CHAPTER VI

Female Marginalization in Shashi Deshpande’s THE BINDING VINE

1 Introduction:

Shashi Deshpande’s contribution to Indian English literature is praiseworthy. She has given new dimension to literature. She has written long buried issues related to women and some burning issues of society in their work.

1.1 Biography of Shashi Deshpande:

Shashi Deshpande was born in Dharwad in the year 1938, a small town in Karnataka, India. She is the daughter of a well known Kannada writer and Sanskrit scholar, the late Adya Rangacharya, an intellectual man who dedicated his whole life to writing plays. He was regarded as George Bernard Shaw of cotemporary Kannada theatre. The literary creed and amazing intellectually of the father had a great impact on the mosaic world of Shashi Deshpande’s literary works. Even though, being born in a traditional Brahmin family, she emerged with a global view despite piousness of family. She neither becomes traditionalist nor conservative in her attitudes and lifestyle.

Shashi Deshpande admits that her father’s literal and extreme ideology played a crucial role in shaping her sensibility. She was away from gender-biased attitude in her house. She received her education in Bombay and Bangalore. She graduated in Economics from Elphinstone College, Bombay and received knowledge of law in Government Law College, in Bangalore. After completing a short course in journalism, Shashi Deshpande got associated with magazine at the beginning of her career. She married a neuro- pathologist, Dr. D.H. Deshpande in 1962. This diversity in atmosphere led her to emerge with a creative sensibility.

She did not follow anyone in her literary career. In fact, she has cultivated her own tradition. She has tried to probe deep into the invisible inner world of female consciousness. Initially, she was
not very serious about her writing venture and did it casually and for the sake of emancipation. Later, the visit to England in 1969 compelled her to express her experiences. The visit to England became a milestone in her writing career as if reintroduced writing skills in her personality. She afterwards selected the path of writing.


Meantime, she tried to deal with detective writing by proving successful in producing three detective serials. Later, she developed novels that were from detective psyche. They are; *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *If I Die Today* (1982). Later, she tried to develop ideas that were already presented in the short stories with the spark of sparks integrity and clarity of her as a creative artist. Prof. G.S. Amur. (1978: Preface: 10) has valued the thought expressed by Shashi Deshpande in her novels and remarks:


**1.2 Brief Summary of *The Binding Vine*:**

*The Binding Vine* (1992) is a lively novel by Shashi Deshpande that talks about the women who get trapped in patriarchy and meet their catastrophes even for not having their own faults. The novel is symbiosis of women in the society. They all are the victims of society, circumstances and their own flaws also. Many female characters are silent in their own situation but they internally crave for their own identity. The method of protest is different with different women. Meera protests her agony through her poems whereas Kalpana protests through anger and her
candid behaviour. Akka remains silent throughout her life but her mental trauma is beyond imagination. She mutually admits to the situation that occurs to her. The Binding Vine is Shashi Deshpande’s attempt to present a symbiosis of all kinds of women on the ground of womanism. Basically, it is the story of Urmila, a lecturer who gets trapped in the misery of the untimely death of her daughter, Anu. Urmila is the narrator of the novel who brings all women from the past to the present in the canvas of her life. The stories of women are full of excitement, heart-rending truths, shocking incidents, relations and gossiping and anguishes. Thus, Urmı’s narration of her own story is interwoven with other women and their stories expressing their own plight. Among them, some maintains familial relation and others are indirectly connected to her. But she brings them on the universal canvas of “being woman.”

The story begins with Urmila who loses her beloved daughter, Anu lives in the world of grief. She engrosses in grief to revive the life of Anu. For Urmila, to forget Anu means to discard her from her life. So, she clings to the grief of loss of Anu. Everyone in her family tries to bring her back but their attempts go in vain. Urmı alienates herself from the daily routine of the world. Her mother, Inni, her son, Kishore also gets afraid of her desperate attitude. Inni asks Vanna, the friend-cum sister-in-law of Urmila to soothe her. But Urmila feels her mishap larger than any other grief. She requests everyone not to disturb her world and leave her on her own condition.

Once Urmila, Akka; her step-mother-in-law, Vanna and Inni sit in room discussing various family issues. In the course of time, the discussion moves to the topic of Meera, Kishore’s mother who appears blessed with gift of writing. Meera’s story is retold in the flash back manner that discloses through her compositions. Her compositions reveal the predicament of women trapped in patriarchy. She undergoes an unhappy marriage life that reflects in her poems. Her poems unfold her story of marriage which appears nothing but the obsession and monopoly of one man. In the whole marriage process, nobody considers her view or even opinion. Meera does not like sexual relationship with her husband, so she dares to call this life as loveless marriage. Her fear of night with her husband appears in her poems. Shashi Deshpande dares to use the word “rape inside marriage” in her novel regarding Meera’s reluctance towards sex. The plights of majority of Indian women who always nurture under the shadow of patriarchal norms are explicitly run in the novel. Meera becomes the victim of gender –biased society where her writing quality gets ignored on the ground of being a woman. Meera is aware of the marginalized
status of women and believes and simultaneously hope for equality between man and woman relationship in future. She highlights the same thought in her poems. She dies at the time of birth of Kishore. While delivering the story of Meera, Akka too unfolds her own story which contains untold tremors of her life. Akka pines for the love of her husband throughout her life who never notices her existence of being a wife in the house. She is aware of this fact but remains silent throughout her life. So, both these women may resemble on the ground of ‘marital rape’. After the sad demise of Meera, Akka marries a person who was in search of mother to Kishore than wife. Akka marries to him knowing this certain fact. The predicament of Akka commences from this incident that brings her on the verge of some unanswerable questions. Akka’s invisible grief is ignored by everyone in the family. She lives for the sake of such person who never loves her. Thus, misery of Akka appears beyond certain words.

Once, Urmila visits the hospital where Vanna serves as a nurse. She coincidently meets a woman namely, Shakuntala alias Shakutai whose daughter is being admitted to the hospital as she has been knocked by a car. But then Dr. Bhasker, one of the colleagues of Vanna unfolds the truth of the occurrences of rape with that young girl namely Kalpana. Both these women belong to the lower class community where the chastity of women relies on their behaviour which is judged by others. Urmila involves with Shakutai’s panic story that again display the battement of women on various ground carved by traditional-stricken society. Urmila tries to help Shakutai and her unconscious daughter who lies on bed victimized because of somebody’s sexual lust. From the conversation with Shakutai, Urmila notices some certain things about her and her family. Shakutai marries a person who discards her by imposing responsibility of three children on her shoulder. Kalpana is one of them who usually behave innocently and candidly as she appears full of excitement of life. Shsakutai does not have the support of any male in her house so she depends on her sister Sulu’s husband Prabhakar. But Prabhakar appears in the novel with some grey shades who often flirts to Kalpana even in front of his wife Sulu. Kalpana dislikes him but Sulu compels her not to tell anything to Shakutai. Here again, the heroine of the novel remains silent on the ground of maintaining the relations. Kalpana tries to show her anger against Prabhakar in different ways to Shakutai but she never notices it. Once Sulu presents marriage proposal to Kalpana on behalf of Prabhakar and Kalpana rejects the marriage proposal by adhering the cause of her love-affair with one person. When Sulu conveys this to Prabhakar, he becomes angry and feels it below dignity. Later, he rapes Kalpana in such a brutal manner that
she becomes unconscious and lies on the bed between life and death. Later, Shakutai realizes the truth of rapist after some dramatic affairs regarding the shifting of Kalpana in other hospital.

