

**OPPRESSION AND SUPPRESSION OF WOMEN IN
INDIAN CONTEXT: A STUDY OF SELECTED WORKS
OF ANITA DESAI AND SHASHI DESHPANDE**



A

THESIS

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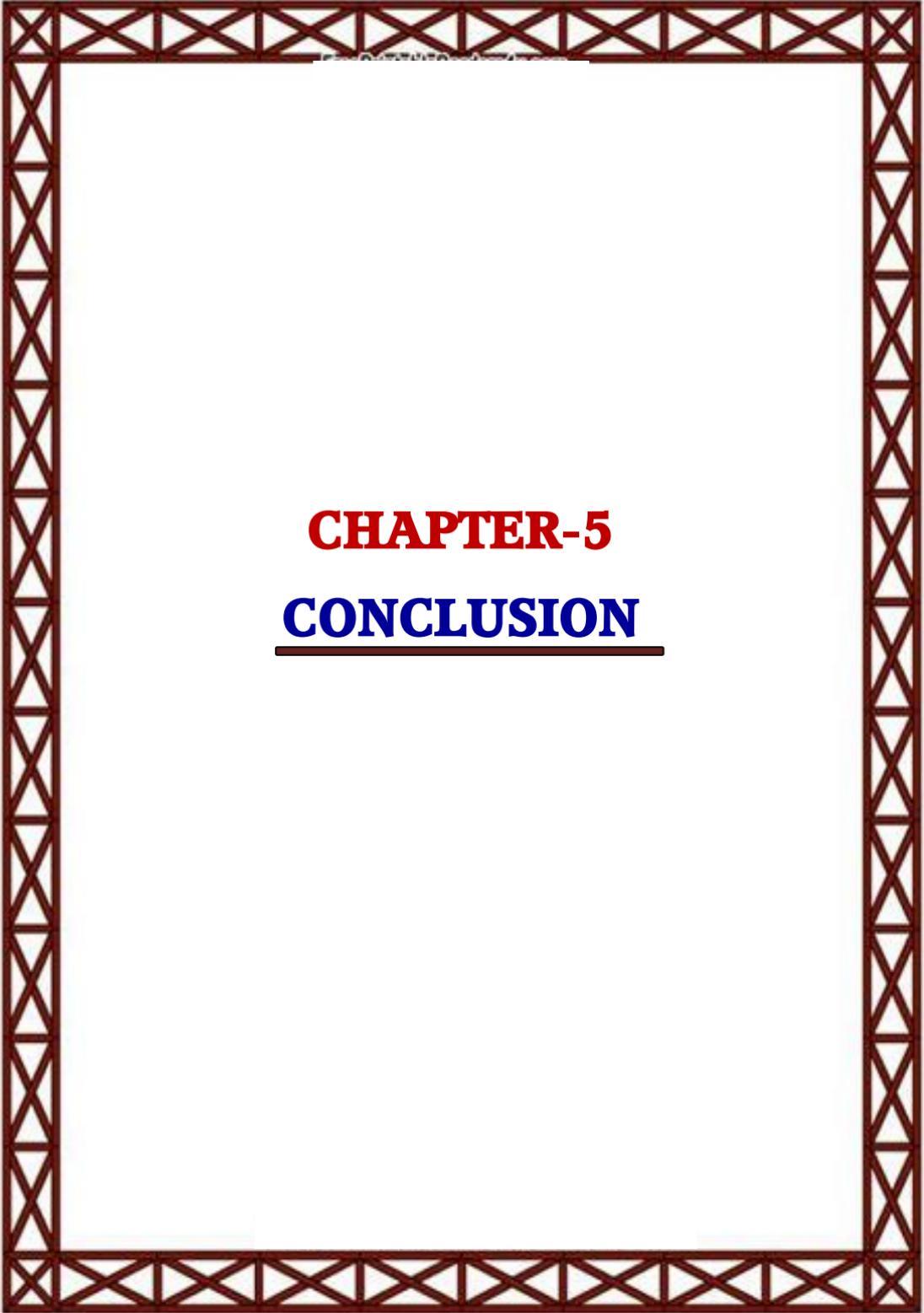
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CHAPTER-5
CONCLUSION

