Introduction

Born in 1938 to famous Kannada dramatist Sriranga, Shashi Deshpande was lucky enough to be born in a family with a literary background. Continuing with the family tradition of writing, she opted for writing as a profession and contributed a lot to Indian Writing in English. A very intelligent personality with a sharp mind and keen observation, she not only had produced great texts in writing rather she even had accomplished very good education. She had attained Degrees both in Law and Economics. Being a multi-dimensional personality, she has been the editor of the magazine “Onlooker”.

Deshpande came out with her first publication in 1978 which was a collection of short stories *The Legacy and Other Stories* and with her first novel in 1980 *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Encouraged by the success of her novel she continued writing and even produced books which are of great significance. Till now she had ten novels and four children’s books, collection of short stories and a number of essays to her kitty. Her contribution has been fully acknowledged and she has been conferred with many prestigious awards. Her novel *That Long Silence* (1989), published by Penguin Books, won for her the coveted Sahitya Akademy Award in 1990 and in 2009 she has been awarded with Padma Shri, a very significant award in India for her outstanding contribution to literary world.

Deshpande has been a very prolific and versatile writer. She has not confined herself with one literary genre of fiction only. She has experimented with short stories, essays and books for children. She has been successful in every genre.

Shashi Deshpande’s Oeuvre:

**NOVELS:**

- *The Dark Holds No Terrors*
- *If I Die Today*
- *Roots and Shadows*
- *Come Up and Be Dead*
- *That Long Silence*
- *A Matter of Time*
• Small Remedies
• The Binding Vine
• Moving On
• In the Country of Deceit

SHORT STORIES:

• The Legacy and Other Stories (1978)
• The Intrusion and Other Stories (1993)

ESSAYS:

• Writing from the Margin and Other Essays

CHILDREN’S BOOKS:

• A Summer Adventure
• The Hidden Treasure
• The Only Witness
• Narayanpur Incident {2003}

Deshpande’s novels deal with the problems of women, hence she has been termed as a feminist author who expresses a deep concern for the women. She has observed the Indian society very well as she was born and brought up in India. Being gifted with an acute faculty of perception, she has been successful to precisely pin point where the shoe pinches for the women in the society. She has articulated the long suppressed voice of Indian women in her works. Her main contribution is in the field of feminist ideology despite the fact that she herself has expressed her dislike with the label of being a feminist. The basic theme of her novels is to deal with the Indian sensibility that has been accustomed to treat woman as mere a commodity. Indian society being dominated by male ego has always resulted in negative outlook towards women. They have been treated as a physical body used for carrying on the family lineage. Her very basic aim of life has been thought as to find a husband and settle down.
Shashi Deshpande is the shining star of Indian Literary constellation who has emphatically, beautifully and vividly expressed her deep concern with the problems that the Indian women are passing through. Shashi Deshpande knows what it means to be a woman and hence she brings out before us the ocean of trials that only women have to swim across. Shashi Deshpande has expressed her own notion of how to grapple with these shackles.

Since times immemorial women have been a hapless lot. For the most part of human history, they have not enjoyed autonomy even in the very essential matters of life such as marriage and bearing children not to talk of other walks of life. The role assigned to them by the society has been always inferior to men whether it is politics, family, profession or sports. In no part of their life they were ever considered as a human being with the same needs which men have. Look at the annals of history; history of any country, their condition is worse, worse than men. Although at present the condition of women is better than it used to be in the past. Women now are privileged with equal rights, rights that empower her to be equal to men, rights that consider her finally as a human being with her own needs. Efforts are being made to ameliorate women’s plight; to lift them up; to empower them so that they could shun their traditional roles which have cramped their soul and turned their life into a hell; making them an epitome of suffering and woe.

Women have always been wronged, exploited and harassed physically as well as mentally. Not only India but the world has witnessed many crimes against women from the very beginning if we have a glimpse in the history. Almost all the countries have witnessed crimes against women and they are still on the rise. Heinous crimes which send shudder down the spine. Crimes commence even before the birth of a female child when some male chauvinists donot even let her be born fearing that perhaps she would tarnish the family name and they have to exert much to amass money to give handsome dowry to her in-laws. They even fear that a girl child won’t be able to continue the family lineage so she is put to death even when she is in her mother’s womb. Many times even women are accomplices in the crimes against women.