Once, the hospital administration tells Shakutai to shift Kalpana to the other private hospital as nothing remains in their hands to do with Kalpana except nursing. Shakutai tells this to Urmila who decides to help her. Urmila intends to disclose the story of Kalpana’s rape to a reporter to publish in the leading newspaper. Thus, the shifting of Kalpana is stopped but the rape story becomes the topic of discussion. The government orders reinvestigation in the case which obliges Prabhakar to unfold the dirty truth to his wife Sulu. By realizing the fact, Shakutai also gets shocked and immediately follows the news of suicide of Sulu who sets herself on fire.

Urmila looks at every woman around her who more or less is concerned with miseries of life. Unfortunately, many of them do not receive another chance in their lives. Urmila realizes the truth of life and comes out of the grief of Anu’s death in her life and lives the life with planting new hope in her mind.

2 Female Marginalization in *The Binding Vine*:

There are various aspects that underline the marginalization of women in every walk of life. *The Binding Vine* is an expressive novel that carries out the bunch of women to talk of their marginalization, which appear inter-related with each other. Shashi Deshpande unfolds here an unquestionable superiority of men to women by focusing on the world of women in the light of modern Indian society. *The Binding Vine* unfolds the stories of such women who survive through their lives carrying the feelings of pains, pangs and agonies and unending sufferings. Meera is the representative of those women who mutually bear every injustice in their lives. The same is the case with Kalpana who resembles Meera regarding her marginalization in such forced sexual relationship. Meera becomes the victim of ‘rape’ in the institution of marriage and Kalpana becomes the prey of ‘rape’ outside the marriage. In spite of the differences between both these characters, the novelist shows that both of them share the common ground of female marginalization. Meera, Shakutai, Sushi (Sulu) Shakutai’s sister and Akka represent the old generation whereas Vandana, Urmila appear to be symbolic of modern women. Despite diversity among each of these women, almost all of them are sailing in the same boat namely
marginalization. Shashi Deshpande attempts to bring them all together under the umbrella of marginalization, who more or less occupies the same sense of marginalization in their lives.

The present study illustrates the marginalization of every woman character by following the procedure of ascending to descending order. The illustrations of women characters begin chronologically according to the intensity of their marginalization. The novel begins with Emily Bronte’s statement. She says “What were the use of my creation, if I were entirely contained here (6)

This statement appears apt to every female who are always postulated by males as well as the whole society. They do not bestow any alternatives to express their creativity; instead they imitate the patriarchy, in the society and in the in-law’s house. The statement resembles with many characters in the society where majority of women are forced to bind with themselves in certain images like Seeta, Savitri. They live their whole lives full of efforts to justify the images depicted in the myths enduring anguishes and humiliations.

2.1 Meera:

Meera is the central character who represents those women who throughout in every circumstance of their lives get marginalized by every one. The conversation of both friends Urmia and Priti centers on the ghost of Meera who is the mother-in-law of Urmia, the protagonist of the novel The Binding Vine. Meera dies at the time of her child birth. Urmia has a great understanding of Meera’s character and for her; she is only a victimized woman rather than her mother-in-law. The male-dominant society never allows women to build their own vision, their own views and opinions. In case of any injustice to women, Indian legal services always retain all kinds of assistance to the victimized women; on the contrary the social structure obliges them to be silent or mute. There are and will be so many Meeras in the Indian society who directly or indirectly suffer from various kinds of victimization.

The story of Meera is the story of the marginalization of women by the society. Meera dies at the time of birth of her child, Kishore, who is now Urmila’s husband. All the women characters in this novel are inter-connected with each-other on the common ground of womanism, which proves the central power force of this novel. Akka, Kishore’s step-mother and Vandana’s mother
appears to be a prime nexus between Meera and new generation. She unfolds the mile-stones of Meera’s life which are never spoken or expressed by anyone in the family. Meera stays blessed with the boon of creativity. She usually composes the poems; an unexpected quality among women in that times. She keeps her creativity much confidential. Akka starts to recite the poems of Meera and suddenly bursts into tears. It might be the catharsis that she would have experienced the same thing ‘being a woman’ in her own conjugal life. The lives of all women share a common ground of womanism.

2.1.1 Patriarchy:

Women never possess the authority to express their likes or dislikes about anything in their lives. The patriarchy imposes various issues on women. They are supposed to emulate such unwritten code of conduct. For years after years, males have the resources. So, naturally they remain at the central place organizing and implementing the things as they feel the convenient. The sociologist, Guerin and Labor (1999:196) elucidates “Many feminists believe that our culture is a patriarchal culture: that is, one organized in favour of interests of men.”

The history of plight of women shows how women’s wish is always sidelined in patriarchy. The same has happened in Meera’s case. She is not exception to this kind of behavior. The whole story of Meera’s marriage arrangement attracts the impression of the patriarchal mindset. Her husband sees her in one of the marriages and falls in one sided love with her. After which, he pursues single- mindedly the objective of marrying Meera. In those days, he could not propose her directly due to the demarcations of various social norms. On account of rigorous social norms, he knows very well that Meera’s mother would never agree with such a marriage. Simultaneously, he even could not ask his parents to propose (on behalf of him) to her parents. Naturally, he induces his one common friend to suggest his name to Meera’s parents as a possible bride-groom for their daughter. And after a long intricate procedure, they get married. Obviously, in this whole process nobody asks Meera about her opinion, her aspiration and her approval too. Nobody even thinks whether she is ready to accept marriageable responsibilities or not. Her future goes from the hands of one male to the other male by sidelined her perceptions, her aspirations, and her views. Thus, she appears as an example of the victim of patriarchy. She becomes the puppet in the hands of her husband. He manipulates her by all means. Meera appears gifted with poetry. She composes poems but hides those from everyone. Patriarchal
mind-set never allows women to express their mind. According to it, women cannot be bestowed with such things. They must concentrate on child-rearing duties. So, Meera composes poems hiding from everyone in the family. The imposition of patriarchy does not permit her to express herself even in words.

2.1.2 Gender-biased Perception:

The male-dominant society never gives importance to any performances and constructive abilities of women regarding any field. The prejudices are based on the false belief of gender stratification in the social scenario. The women always become the victims of gender-biased perception of society. Gender-biased attitude strongly shuffles in the mind of society regarding every major and minor deed of women. Being mere male, the society gives them supremacy and sidelines even mosaic qualities of women. Meera’s life has to run the marathon race of her ‘self’ and ‘imposed responsibilities’ by the social structure. The novelist illustrates gender belief with the example of Urmila’s Aju, a self-declared writer with reference to Meera’s creative capacity. Urmila becomes nostalgic while glancing at the writings of Meera. She thinks how it might have been tough time for women to compose poems in contemporary? It is still a question in her mind which makes her aware of the mal-treatment and under-estimated perception of the society towards women’s creativity. It points out the perplexed situation and ignorance of society towards writing of women. It is highlighted by Chanda Mohanty’s (2008:199) statement regarding Meera’s ability. She says “As a writer she is afraid of being mocked and as a woman she is fearful that an assertion of self will bring dishonor to her natal family and expel her from her marital home.”

So, perhaps Meera keeps her creativity as a secret. Realizing the maturity of writing of Meera, Urmila recalls the incident of how Aju, her grandfather who declares his proposed writing of a book on Raja’s family. Everyone in the family warns each other not to disturb him as he needs concentration on writing an important book. Consequently, easy approach becomes strictly prohibited towards him for maintaining his concentration and constructive mind. But now after realizing the wonderful creativity of Meera and the way of her secrecy in writing poems, Urmila thinks over the ordeals that Meera might have undergone. She imagines of many disturbances and interruptions that Meera might have faced while writing poems. Urmila compares the writing of Meera with an attempt of her Aju’s writing; where being a man he receives the special
atmosphere for writing but even such an arrangement could never make him a writer. On the contrary, Meera who composes poems by fulfilling womanly duties possesses a very high creative quality which gets neglected by the society only on the ground of gender. It is proved that efficiencies have no connection with gender. Despite this, male dominant society always confers special favors to men than to women that obviously appear in the incidents of Aju and Meera. She suppresses her abilities of being woman and this gender-biased perception ignores her capacity. According to the societal view, to be simply born as a ‘men’ (devoid of any remarkable quality) is a mark of superiority and women even with many qualities retain inferior status. In this regard, Chanda Mohanty (2008:198) says “as a writer, she (Meera) owes her craft in secret, afraid of being mocked for her effrontery, and full of self-doubt about her worth:

Huddled in my cocoon, a somnolent silkwormwill I emerged a beauteous being? Or will I, suffocating, cease to exist?’ Meera’s suffocation and diffidence stem from her choice of a male normative model.”