The thesis has attempted as an instance of awakening, empowering, freedom, and protest in the novels have taken for study. Indian women writers in English and in others vernaculars try their best to deal with apart from many other things the pathetic plight of forsaken women who are fated to suffer from birth to death. The women novelists portray mostly the miserable life of an average Indian woman. A woman has to suffer insult and abuse, tyranny and injustice without any reason in this male-dominated society 'why always a woman have to suffer and portrayed in this way' because right from the beginning of the creation there is a disparity between man and woman. Indian women writers provide insight and a distinguishing truth from falsehood and a basis of discussion. Most of the Indian women novelists focus on women's issues as they have a female perspective in the world. Women in India though emancipated in certain areas, they still face oppression in particular cases. Problems like female infanticide, dowry, restrictions and rape are the order of the day. Many activists and writers are protesting against these Shashi Deshpande who creates a realistic depiction of the anguish and conflict of a modern educated middle class woman, Indu in *Roots and Shadows* though she was born in orthodox Brahmin family, she herself becomes free from all traditions and lives independently. Indu endeavours fulfilment in education, career and works as a journalist for a woman's magazine and gives up as she was fed up with women and their problems and works for other magazine. She marries a man of her own choice Jayant. He was a bourgeois person doesn't

accept her quitting of her job as a journalist when she wants to concentrate on her writing and she too doesn't oppose him maintains her resilience and goes back to work silently. Indu wants to achieve complete happiness through her marriage but her marriage with Jayant.

Much to the chagrin of strong will suppresses her femininity and her human demands. She is physically and spiritually discontented with her husband.

Who takes her for granted and expects her to 'submit' in order to maintain domestic harmony and keep their relationship intact she plays a role of 'ideal' Indian wife.

Indu's love marriage deteriorated into a mere psychological affair and feels that she has abused her body's sanctity, denial of full experience satisfaction or happiness. The affair with Naren becomes a metaphor for Indu's rebellion against Jayant's humiliation of her for being the initiator in their sexual relationship. Indu like all Indian women feels that she would not be happy and cannot live without Jayant she also realizes that it is because of him that her life is meaningful in one aspect and also meaningless in another aspect.

Initially Indu was independent from her conventional family but when she married she becomes entrapped in the bonding of the marital relationship, archetype submissive. Marriage takes away the freedom of a woman. Indu who was made as heiress to the Akka's property she discharges all her duties according to her wish.

The author depicted how the child brides undergo trauma, where they can't escape child marriages make the girls and force them out of education, into a life of poor prospects with an increased risk of violence, abuse, ill health and

early death. Early pregnancy is one the most dangerous causes and consequences of the harmful practice. Girls when married early are likely to experience violence and forced Sexual relations. Child marriage also denies girls to make vital decisions about their life, sexual health and well being. Child marriage is a violation of children's human rights and an extreme manifestation of gender inequality. Mini, expresses her view about marriage, she expressed that a girl have to get married and where there is no second thought about it A girl when grew up to certain age, parents make themselves to get rid of those girls through marriage, where the girls have no choice to think about their own selves and girls when get aged, they have to listen many flaws, that they did not married yet expressing sympathy. Mini expressed that she is getting married because there is nothing else she can do. Many of the girls get marry because they can't do anything except accepting the partner whom their parents show them and live with him blindly whether they are pleased with him or have aversion towards him Shashi Deshpande articulated, the Indian way, the husband, A definite article permanent which is destiny. Not only for now, but forever to be accepted 'marriage as a catalyst, eh? (RAS 126,127) The marriage before meetings too make the girls feel embarrassed. Mini signifies when groom and their relatives come, stare asking different kind of questions like her education, whether she can do house hold chores or not or rejecting too height or short too dark if they accept then it may be the matter of dowry. She also expressed that parents of a girl should struggle a lot to get her married. In the lives of girls, in the conventional girls had no

place of decision making. The novel highlights that it is hard to find a suitable groom for middle class people to their daughter.

A woman's role is not only confined to the centripetal needs of the family in which she lives but also to its centrifugal needs. Indu was always against the traditional role of a woman, so, in her quest for individuality and identity becomes independent from the familial relationships, works as journalist, marries Jayant to show her success to her ancestral family. Somewhere in assisting her fulfilment, she loses her selfhood and becomes submissive to her husband. Indu realized that she imposed herself alienation, by granting all her freedom to her husband, and gets oppressed by him. As Deshpande rightly expounded, 'we woman had locked ourselves in a cage and thrown away the keys'. (RAS 78) And searching them in the darkness. Indu ultimately asserts herself, decides with the hope that she would do what she thinks correct and not be dishonest to inner self. And thought that freedom within marriage is possible if one dares to do what one believes is right and uncompromisingly follow it. Deshpande through protagonist Indu explicits the awareness of feminine development breaking through the shackles of traditions and become independent, economically, socially, have an identity, and meaningful, peaceful life with husband.

Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* delineates the oppression of women through the suffering and agony of the protagonist Urmila, the protagonist fights against the oppression caused to other women in the novel. Urmila agonizes at her daughter's death, in some way she gets connected to others anguishes and attempts to bring justice to the victims. Kalpana, and her mother

-in-law Mira. Mira suppressed and suffered in silence. Urmi comes to know about Mira, her mother -in-law through her diary that she wrote. Mira's story is about rape within marriage. Urmila comes to know about Mira from Akka, who is Vanna's mother and Kishore's step mother. Mira was not happy with her husband and marriage, she even hates to have physical relationship with her husband and experiences mental torment in the unwilling relationship.

Mira writes poetry and diary so that she can express her suppressed feelings through her poetry and unsaid words in dairy, which shows a feeling of solitude, pain of an unhappy married life and intense aversion of the sexual act in her diary. Mira's husband tries to possess her against her will, it may be her mother who told her "never to say no" as she writes in diary.

Don't tread paths barred to you
obey never utter a 'no'
submit and your life will be
a paradise. She said and blessed me (TBV.83)

Since ages, it shows that women however they are educated they are taught to submit why should always a women submit and obey the husband's will? Woman do have a desire of her own, she too posses a self-hood. Shashi Deshpande so intricately arises this question.

Even the name changing ceremony after the marriage, brings a kind of distrust in women, when Mira's name changed to Nirmala, where she finds that she lost her identity, but the change in name will not our personality. Urmi, tries to help rape victim Kalpana and her mother Shakutai. where, in the conventional society, it is considered guilty of a girl, who was raped though she is innocent.

The most terrible thing about Kalpana's life is that she was raped by a man of her father's age, her Sulu-mavshi's husband, Prabhakar. He was mad after Kalpana she wants her when she was only fourteen, but he couldn't. Shakutai, couldn't find out that, the man who is a relative to them, faithful could have such a terrific face. Shakutai, a struggling women throughout her life, accept all the challenges of life, but worries about Kalpana and her younger daughter Sandhya. She was deceived by her husband, who doesn't work, lazy and leaves her for other women. Shakutai, struggles a lot to bring up her children. The women portrayed in the novel face different oppression in various situations and suffer who are of various classes.

Urmi's father does not consider Inni to take her decision about their daughter Urmi, when she was a child Inni leaves her daughter unwillingly with her grandparents who doesn't oppose her husband till death.

Sulu, leads a dreadful life for the fear that her husband may desert her, that she can't give birth to a child and act accordingly to him.

The protagonist Urmi is bound by the vine of sympathy with Shakutai, and her unlucky daughter Kalpana and also by the same vine with her mother-in-law Mira, who lived in past. Urmi neither a relative nor a friend of Shakutai, have concern and support to her and Kalpana.

Urmi, though frustrated as, mother she extends her hand to Shakutai, also expose her sympathy to Mira and get her poetry published, the determination and proficiency of a woman to help another less fortunate women is striking and a positive step taken by Urmi in the novel. Urmi is bestowed as a bold lady, considered, by virtue of her social status, very assertive.

The Binding Vine extends various class of women with divergent mentalities of different generations. Mira, a very sensitive woman of first generation, didn't rebel against her husband, get oppressed silently, and departs her life suppressing all her feelings. Shakutai, though as a frustrated mother, exhibited as psychically strong, she faces situations boldly though her husband is a worthless man, she struggles to bring up her children where as Sulu was too timid all her life. Inni and Vanna accept patriarchy, who doesn't oppose their husbands. Vanna though educated and working she is submissive and solicitous woman, and also compromising nature. Kalpana, who belongs to younger generation, does, what she wants to do, she also selects a boy of her wish to marry before her ill-fate.

Urmi an emancipated woman sustained the binding vine of femininity with sympathy and endearment which operates as a strategy of empowerment, and hopes for the "spring of life" despite endless suffering.

Fasting, Feasting by Anita Desai, is a novel, absolutely express the title, fasting vividly represents the oppression of a girl for the sake of boy and feasting represents a boy's evolution.

The novelist depicted two different cultures in the novel. Indian and American, where as it presents Arun, in America was not so happy with momentous and materialistic scenario of west.