No doubt, the condition of women had been better in the remote antiquity. In the Hindu religious scriptures there is the mention of the seers Lopamudra, Maitreyi, Gargi and so on. But the situation changed with the Indian invasion of Muslims. In the Muslim rule of Middle Ages, the practices like Sati, ban on widow remarriage and child marriage were well in vogue. Among the
Rajputs a practice called *jauhar* was well ingrained. *Jauhar* meant self-killing by the widows and daughters of the Rajput warriors who were defeated and subsequently killed by the Muslim invaders, in order to protect their honour. In the British rule succeeding the Mughals, however, the condition of women improved as a result, to a large extent, of the efforts made by social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy who made earnest efforts to abolish evils of Sati and child marriage.

In the Nineteenth Century Feminism emerged as a powerful social movement across the Europe as a result mainly of the new awakening which dawned on man with the advancement of science and technology and the spirit of reasoning which questioned the traditional norms, a spirit that was first witnessed in the Renaissance. The reasoning spirit propelled man not to accept whatever he is offered in the society rather he became skeptic to know why a woman can’t be given equal rights and treated on the equal platform. Thus there were the seeds of feminism. Feminism was a movement concerned with the sole aim of uplifting women. Even before the full-fledged advent of feminism, there were signs of it when some intellectuals and philosophers raised questions with regard to women and their role in the society. Feminism emerged in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century with full swing. Feminism can be divided into three waves: First wave Feminism, Second wave feminism and Third wave feminism. First wave feminism spanned from nineteen century to early twentieth century. The predominant aim of this feminism was to provide suffrage to women in the Europe. Thus it was basically a political movement. The Second wave feminism came from 1960-1980’s. The aim of this wave of feminism increased in scope as it was no more a political movement rather it took in its ambit cultural and gender inequality in every sphere of life. The third wave feminism was from 1990 to 2000’s onwards. It was an extension of second wave feminism.

In India feminism came in the mid19\textsuperscript{th} century. Feminism in India can be classified as:

- First phase Feminism- 1850 to 1915
- Second phase feminism- 1915 to 1947
- Third phase feminism- after and independence.

British colonizers were amazed at the atrocities which women had to undergo. They were stunned to witness the horrifying practice of sati where an alive woman was forced to burn on
the pyre of her husband. Their conscience could not tolerate this kind of torture and anguish that a woman had in her destiny. They raised a voice against this and with the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Lord William Bentick, this horrid practice was abolished in 1856. This was the sole achievement of first phase of Indian feminism. The second phase of Indian feminism was Gandhi’s contribution. Gandhi joined women’s movement with Quit India Movement of 1942. Indian women were awakened and many organizations of women were set up. The third phase of Indian feminism is after independence where the aim was to provide equal political rights.

Although much has been done for the betterment of women and their condition is better than it was in the past still women are not equal with men. They lag behind in many spheres. The soul of man is still traditional. There is a multitude of crimes against women. They are on the rising scale. Newspapers are hogged with the news of such crimes: A girl is burnt here because she does not love a boy, a girl was burnt by her in laws because she could not bring hefty dowry to her in laws, a girl killed in her mother’s womb, a girl raped, a girl gang- raped and murdered. So to counter all this and to support women a movement named feminism came to their aid. Feminism is known as women’s movement as it champions their cause and helps them in seeking their rights.

The present study will be focusing on her five major novels which are generally acclaimed as her representative work. These include the following:

1. *The Dark Hold No Terrors*
2. *Roots and Shadows*
3. *That Long Silence*
4. *A Matter of Time*
5. *The Binding Vine*

The topic of my research is “*The Study of Female subjugation and liberation in the selected novels of Shashi Deshpande*”. Thus my aim would be to point out why and how females have been, and are being, subjugated and silenced in a variety of ways. It will also study how women in Deshpande strive hard to get rid of their stifling environment.