After the sad demise of Aju, every one becomes curious to search for his write up (as he has made its propaganda splendidly) but unfortunately nothing not even a scribbled paper is found. In spite of this, nobody admits inability of Aju’s writing but offers various excuses supporting his behavior regarding writing and fostering male-ego. Thus nobody accepts the fact that creativity has nothing to do with gender. The gender becomes a pivotal part while considering Meera’s writing. Basically, the creativity is the gift of nature which is not bestowed on the basis of gender. But men do not realize it or purposely ignore the reality. Societal view never believes in the virtuous qualities of women as human beings. Nature does not offer anything by classifying men or women. The gender stratification is a man-made feature. It is not biological because nature treats every human being equally. The same rule of nature applies to the writing of Aju who is actually devoid of gift of creativity; on the contrary, Meera is bestowed with it immensely. But unfortunately Meera gets sidelined on the basis of mere gender. Naturally, though a woman, nothing can obstacle Meera from composing poems whereas Aju; being man cannot write a single line even after being provided various facilities. Unfortunately, Meera never receives such ‘special treatment’ while writing; instead she chooses to write late at night so as to avoid being interrupted. Thus, through many hurdles, Meera composes various poems which are worth-publishing, but even her writing quality gets marginalized on the ground of being a ‘woman’. Her husband never values the quality of her writing. After her death, he
collects all her scribbled papers as they merely appear just papers to him and keeps them in a trunk as a disposable thing. Nobody feels that her work is worth appreciating.

In fact, these writings become the oxygen of her undesired life circle. It seems a tough task for her to compose poems as she has to overcome so many external and internal obstacles in writing poems. She is fond of a great poet, Venu whose poems always enchant her. She usually gets fascinated when he says ‘I am only an instrument’ (127). She desires to be like him and so starts to imagine the girls and boys around her, appreciating like the poet Venu. She adores Venu for his bestowed poetic mind. But unfortunately he also appears the male-child of conventional social structure that represents the same attitude where women are ignored for their quality deeds on the basis of mere gender. Venu too expects the conventional image of women merely bound to the child-rearing and household duties. Thus, the whole mind-set of society runs on the constructive gender biased perceptions. Meera’s diary illustrates the above incident which was the great shock for Urmi. The psyche of males appears the same all over which is pointed out by Meera in her diary. Shashi Deshpande says:

She met him once. She does not say where or when, but she writes in her diary of the meeting. Perhaps she spoke to him of her poetry. She has quoted his actual words: ‘Why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men.’ (127)

The paradigm of women’s intellectuality is restricted within the four walls of the house only. It is postulated that the working sphere is the monopoly of men. Venu is the symbol of male-dominated voice who desires to restrict the ability of women to household duties in the name of gender role. The women are not expected to be ambitious because their spaces are drawn to the work of husbands and children. Their efficiencies get ignored deliberately by the social mind. Here, Meera bestows the same efficiencies as that of Venu. But the trauma of gender biased outlook runs very significantly. Urmi says:

And Meera…? The tapping on the wall is finally beginning to make sense. Something comes through when I think of Venu’s poems everywhere and Meera’s voice silenced. (128)
Regarding efficiencies of women in gender-biased and patriarchal society, Sarah Grimake registers some observations in her book, “Letters On the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman” saying inadequacies of patriarchal ideologies where woman is sidelined in the case of spiritual, economic, social equality and moreover in sexual relationship also. She gets colonized and biologically subjugated. Males have done everything that could enslave their mind. It points out the marginalization of women at every stage of life. Thus, Meera too becomes a victim of such an attitude. She lives the life of a common woman even having uncommon qualities in her. She lives the whole life wearing the mask on her face, burying creativity only because of the gender-stratification.

2.1.3 Sexual Harassment:

Meera becomes a victim of sexual harassment. Marriage becomes a license to enjoy the sex but sometimes it goes against the will of any partner. Such unwillingness in sex becomes rape inside the marriage. The Indian social structure does not dare to use such a word in conjugal life. But such unwillingness regarding sexual relation is labeled as rape. Many women in Indian culture keep mum and bear undesired sex with their partners.

The same goes with Meera, who too becomes a victim of sexual marginalization. Akka, Urmi’s step-mother-in-law carries out the poems of Meera, and tears roll down from her eyes after its recitation. Meera’s poems reveal trauma of the sexual relationship which she has undergone with her husband. Meera usually gets afraid of the coming of night because of the fear of undesired sexual relationship with her husband. The night persecutes her which is reflected in the following verse:

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)

The night appears engulfing because of the presence of her husband. He obsesses her, makes her involve in unwilling sexual act, so all appear fearful and a kind of harrassesment to her. His sexual lust is imposed on her to do what she dislikes. Meera depicts here her unwilling emotions of sex in her diary:
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 has done,’ I love you’. Love! How I hate the word. If this is love it is a terrible thing. I have learnt to say ‘no’ at last, but it makes no difference, no difference at all. What is it wants from me? I look at myself in the mirror and wonder, what is there in me? Why does it have to be me? Why can’t he leave me alone? (66,67)

The sexual act against the wish of anyone gets defined as rape. In the shelter of marital status, this sexual marginalization frequently appears to the majority of women, Meera represents symbolically the effects of this imposed act. She suffers from imposed sexual harassment which seems tough to express in words. The social structure always gives secondary importance to women. So, the cases like rape within marriage (like Meera’s) and rape outside marriage usually occur in the life. Regarding this, Brown Miller (1975:391) says “Rape is the physical and symbolic assertion of man’s violent authority over woman, passion, and sexuality as such have little to do with rape.”

She concludes that rape is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear. Perhaps, the same fear might have obliged Meera to be a prey of sexual harassment. Regarding marital status, the novelist dares to depict rape within marriage which appears very common with many women but remains a suppressed sob under the roof of culture. In most cases, women suffer from sexual harassment from their own husbands but they bear it keeping mum strangling their emotions. The husbands consume the physic of their wives, their mentality. They simply scratch their bodies for their fulfillment of lust. In such a sexual harassment, there is lack of sensitiveness, tenderness and emotions which always become the priority of even women. Meera represents those Indian women who dislike their husbands but still continue to bear sexual harassment at both levels: physical and mental.