With the birth of Arun, Uma gives up her education, despite her interest to be educated, she was repeatedly unsuccessful in her examinations, as it leads her mother to quit her education, who makes to look after her baby brother, added to her failure she was not beautiful, can't do domestic work, and have health

problem who wears thick glasses, while Aruna her sister lives the life as she desires and makes her dreams come true with her determination. By the birth of Arun, Uma was commanded by her mother to nurse his brother. As he was a boy, he couldn't be given to servants to look after. Gender discrimination highlighted in the novel, because of his brother, she has to sacrifice her wishes and is entrapped in the home as a subservient. Uma does not have proper vision of her freedom, who doesn't have any own ideas of her life. Uma either failed in her academics or domestic work her parents make unrestrained efforts to marry off Uma which is the final destination of every Indian girl. She gets a proposal where the boy's parents ask dowry to build a house for Uma and their son. After engagement Uma's parents found that the groom's family have cheated them. However Uma's parents brought another proposal a man who was age of her father who marries only for her dowry for business purpose and already married have four children. Uma comes back to her parent's home as she was deceived again. A girl's life in India is that of oppression, whether it may be in her parent's home or in her in-law's when girls are merely educated, doesn't know household chores they won't get proper place in the marriage market. Uma was overwhelmed by failures in her education and domestic works.

Anita Desai, rightly exhibited that a woman may be good at her education or at household chores or any other handy works, but women like Uma, who could have experienced only failures and doesn't know any other work their lives are crushed and dominated by others. Even, Uma was offered a job by Dr Dutt. in a woman's dormitory, but it was rejected by her parents as it is not good for their status.

Uma was so helpful to others in their work as doctor says “A young woman with no employment who has been running the house for her parents for so long”

Uma was so enthusiastic to work and go for a job but was resisted by her parents, she doesn't have any freedom in her house to use the things as her father shouts for using a telephone, “costs money! costs money! (FF 146) and he also says that he lost money spending on two dowries for her who doesn't bother about her life or future, even when her eyes are paining and hurting he doesn't care. It exhibits that how she was neglected and given more importance than her and also differentiated by a father who cares and plans for a son's future. Gender discrimination was made by her parents which makes her life disaster.

She even thinks of her career when Mrs. Joshi said about her daughter who went to achieve her career in Delhi, but she thinks there is no escape from this life, even escaped she doesn't know where to go and what to do.

Anita Desai delineated the character Uma, who fails in all aspects of life and on contrary, depicted Anamika, who is very beautiful who holds first place in all her academics, and also gets a place in Oxford. But her parents are conventional and possessive that they did not allow her to go Oxford to study rather they used it as a qualification of her to search a bride groom for her, they found a man who has equal qualification to her, and he was also much older than her and was proud of his degrees and medals. Anamika's beauty, education and good behaviour were ineffective when she goes to her in law's she was ill treated and beaten regularly by her mother- in -law and her husband

doesn't speak a word seeing all this and won't object. She spent time in kitchen, cooking, scouring and other work and after the work eats remains in the pots. She had also a miscarriage after beaten by her mother-in-law. Then she was flawed that she could not bear children anymore and later she was burnt and died.

Anamika who was beautiful and educated oppressed a lot in her mother-in-law home and Uma merely educated and not pretty oppressed in parental home. If Anamika was not a girl and a boy she would have sent to Oxford with pride by her parents for further education but as she was a girl they wanted to her get married.

The author explicitly showed that women lead a life of oppression and suppression physically and mentally in a male dominated society. A girl craves for parental affection but gets nothing frustrated. Here parents don't understand the desires of girl nor speak to them openly and affectionately, women are denigrated, isolated and tormented by the patriarchal domination. Gender discrimination is one of the crucial reasons for female oppression. As a woman can be viewed in numerous ways who have various facets, a wife, a beloved mother, daughter without the presence of woman, home is not home but a dreary desert. Desai emphasized that women should be given proper respect and equal treatment along with the boys.

Voices In The City reveals the female struggle played out against the backdrop of the patriarchal cultural pattern.

Monisha, Amla and mother are three different characters of human relationships that have been portrayed from their point of view. Man – woman

relationship have been viewed from different points Monisha married Jiban but finds no happiness and satisfaction through her marriage, she couldn't adjust to the joint family where the women have to spend in the kitchen, cooking and serving the food.

