. Therefore, this chapter studies the position of women in India in the Ancient, Medieval and Modern India. The Naga society has been studied by categorizing the Naga history roughly into the pre-Christianity period and the post- Christianity period.

The patriarchal set up of our society is so stubbornly strong that it has penetrated every area of our lives. Be it social, political, religious, cultural arena, women are suppressed in one way or the other. In India, the "ideal women" is defined by the mythical characters of Indian Epics such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These Epics are a product of patriarchy and plays an important role in shaping the ideology of Indian women even today. Historically, Indian women enjoyed equality in the early periods of Ancient India but gradually under the influence of many factors, their status in the society came down even to the lowest point in the medieval period. Religious scriptures such as the *Manu Smriti* have been heavily influential. The list of roles assigned to women is astonishingly cruel. However, it was accepted by the society and even today; a woman is measured by the standards set by Manu.

In the Naga Society too, women have been subordinated in many ways. Comparatively, the place of Naga women is much better than that of the mainland India, but at the same time it cannot be ignored too. Women are subjugated in many ways. Like the rests of the world, Naga society is progressing however they are still

denied in many ways. People are unwilling to give up their old tradition which suppresses women.

Literature is the mirror of the society; it reflects the condition and background of the society. The women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande are analysed in the third chapter. we see how women are subjected to different obstacles in the everyday lives. All the women of Shashi Deshpande are educated and belong to the middle class society. They often succumb to the patriarchal set up of the society however despite it they learn themselves to come out of such problems and assert their own individuality. Beena Agarwal comments, “In the traditional society of India, woman is essentially acknowledged as a shadow of male identity with little scope for assertion of her choices. Traditional images of women essentially affirm the subjugated status of woman but Shashi Deshpande categorically tries to establish that women endowed with inherent potential to recognise her femininity and assert her powers as an individual”(MFWS.D.50) In the novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* and *That Long Silence*, the protagonists learn to assert themselves and learn that while doing so they should compromise with the reality. The protagonists of *The Binding Vine* and *Small Remedies* is a step ahead of Saru and Jaya as help the women around them to emancipate from the emotional, physical bondages of patriarchy. The protagonist of *A Matter of Time*, Sumi is the most advanced amongst the five protagonists of Shashi Deshpande’s novel as she is not dependent on men entirely. Despite her husband abandoning her, she does not take time to move on. She instead turns the negative situation into a positive one by rediscovering herself.

In the fourth chapter, a comparative study of Shashi Deshpande’s novel and the works of Easterine Kire and Avinuo Kire have been done so as to highlight the similarities of hardship which women of both the society undergo. Simone De Beauvoir had rightly commented that the society makes a woman womanish and one is never born as a woman. In many parts of the world especially in India, a girl is taught to behave like a woman. She is trained to become the “ideal woman.” We see how girls are prepared from a very young age. In the novel, *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Saru is reminded by her mother of what to do and what not to do. She is made conscious of her being a female. She is treated differently from her brother Dhruva because she is a girl. Jaya of *That Long Silence* is taught that anger makes a

woman ugly and is taught that her husband is her protector. *A Terrible Matriarchy* also brings out the condition of girls in Naga society. Dielieno is made to live with her grandmother place so that she can mould her into an “ideal woman”. The protagonist of Avinuo Kire’s *The Fallen Bird* also learns about her place in the society from a very young age. All these portrays that women have been taught from their own homes to abide by the roles assigned to them. In spite of the cultural diversities, it is true that women are taught “to be women” from their family itself which sociologist considers as the primary institution of the society. On the other hand, women are today given liberty to access education. This has played a major role in the emancipation of women from the social, economic, political bondages of women especially in India to a large extend. However, women are still bind by the age old traditions. They are taught to expand their horizon as an individual but on the other hand, the traditional teachings become a stumbling block to many women.

Most of the women of mainland India as well as Nagaland are today career oriented. In fact an impressive number of women are now the bread earners of the family. However, they have still not been relieved from their traditional roles of being the in charge of the kitchen and the children. Thus, women have only added another work to their existing job.

Marital conflict often occurs because the expectation of men from their wives in a patriarchal society is very high. Women are expected to be submissive and live by the rules laid down by the tradition. When women fail to oblige by the rules lay down by the tradition or when they fail to attain the expectations of men, they are often alienated. However, today women are no longer the meek and submissive women. This alienation only gives them the space to ponder, grow stronger and assert themselves.

Rape is one of the most common crimes. Despite the protests and many laws to protect women, it has been increasing at an alarming rate in India. Marital rape is also a very common issue. Though unreported most of the time, it is happening in almost all the household. Rape is nothing but an assertion of male power over the women. In a place like Nagaland, cases of rape have been almost nonexistent in the past decade. But over the years there has been a rapid increase in the reported cases

itself. As women try to assert themselves in the society, such crimes are increasing so as to create fear. Thus crime is nothing but a product of patriarchy.

Since time immemorial women have been taught to remain silent. Even religious teachings advocate that women should be meek and submissive. Thus in the past decades many women have died silently unable to voice out their pain and anguish. Today, when the world has seen so much of growth and is progressing at such a fast pace, women are still expected to perform the characters assigned by the patriarchy.

All the novels of Shashi Deshpande are in the sense breaking the long silence

that Indian women have kept about their sufferings and neglect, of the stifling of their personality and about their breaking out in protest. The Indian culture, which the author depicts in her novels and of which she herself is a product,

appears to hold the protagonist back in spite of the their higher education

from the kind of feminist sexual freedom advocated in the West by feminist

(CSNSDMKI.52)

Many educated modern women succumb to the patriarchal set up of the society. They know their rights but often become vulnerable to the bonds of family and marriages. This makes them shut their individuality and behave in the pattern assigned to them. Yet they cannot be silent sufferers anymore. They have their own limitations. Women in the past decades may have abided by the traditionally assigned roles but modern women are not ready to accept it. Saying so, the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande, Easterine Kire and Avinuo Kire do not follow the rigid western feminist mode of giving up everything for the sake of their individuality. They however, maintain the sanctity of their relationship with their family members and at the same time assert their individuality within these relationships. These women are aware that the patriarchal system is rigidly ingrained in every aspect of our lives that it is impossible to overthrow it all at once. Doing so would only result in isolation and

loneliness and would do little in changing the society. They also realise that in order to bring about a change in the society, they have to be whole themselves. Only if one is whole in oneself can she change the mindset of the people who oppress them. They cannot be contributors to their own victimization by being submissive and settle down with self-pity. Thus they attain self- realization and learn to assert their individuality.

A study of the history of women in India as well as in Nagaland shows that over the years, there have been constant improvements in the status of women. Many social evils practiced in mainland India have been eradicated and women are slowly gaining their rights in different fields. In Nagaland too, despite the certain issues, women are given opportunities which they never got before. Besides, many feminist in groups as well as individuals have been working tirelessly to justify the stand that women have equal rights too. All this has gradually led the society to gradually understand the voice of women thought not fully. This improvement in the mindset of the society gives room for hope, for a brighter future.

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