The male-dominant society always conveniently ignores the aspirations of women. The patriarchal mind-set always recommends women to be ‘submissive’and ‘meek’ by devaluing
their image. They glorify the submissiveness of women by offering an example of mythic images of goddess. It appears in the following lines:

Fixed forever in our places, Face to face the two of us, Like Siva and his nodding Bull. (82)

Here, women symbolize as “nodding bull” that are supposed to be inferior to males and are compelled to agree with everything that is carried out by males. So, major women in society surrender to their husbands. In this novel, Inni, Vanna, Meera are the examples of this kind of submissive women who get subdued to their husbands. Meera’s will and emotions are never considered in sexual relationship by her husband. Meera conveys it:

“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” (83)

Right from their birth, women are taught to be obedient and subdued to their husbands. It is imbibed on them that they should be submissive to their husbands in every critical situations. Meera grows up under such impressions taught by her mother. Meera expresses these emotions in her poem. She dislikes her husband, his sensual act but due to the stereo –typed image of an Indian woman, she follows the same path of surrender like other women. But she continues her protests through poems. She looks at marriage as loveless marriage where physical act becomes a routine discourse. Shashi Deshpande dares to call it a sexual assault on the self of women under the shelter of marriage. As per the legal verdict, any sexual act against the will of women is called rape. The same goes with Meera whose reluctance towards sex forges her to call the sexual activity as rape inside the marriage which always seems to be suppressed by male-chauvinistic society in the name of religion and culture. Regarding this, Chanda Mohanty (2008:207) says“---an overt indictment of male sexual violence within marriage would be unacceptable because it queries the presupposition of a husband’s right to his wife, which is the corner stone of the institution of marriage.”

Meera does not wish to beget the child as it is the effect of her disliking emotion with loveless marital status. The poem expresses her inert hatred for sex and husband that compels her to call the fetus as “monster” child. This word illustrates her immense disgust for sexual act with her husband. Urmi realizes resemblance between Meera and Kalpana, a daughter of a servant namely
Shakuntala on the ground of the sexually marginalized level. Meera faces rape in marital status where as Kalpana becomes the prey of the rape outside the marriage. Thus, Meera has become the symbol of sexual harassment.

2.1.4 Subordination:

Indian social structure subordinates women at every level. The supreme resources are used by males. Naturally, they become the prime factor in the structure of society as well as house hold things. They use women by their authority and compel them to get restricted to child rearing duties. The existence of women becomes puppet in the hands of men. The male-dominant society drags women conveniently in every direction. Thus, women become subordinate at every stage of lives.

The journey of Meera, the poet and her poems present the plight of women that focus the universal marginalization of women being woman; as subordinate class. Meera appears silent on the canvas of life but her poems protest against the marginalization that women face in their lives. To be blessed with motherhood, is supposed to be the glorification of women’s lives, but in the case of Meera it appears different. She does not love her husband, and so naturally she does not expect the child of loveless marriage. The novelist Shashi Deshpande also musters courage to illustrate the plea of many such suppressed women in Indian society. Kamala Das, a famous confessional poet in Indian English Literature shares here the same kind of dislike towards her husband directly in her autobiography “My Story.” Shashi Deshpande words the concerned plea indirectly through the depiction of her characters. Every mother dreams many things for their daughters than for their sons. Mothers start to see their own world in the image of their daughters. Majority of mothers aspire that their daughters should get marry at marriageable age, beget child and should become submissive in the in-laws house and get settled in marital life. In this novel, the mothers like Shakutai, Akka and Meera’s mother are not exception to this kind of perception. But the girls too have their own vision seem to be the hidden secret for mothers also. They always do not want to share the hopes of their mothers. In fact, the girls also nurture their own space and live with full of excitement. The poems of Meera disseminate such thoughts in the following lines:

To make myself in your image was never the goal I sought (124)
Meera appears unhappy on her journey of motherhood; on the contrary, her mother becomes much elated. Meera does not wish to beget a child of loveless marriage but her mother becomes joyful as the life of Meera proves fruitful as per the tradition of society. She even cannot think whether Meera is ready to shoulder the responsibility of a toddler or not. Regarding rigid convention of motherhood, Shashi Deshpande points out the otherside of that in despite their feminity. It seems to be the humiliation of individuality and self-respect of woman also if it goes against their will. The same goes with Meera who too being intelligent keeps on asking questions to herself through her compositions. But later Meera loses that child and when she finds herself with the child again, her mother was dead. Meera says:

My mother is dead. She died happy, they tell me. She saw me married, she sawme pregnant and she was happy. I am supposed to comfort myself with this thought. But I can find no comfort in it, for myself, anyway. She is dead, that is the truth. What does it matter whether she died happy or unhappy? Yet I am glad I told her nothing what if I had? What could she have done? Nothing. That was all she could do in her entire life- nothing. 'Don’t ask me’, she used to say to us. ‘Nothing is in my hands.’ She Knew I was not happy, I know she knew it; butshe was afraid to ask me, afraid I would admit it. No, I am glad and never told her anything. They all think I am grieving because I could not meet her before she died. Am I? Yes, I am. But there is more. I wish I could have asked her a question. ‘Mother’, I always wanted to ask,’ Why do you want me to repeat your history when you so despair of your own?’… (126)

This whole monologue illustrates the universal marginalization of women being women. The conventional mothers always feed their daughters to be submissive. They oblige girls to be ready to do unwilling compromises for the sake of the welfare of family. Regarding this Beavour (1997:358) says “---the boy’s effort to become a man is respected, and he is granted much liberty. The girl is required to stay at home; her comings and goings are watched---.”

In the case of Meera also, the same thing happens where she always endeavors to remain silent and stable as per the demand of the situation. Majority of Indian women undergo the same circumstances in adverse situations. They usually accept the subaltern status like Meera’s mother without any complaint. Meera’s mother never feels humiliating or below dignity restricting her aspirations to the mere child-rearing duties. However, she feels proud to be submissive to male and expects the same kind of attitude from her daughter, Meera also. While discovering various
things regarding Meera, Urmli obtains one family photograph where all family members are assembled. Meera’s mother appears different, who might have occasionally dressed up, looked uneasy, and sitting slumped awkwardly in her chair, as if she was unused of being centre-staged. Her position shows that she must be happy in getting to the back-ground. This depiction points out the mindset of typecast Indian women who always like to remain in subaltern status. The internal impulses of women marginalize themselves at the societal level. In fact it becomes their psyche also. Meera composes:

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. (101)

Thus, women like Meera’s mother forget their own views, own opinions and mingle with their husbands forgetting individuality. They bundle themselves in such a way that there cannot be any special thing in their lives other than their husbands and children. But Meera does not appear like every common woman because she is aware of the feeling of being marginalized; being subordinated. The following poetic composition by Meera brings out the thought of marginalization that every woman gets affected by. She says:

Whose face is this I see in the mirror, unsmiling, grave, bedewed with fear? The daughter? No, Mother, I am now your shadow. (126)

Getting awareness of being marginalized in Indian social starta, Meera conveys the thought of equality in the following lines. She says:

Come, my brother’s, come, my sister’s, let us join our hands;a new road, a new way a new age begins. (44)

Thus, she nurtures hope of equality through her poems which displays her positive attitude and optimism towards the future regarding socio-cultural equality among every human being.

2.1.5 Quest for Identity:
Quest for identity is a process and not an object to be found. The quest for identity begins by
talking what human beings perceive in their lives. Identity emerges from the self-consciousness
and environment. The environment shapes the person to look at real problems. The
circumstances and real facing problems pave the path of identity. Generally, in Indian social
structure the identity of women goes with the identity of their husbands. They cannot maintain
their own individuality or identity separately. They are always expected to succumb to male-
dominated society by their devotion to themselves. If any woman is engulfed with such thought
then they become the stigma on the Indian society. The Indian society postulates that the identity
of women should not differ from the identity of their husbands. The Indian society does not wish
to confer on them any space or identity as it is defined that women’s world begins with husbands
and ends with their names.