She have little privacy where she likes to read the books Monisha didn't have any privacy to talk with her brother or sister when they visit her in-law's house. She was a hypersensitive woman who compares herself to a "Bleeding Heart Doves" Monisha was blamed as a thief by her husband's mother, added to this she can't bear children as her tubes are blocked. She suffered the slings and arrows of the taunts and tortures the slings of the joint family. Monisha created a barrier around herself and the family which proved too much for her she compares house to that of a prison her utter humiliation and desolation leads her to death, where she sets ablaze herself and commit suicide. Monisha's partner doesn't suit her understand her as per her aspects knowing her daughter Monisha's father wantedly marries her to Jiban She craves for love and affection, privacy and freedom where she doesn't get at all.

Calcutta with goddess Kali as its presiding deity is both a creator and a destroyer of her own creation. Otima, the mother is often compared with goddess .The mother never identified or defined herself with the husband which is the determining force in the lives of all her children the detachment with her children, specially Nirode experience could be directly linked to the incompatible marital relationship of mother and her husband. When we see Otima through the consciousness of Nirode's relationship with his mother has fouled with Oedipus complex, he imagines that his mother's friend Chadha,

whom he considers coming in his way of winning his mother's affection for himself. He hates and blames his mother utterly where he dismisses his mother's affectionate letters and doesn't accept her money.

Amla the youngest daughter of Otima gives an external around of the mother Otima. A woman of refined tastes, adventurous, artistic and well accomplished her attitude towards the children falls somewhere between indulgence and Otima who have inherited property from their parents, married into a ordinary family where her husband uncooperative and quarrelsome is a type of resentment to her. Otima who finds nothing but contempt and resentment for the husband she achieves her personal happiness by her embroidery, gardening, music and so on.

Otima is a loving and understanding mother capable of extending friendly advice to children. Her love for the children brought as much suffering as her marriage did. The tragedy of her daughter made her silent and composed mother free from the bondage of affections.

Amla a woman who have spirit achieved her career and comes to work in Calcutta. Amla when encounters with Dharma repeatedly, she finds herself in the image of love with him when, Dharma says about her daughter who ran with her cousin, she thinks that his cruelty towards his daughter are justifiable, his rejection towards Amla's love, she feels hurt and out of control, leaves him in disgust. Amla accepts that Dharma is committed to his wife and society he is a conformist who would not be able to bless her with love. The future of Amla seemed to be in solace Amla is a modern emancipated woman, who enjoys the city culture goes to party, she was also psychically strong when she was

rejected by Dharma. Various kinds of mental aberrations and psychic disorders in characters, as Nirode wounded self, Monisha's agonized self and Amla's insecure self fail to cope with freedom.

The characters are privileged by having the opportunity to make or to mend their choice and lead a life of commitment and responsibility.

The women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande and Anita Desai aspire for emancipation, identity, individuality. The protagonists delineated by both the authors are no longer passive victims, where they are trapped in conventional society and patriarchal oppressions. The protagonists in the novels survive under different circumstances, against oppression Indu and Urmi, empower themselves, and also try to empower the women in their surroundings, get emancipated from the conventional society, who are also psychically strong. The novels of the authors depicts various types of women with different mindsets the women portrayed in the novels are integral part of the Indian society. The protagonists try to change the stereotyped life of women that men have created

Indu in *Roots and Shadows* breaks the boundaries defined by the conventional society, realizes and empathize herself. The predicament of women in 'The Binding Vine' is another set out, which exhibits the tenacity shrewdness, and triumph in a male dominated society. The novel illustrates the matters of the crime of sex, rape within and out of marriage, physical torture and mental insecurity. Urmi endeavour to resolve the problems of other women.

The protagonists in the novels of Anita Desai presented are unique, the female characters like Uma, Anamika, Monisha struggle, agonize, meek and

submissive and also sensitive strive for the freedom within the institution of the society. The novels perpetuate the theme of unstable marriages with a wider aspect. Not only the husband and wife but their children, relatives and friends come under the influence of existential predicament. They also point out that a marriage of convenience leads to Kaleidoscopic and inconsistent conjugal life. The other side of oppression is empowerment. The empowerment in other words meant economically, politically, sociologically and psychological sensibility of women only possible by self empowerment and the development of a woman is a method that can offer stable and permanent empowerment. 'Empowerment' a term used to indicate many things, including a 'fundamental social transformation'. It also help the women completely to make avail of all the rights.

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