The journeys of women’s identity crisis appear to be the result of the awareness of marginalization related to every situation. Meera desires to form her own identity, her individuality even though she is experiencing the subjugation in the patriarchy. She explains this identity-crisis with the marriage ceremony where women get marginalized by changing their names given to them from their birth. The crisis of their quest for identity commences exactly from such events where they keep mum but twist inwardly after marriage. The identity crisis of women begins from the change in the name at the time of marriage ceremony. Everyone changes Meera’s name as ‘Nirmala’ in the marriage ceremony without her consent. She is compelled to accept it as per her husband’s anticipation. Meera does not aspire to lose her identity which has stuck to her right from her birth. She does not get habituated to her new identity. So, she protests this tradition in marriages that appears to crack on the identity of women. Regarding this tremor, agony, subjugation flows in one of her compositions. She says:

A glittering ring gliding on the rice carefully traced a name ‘Nirmala’. Who is this? None but I, my name hence, bestowed upon me. Nirmala, they call, I standstatue-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 Meera. (101)

The above poem highlights an anguish of Meera’s pining for her own “self.” Meera talks not only of herself but of other women who are also subjugated and tortured on the basis of gender, patriarchy, sexual harassment and the suppression of ‘self’. The awareness of marginalization

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gives her outlook towards her ‘self’ which displays in her above poems. Thus, Meera too becomes the victim of marginalization of identity-crisis.

She composes poem focusing the turmoil of women. She does not want to be at the back-foot in her life. But still, she composes the poems keeping them as secret material. These poems become the journey of her identity and the medium to express her anguish, tremor and tantrums. She secretly composes poem to keep it away from everybody. Thus, she endeavors to establish her own identity through poems. After Meera’s death, her husband finds some scribbled papers and he keeps it in the box as disposable things. Thus, till the end of her life Meera becomes the victim of an identity-crisis.

2.2 Kalpana:

Kalpana is a leading character that has become a victim of marginalization. Kalpana is Shakuntala’s daughter and a girl striving to make her own identity in this male-dominant society. She is enthusiastic and a lover of life. She does not like her mother’s attitude. Though, she belongs to the lower-class community, her zest for life appears very energetic. She likes to wear dresses, apply make-up which her mother does not like. Later, she becomes the victim of rape and gets admitted to the hospital where Urmi meets her and her mother.

2.2.1 Gender-biased Society:

The Indian social structure is filled in with gender-stratification. The birth of a boy gets celebrated with rejoice whereas the girl-child receives frowning faces. Right from their childhood, both genders are treated differently. Girls are forced to imitate feminine traits in their personalities whereas boys grow by imbibing masculine traits. The whole society draws the image of boys as ‘supporter, protector’ to everyone. On the contrary, these masculine traits in girls become the arrogance. The outlook of Indian society towards gender is completely one-sided and prejudiced.

Kalpana is the victim of gender- biased perception of society. The questions raised and statements made by Shakutai, her mother deserve thought- provoking attention. Kalpana becomes the victim of rape and Kalpana’s rapist has absconded almost safely whereas she lies on the verge of life and death. Thus, Kalpana becomes the object of fulfilling lust. Here, Meera...
and Kalpana share equal ground of the imposition of sexual harassment. The society always gives secondary importance to women. Consequently, the cases like Kalpana and Meera usually occur in lives every now and then. As Dr. Bhaskar Jain and Urmil talk about the security of women; suddenly the topic drags towards Kalpana who clings to her bed of death for being allegedly humiliated by the rapist. In this terrifying physical and mental trauma, the entire society holds Kalpana responsible for the rape as if it is her own fault in being raped. The rapist brutally humiliates her that is why only Kalpana suffers from unending agonies of her life after rape. It is a women’s catastrophe, who are always compelled to keep mum in spite of their every kind of loss. There is a close similarity between of rape within marriage and rape outside marriage. Basically, here the victims are both women who suffer because of the prejudices against their gender. The gender-biased marginalization of women at sexual level is displayed strongly through the examples of Meera and Kalpana.

Kalpana becomes the victim of gender-biased society in male-dominant society. Being an employee, Kalpana attires herself in a descent way and rubs lipstick but people around her misinterpret her attitude and talk about her in unpleasant level. According to social-culturist, women should not apply make up to themselves in such a way that could attract the glances of other people. In short, the society holds women responsible for any mishap but happens to them. The social-culturalist conveniently ignores dirty mentality of men behind such incidents. Kalpana realizes all these things but her mother used to be afraid of her future. She expresses her fear in the following words:

(Urmi says)- ‘what’s wrong with lipstick, Shakutai?’ ‘You don’t understand, Urmila, it’s not only the lipstick. Here boys are like... they’re like dogs panting after bitches. And if you paint and flaunt yourself, do you think they’ll leave you alone? Ever since Kalpana grew up, I have had to live with this fear. (146)

Here, Shakutai represents universal motherhood that expects that girls must remain in their boundaries drawn by the society. Shakutai’s mindset has become so because of her nurturing under the strict imposition of social system. The ‘Rape’ always raises questions about the women’s chastity but the rapist always remains from such allegations and discussion. For the sour mind of society, women always appear as tools for sensual attraction. Regarding this, Mathur (2009:158) remarks “ ---, a woman is, in consistence with the imposition of a moral
double standard regarding sexuality, judged extremely harshly if she behaves in a licentious way, where as man is not.’

The same kind of biased attitude emerges in Kalpana’s rape case after the occurrences of rape. Each one holds her responsible for this kind of occurrence whereas the opponent is acquitted of all these charges. The lower class society appears full of gender-biased perceptions that never allow women to be superior to men. So, men always remain safe after any allegations regarding their code of conduct. Urmii divert Shakutai’s attention to the fault of the rapist who leaves Kalpana in hell. But Shakutai says:

The man, ‘she says after a small silence.’What use is it blaming him? Women like you will never understand what it is like for us. We have to keep to our places, we can never step-out. There are always people waiting to throw stones at us, our own people first of all .I warned Kalpana, but she would never listen to me. ‘I ‘m not afraid of anyone,’’ she used to say. That’s why this happened to her … women must know fear.’(148)

Shakutai blames Kalpana instead of the rapist for ignoring the restrictions of being a woman of being away from a fear. Kalpana must know fear; in fact every woman must feel fear of males. Actually, the theory of fear differs from person to person. This ‘Fear’, takes some different forms in each person’s behavior in different manners. It appears in the form of a protest in Kalpana’s behavior, but her mother never notices this. Kalpana, being a young and enthusiastic girl loves to do every beauteous thing to herself. But it does not mean that she does not know fear. Her fear is expressed through her protest against her mother about which Shakuntala never tries to probe or analyze. In this regard, Sebastian (2000:60) remarks “the story of Kalpana and Shakuntai is more effective in its exposure of the fear of woman belonging to Shakutai’s class. It discloses the paranoid fear of woman who is trapped in the strict morality conferred by her class; Kalpana is one of the girls whose morality is labeled by class.”

The present study recalls the play ‘Silence! The Court Is InSession” by Vijay Tendulkar who depicts one-sided humiliation of woman in adultery. The central character Leela Benare gets pregnant as an unwed mother. Everyone treats her pregnancy as the sexual adultery. The whole society condemns and puts her in the custody of charges and considers her responsible for the adultery. The offender Prof. Damale, who shares equal responsibility for the fact remains away from these alleged charges. On the contrary, Leela endures all the charges and harsh treatment
given by the society on her character. Her life as well as her career is at stake and she becomes emblematic of the social stigma on her character. This incident shows the biased attitudes and perceptions of male-dominated society everywhere.

The same applies to Kalpana’s case. Her behavior becomes as if the parameter for the occurrence of rape. Shakutai utters the same view nurtured in her by the society. She says:

---.My children have become a burden to me, Urmila they have become burden.’ She stops, exhausted. ‘And now, Prakash… “You should have controlled her,” he says. “You let her get out of hand.” I don’t blame him, he listen to others. I know what they’re saying. What can you expect, they say of a girl whose mother has left her husband? Imagine! He left me for another woman, left me with these children to bring up. And I have to listen to such words because of this girl. She’s shamed us, we can never wipe-off this blot. And Prakash blames me. What could I do? She was so self-willed. Cover yourself decently; I kept telling her, men are like animals. But she went her way. You should have seen her walking out, head in the air, caring for nobody. It’s all her fault, Urmila, all her fault—‘(147)

The male-dominant society gives birth to the agony of Kalpana’s mother where everyone condemns a woman for everything. Shakutai blames her for the mis-behavior (male- mindset) of her daughter Kalpana whereas Prakash, (the brother of Kalpana) holds his mother and sister responsible for the mishap. The dirty mentality of ‘males’ remains free from the social consideration and condemnation. In the case of rape, the societal view appears gender-biased. When Kalpana’s story comes across in the news paper, various strange opinions acquit the rapist and blame Kalpana. The following words reflect this attitude:

Saying that there can be no rape, because it can’t be done unless the woman is willing? Yes, I’ve read that. And the piece by the poet who wants us to “forgive the rapist for the knows not what he is doing”! And I’ve read the letters that say rape happens because women go about exposing themselves---. (182)

The society condemns chastity of women when she becomes a victim of such mishaps. The rape usually asks questions to the character, to the behavior of women whereas the rapist does not face any charges related to his rape attempt. Many women organization come to help Kalpana through their protests and marchas. Kalpana’s case puts up in the assembly and her shifting to the private hospital is prevented. So, afterwards the re- investigation continues in Kalpana’s case. The police investigation unfolds the truth that Prabhakar, her kin, who raped Kalpana. Women,
always inflame a fire in their hearts but this spark almost kills her life as the stake is of being a woman. Thus, the gender-biased perception of society holds Kalpana responsible for her own doom. Kalpana is the representative of those women who face such a situation in the ups and downs of their lives.

The role of society is also thought-provoking which appears biased related to the ‘rape’. The occurrences of any rape always humiliate women, their families and their related things. Although, Kalpana remains unconscious but the post-rape procedure adheres to the gender biased reaction about rape. The male dominant society never considers the fault of rapist but this issue compels them to discuss Shakutai, her unsuccessful marital life, Kalpana’s behavior, her life style and her dealing with society, all these factors as if become responsible for rape. Isn’t it strange? But it happens everywhere in the Indian male-dominant society regarding women’s physical abuse by men. Shakutai conveys the heart – rending story of Kalpana to the journalist Malcolm to release from the tension of shifting Kalpana. The journalist, Malcom publishes the story in leading news-papers along with photograph that leads the matter to bring out the social commotion. The government is forced to announce the deep re-investigation of the case and the hospital administration allows Shakutai to continue with her daughter there. But the psyche of social structure relates the issue to the gender biased attitudes. The society looks at the victim as accused and the rapist ‘male’ goes away from all controversies without any allegations. Nobody blames him whereas the Kalpana’s conduct is considered to be responsible to carry out mishap to take place. The consequences of Kalpana’s sexual assault do not restrict to herself but cover her kinship too. Naturally, Shakutai, Prakash; Kalpana’s brother and Sandhya her sister goes through toughtime in the society. They get the feeling of boycott from their society. The situation is described by Shakutai:

Everywhere we go they look at us as if we’re actors in a drama. We stay inside the house, we don’t come out unless we have to…” (177)

This puts the focus on the biased mentality of society towards Kalpana. They discuss about her candid behavior, her up-to-date life-style, her careless attitude towards others. So, the society holds Kalpana responsible for the occurrence of rape. Thus the Indian social structure appears biased in handling the feminine issues.
2.2.2 Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment is bullying of a sexual nature. Most of the time the perpetrator who is holding position of power or authority over the victim due to seniority in age, social, political educational or employment relationship affects the psyche of victimized. Sometime the perpetrator might be a close kin also.

The marginalization of Kalpana runs at multi-level who represents the lower class community. She is Shakutai’s daughter, a servant who registers her unconscious daughter in the hospital of Vandana, Urmí’s cousin and friend. Coincidently, Urmila meets Shakutai and gets close to her, after realizing the facts of Kalpana’s case, a young girl. Somebody admits her in the hospital unconscious as it is said that she was knocked down by a car. When doctors examine her body, they declare it to be a case of rape which she has undergone. She suffers from the severe sexual harassment by an unidentified person because of which she becomes unconsciousness. Dr. Bhaskar Jain, one of the employees in the hospital and Urmila’s friend reports this to her, Vandana and Shakutai talk about the real fact. Shakutai gets shocked by this report and resists accepting the fact. The post-rape situation appears worse as this situation affects the kinship. The condition of others also becomes pathetic because of the social psyche. The light is focused on the social truth of how the women get accused on the ground of rape.

“What is the saying, tai? Tell him my daughter is not that kind of girl.’ ‘Nobody is accusing your daughter...’ ‘Your daughter hasn’t done anything, he isn’t saying that.’ It was an accident, a car knocked her down.’ ‘This doctor has examined your daughter.’ ‘She was raped,’ he says, still speaking in English. ‘Your daughter has been...’ Vanna hesitates, searching for the Marathi word, gives up. ‘Someone has wronged her.’ ‘It’s not true, you people are trying to blacken my daughter’s name.’ Leave it alone, Vandana. I have my report to make anyway.’ ‘Report?’ She catches the word, looks suspiciously at him. He has to tell the police.’ ‘No, no, no. Tell him, tai, its not true, don’t tell anyone, I’ll never be able to hold up my head again, who’ll marry the girl, we’re decent people. Doctor, ’she turns to him, ‘don’t tell the Police.’ He looks confused, imitated. ‘Look, tell her it’s already in the records, I’ve put it down after examining her. How the chap in Casualty could have missed it, I can’t imagine. She was so badly mauled- thank God she’s unconsciousness’ ‘What is the saying?’ ‘Listen, Bai, this is a police case. The doctor can’t tell a lie. He says she must have got hurt when she was struggling against the man.’ ‘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---?’(58, 59)
The marginalization of the females at sexual level is pointed out here. The rape of women always occurs against their wish. Females get injured not only physically but simultaneously receive stigma on their chastity also. Kalpana becomes a victim of such a situation though she was full of excitement of life and was happy in her own world before this mishap. By rape, she gets dragged in the world of dirt. The rapist mauls her body brutally in such a way as to express his long suppressed lust on her body, to show his male-superiority, to show that Kalpana’s body is his own territory. In connection with rape, Chanda Mohanty (2008:201) says “Rape is the most extreme manifestation of an in-built male authority over women. It is punishment specifically against woman’s sexuality, for transgressing the bounds of patriarchal protection. Rape is seen as pivotal moment where control over women is asserted through sexuality.”

Thus, Kalpana becomes the victim of such lust of male-dominated society where she receives the treatment of being mere an object of consumption. Kalpana being of a subordinate class belongs to poverty where the social norms appear very harsh to women. Kalpana, Shakutai and Sulu are the tokens of such a situation.

Sexual harassment is an assault on the ‘self’ of women, an unwanted attack on their physic. Basically, the physic of women is their own territory not of any men. Unfortunately, it is misused by men and consequently women become the victims of rape. Shashi Deshpande discloses here that there is the rape within the shelter of marriage that Meera experiences and here is the rape outside marriage that Kalpana becomes prey of. Dr Bhaskar depicts Kalpana’s sexual harassment in words which force the readers to ponder over the brutal marginalization of women in such rapes. He says:

‘You could see the marks of his fingers on her arms where he had held her down. And there were huge contusions on her thighs- he must have pinned her down with his knees. And her lips-bitten and chewed. (88)

Those words imply Kalpana’s painful experience which she might have undergone when being raped. Prime Facia, Kalpana appears a fun-loving girl who has always engrossed in her own world. Her uncle, Prabhakar always flirts her that she dislikes. Her aunty and wife of Prabhakar namely Sulu requests Kalpana to keep the attitude of her husband secret from everyone. Consequently, Kalpana buries it in her mind but tries to convey this thing to her
mother through protest whenever any topic of Prabhakar arouses. Unfortunately, Shakutai takes Kalpana’s protest otherwise and mis-interprets her behavior. Once, Sulu brings the marriage proposal from Prabhakar to Kalpana which she turns down by unfolding her love-affair and plan of marriage with the guy she loves. Sulu conveys these things to Prabhakar who later becomes furious about Kalpana’s rejection of himself. He feels humiliated on account of his male ego and rapes her to show his anger and revenge upon her. Thus, womanism offers unending sufferings to Kalpana on account of this rape. Susan Brownmiller points out certain things about men who start to use sex as a weapon. She (1975:14) states “---the basic truth(is) that rape is not a crime of irrational, but it is deliberate, hostile, violent act of degradation and possession on the part of a would be conqueror, designed to intimidate and inspire fear---.”

Prabhakar does the same with Kalana who receives an unending punishment of life without having any fault of her own. Urmila happens to meet Shakutai coincidently and they become very close to each other on the common ground of being frustrated mothers. Urmila gets frustrated because of loss of her daughter ’Anu’ and Shakutai also becomes frustrated on account of her daughter Kalpana’s loss of her chastity. For Shashi Deshpande the forced sexual relationship without emotional investment appears ‘Rape’, and then it may be within the shelter of marriage or outside the marriage. The sexual harassment is a method of “taming” women into passivity. In this regard, Dr. Beena Agarwal (2009:92) in her book *Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande* talks on rape in following way:

“Legally, rape is recognized as a crime with physical aspects only, namely, the penetration of the vagina by the penis against the will of the victim. In effect, however, the real crime is the annihilation by the man of the woman as a humanbeing.”

Kalpana becomes the victim of such male ego. She gets victimized of rape without any fault of her own. Such incidents focus sexual marginalization of women. The whole society looks at women as a vessel to fulfill the lust. Her own body becomes the territory of men. Here, Prabhakar conquers Kalpana’s body by rape. To reject Prabhakar’s marriage proposal, to refuse his favors and to crush his male-ego become the causes of her mishap. It means honesty; sincerity and pertaining to one own decision appears mistakes that invite rape in Kalpana’s case. The patriarchal person like Prabhakar does not bear independence in Kalpana’s personality. As a
result, Kalpana receives an unending suffering in her life. Thus, Kalpana becomes the victim of sexual humiliation without any fault of her own.

2.2.3 Poverty Marginalization:

The poverty among the people shapes their own culture and design. Much of the behavior accepted in the culture of poverty goes counter to cherished ideals of the larger society. Poverty culture consists of lack of something, to be deficient in some ways. Poverty marginalization emerges from some insufficiency in life. It does not even get minimum requirement of life. Thus with all these deficiencies poor people establish their own subculture. They transmit this subculture from generation to generation. Naturally, these people soak in poverty mentally and financially also. The situation of these poor people appears to be full of scorn, disgust and hatred as viewed from the eyes of wealthy people. The situation of women becomes more plightful in financially weak community.

The poverty becomes the social problem for the girls like Kalpana. Kalpana meets her mishap because of her belonging to lower-class community. The social structure always marginalizes the lower class people with scorn and disgust. Moreover, these lower class people have their own culture transmitted from generation to generation. The condition of women in lower class people is pathetic. Women are absolutely at the bottom level of the society. The rules for women become mandatory for social welfare. These lower class communities have their own rules especially harsh for women. This lower class community asks various questions on the chastity of girls like Kalpana. Here runs the double suppression of women in lower class community; one that is on the ground of poverty and other on the level of being woman. Every word of Shakutai conveys the truth of social structure that always holds women responsible for every happening in their families or outside the family. Here, especially women belonging to lower class community suffer from it. Everyone knows the innocence of women regarding rape but the social- culturalist conveniently ignores all these details and places only women in the custody of allegations of criminal acts. Shakutai wants Kalpana to stay away from vicious social glances. She is aware of prejudiced treatment of police to their community. So, naturally she gets scared the police- case. She desires to be away from topic of discussion because she senses the forth coming menace of such an incident on her whole family. The society always raises various questions on the immorality of girl regarding rape and thinks that rape occurs with only loose –character girls. So,
Shakutai wishes to hide the reality of the situation and frequently murmurs the words. ‘We are decent people.’ Society imposes unimaginable consequences on the lives of women who have become the victim of rape and makes her kin to live in the den of the hell. This incident affects the whole family and Shakutai worries about the future of Sandhya, Kalpana’s sister. To avoid this, she does not lodge the complaint against the unknown rapist. The identity of rapist remains veiled till the commotion and instruction of re-investigation of the concerned case by the government. Being a girl belonging to lower class community, Kalpana undergoes the dilemma of morality and immortality of society. So, it is true when Urmì states that ‘Laws can’t change lives.’ (38) Laws will not change the mentality of people. The police officer is reluctant to register the case as a rape. It happens because of prejudiced views that the whole white-collar society nurtures. The poor people do not receive the same honor and respect as middle and upper class people do on the contrary they get scorn and frowning faces from each member of their community. These are the reasons of the reluctance on the part of the police officer to register the complaint about Kalpana’s rape:

Oh yes. I spoke to the police officer and he refused to accept my findings and change the first report. You know the Casualty man had put it down as an accident? Obviously he hadn’t done a proper examination. Let it remain an accident, the officer said.’ He tells me the story and I listen intently. The police officer argued with him. Why make it a case of rape, he asked? She’s going to die anyway, so what the difference does it make whether, on paper she dies the victim of an accident, or a rape? We don’t like rape cases, the man said. They’re messy and troublesome, never straightforward. But forget that and think of the girl and her family. Do you think it’ll do them any good to have it known the girl was raped? She’s unmarried, people are bound to talk, her name would be smeared. For all you know she may be a professional, we see a lot of that. But if you ask me, the man said, she must have been out with a boyfriend- girls of that class always have boyfriends the families know nothing about it. May be after they had a bit of fun she was knocked down by a car… (88)

The police officer questions Kalpana’s morality. According to him the girls of such class do not have any kind of morality. He denounces Kalpana’s chastity instead of probing the case deeply. Not only this, he advises others to register the case as an accident to avoid unnecessary intricacies regarding rape. Kalpana’s life becomes a casual incident for the whole society. The value of Kalpana’s life is nothing for society and if it is woman then it is goes beyond justification. Here, Kalpana gets denounced without any fault of her own. She suffers and
becomes stigma on her family only because she belongs to lower class community. Nobody thinks to probe deep into the matter to assert the reality. Thus instead of receiving justice, Kalpana becomes a victim of lower class community. The attitude and encoded morality of lower community convicts Kalpana in this incident of rape. They condemn her frank behavior, her attitude towards life. Simultaneously, they denounce Shakutai also. In this regard, Sebastian (2000:160) explains “The story of Kalpana and Shakutai is more effective in its exposure of the fear of woman belonging to Shakutai’s class. It discloses the paranoial fear of woman who is trapped in the strict morality conferred by her class; Kalpana is one of the girls whose morality is labeled by classs. Shakutai’s statement –don’t tell anyone---unfolds the fear and control of patriarchal culture about women in Indian society where the woman’s life is glorified by marriage.”

The post- rape situation becomes more intricate for Kalpana’s family. Her rape becomes the topic of politics than treated through human point of view. It all happens to Kalpana because she belongs to the lower class. If there would have been a woman from the higher caste, no one would have dared to draw such dirty inferences but it happens with Kalpana because of her belonging to poor community. The rape of Kalpana gets treated as a casual incident. The society conveniently forgets her trauma while she was undergoing rape. But the psyche of society towards woman’s rape is beyond imagination. The humiliation of woman’s body is mere incident for them. Thus, Kalpana’s plight appears double because of her belonging to lower class community. Thus, Kalpana faces marginalization of her physic only because of her connection with the poverty class.

2.2.4 Quest for Identity:

Identity is a multi –dimensional word. It is a person’s conception and expression of individuality. Identity crisis emanates from conflict between social values and individual aspirations. Many times; human beings get crushed under the individualistic urges and social expectations. This identity-crisis becomes the journey of self-hood. This self-hood is about freedom, about choice, about right and equality. Thus, whole life becomes the journey of quest for identity.

Kalpana becomes the victim of the journey of identity. The self-consciousness waters the thought of realization of identity crisis. Kalpana becomes the victim of identity-crisis. She receives
identity from her community which she wants to change the situation and her personality. She does not like Shakutai’s attitudes instead she hates every one of her mother is relative. She does not like her mother’s relatives like Sulu, her auntie and Prabhakar, her uncle. She hates her mother’s attitude that looks upon Prabhakar as mentor of the family. She hates Prabhakar who always flirts with her which she cannot tell her mother because of Sulu’s request of keeping it a secret. This feeling of disgust converts into hatred for her mother who always seeks Prabhakar’s advice. Naturally, Kalpana develops her own world where she enjoys being a free bird. She searches for her own identity, away from her mother and her community. She pretty aspires to live the life on her own terms. The theory of womanism appears as protest for Kalpana who always strives for her own space. Kalpana behaves against the social values of her class. She represents the girl of the new generation who believes in liberalization, in their selves. She wants to establish her own identity. Despite this, Kalpana does not ignore her family’s welfare. She becomes the supporter of her family. Being aware of the marginalization of women makes Kalpana’s personalities with rebellious attitudes. She protests through her own way of living. She adores her womanhood and nurtures pride of being so. In this regard, Beauvoir (1997:360) says— “her body seems endowed with magic virtues; it is a treasure, a weapon; she is proud of it. Her coquetry, often lost during the free years of childhood, is revived again. She tries different make-ups, ways of doing her hair.---”

Naturally, Kalpana sidelines the strict code of conduct imposed on her by society. Being afraid of Kalpana’s attitude, Shakutai sends her to her sister’s house for security. Suddenly Kalpana runs away from there in anger and unfortunately Shakutai never ponders over her sudden return. She believes her sister Sulu who always comes ahead to help her and her kind-hearted husband, Prabhakar more than her daughter. Shakutai never doubts the purpose of Prabhakar but denounces Kalpana. Shakutai says to Urmil:

She was stubborn, she was self-willed, she dressed up, she painted her lips and nails and so this happened to her. ’You should have seen her walking out, head erect, caring for nobody.’ (148)

Perhaps so Shakutai usually make complaints of the liberal behavior of her daughter. She denounces Kalpana, her attitude, her living style and rebellious spark. She does not understand Kalpana’s craving for identity. Shakutai condemns Kalpana for her behavior. But Kalpana’s zest
for identity becomes stigma on her personality. Regarding this, Simon-de-Beauvoir (1997:357) points out “Custom makes independence difficult for them.---Careless gaiety is in itself bad deportment; the self-control that is improved on women and becomes second nature in ‘the well-bred young girl’ kills spontainety; her lively exuberance is beaten down.”

The patriarchal system binds women in such an attitude that is why they cannot escape from the clutches of the social system. So, Shakutai becomes more conscious about the responsibility of Kalpana as a girl. Here, life appears exciting and full of miracles for Kalpana. It does not prove that she is unaware of the fear of being a woman. In fact it is seen that Kalpana nurtures the fear of her uncle, Prabhakar which nobody, not even her mother notices. Kalpana buries all grey things about her uncle in mind. She follows the norm of being submissive but inflames her own identity. Unfortunately, her quest for identity brings her to the path of brutal rape. Men look at women as a mere sexual being who never realizes the value of relations, age, regarding their sexual lust. They become a single minded person to pursue women. When Kalpana arrives at the Prabhakar’s house, he every time misbehaves with her that is why Kalpana runs away from that house. She does not tell it to her mother as her auntie Sulu had instructed her not to tell. Sulu obliges her to keep mum regarding Prabhakar’s behavior. Kalpana is a wise girl who tries to remain away from Prabhakar by realizing the forthcoming menace. Kalpana does not want to stick to her identity with Prabhakar so she protests about every gift offered by him. Once; Kalpana refuses to wear the sari gifted by Prabhakar. Shakutai insists on her to wear that sari without realizing the commotion in her mind. Sulu takes her home where they three (Sulu, Prabhakar and Kalpana) take a photograph. Kalpana tries to tear the photograph and so many such acts always remained a mystery to Shakutai till the discovery of the accused after rape. Shakutai looks at the reluctant behavior of Kalpana. She remains away from her daughter’s internal agitation and her hunger for her own identity. Once, Kalpana denies the marriage proposal by Prabhakar and discloses her relationship with the other boy. Kalpana has maintained her own world which is full of delight. But her journey of quest for identity is intimidated by Prabhakar who rapes her brutally and destroys her imaginative world completely. He snatches the right of her identity, herself by scribbling her physic, her self and to show the supremacy of male. It shows that women have no right to develop their identities. The marginalization of her identity gets devalued by the publication of her rape story in leading news papers where she faces frowning attitude of society even after rape. In the love of her own identity, she receives
the agony, pangs and pains of lifetime which is beyond repair and recovery. She pays the huge
cost of love for identity. Thus, Kalpana’s rape marginalizes her identity at every level of society.

Thus, it is true that every women knows fear of sexual threat, sexual humiliation. Kalpana, Urmila and other women learn the fear right from their birth. Dr. Vidya Bal states that women have the fear of men than ghosts or other deadly things. She continues saying that women cannot walk in night not because of the fear of any animals or ghosts but only because of the fear of ‘men’. If we put all the men in the world in a cage and ask women to wander on the street even late at night, then they will do it freely. Thus, it is truly significant to note that women mostly feel fear of men than of anyone else. It appears with each woman in this novel The Binding Vine by Shashi Deshpande. All women appear as the speakers of social experiences.

2.3 Shakuntala alias Shakutai:

Shakuntala is a servant well-acquainted with Vandana. She is called as ‘Shakutai’ in this novel. Urmi meets Shakutai accidently in the hospital where Vandana serves as a nurse. Urmi watches Shakutai who appears in distress regarding her daughter Kalpana’s health. From Vandana, Urmi comes to know about the mishap occurred to her daughter. Naturally, Urmi feels attracted to her on the common ground of frustrated mothers. Urmi is in distress because of untimely death of her daughter, Anu whereas Shakutai is distressed on account of her daughter’s mishap. Shakutai belongs to lower-class community where social norms become much harder to women. Women are always under the strict surveillance of the social norms. Throughout her life, Shakutai strives to follow the same unwritten social law. Simultaneously, she expects the same behavior from her daughter. Thus, in this journey of life Shakutai faces various kinds of marginalization.

2.3.1 Patriarchy:

The male-dominated society gives importance to men and sidelines women. Men are men even if they do not become supporter of the family or do any earnings from family. Even in such situation; men are always acquitted from any conviction of negligence to their families. Regarding such a situation, women of the family come to support the house-hold welfares. They still remain on the back-foot. Women move through their lives according to the patriarchal mind-set of their men. Shakutai’s marginalization is displayed in following perspectives. The
sociologist Ernestine Friedl argues (1980:450,451) about the male-dominance “a consequence of the frequency with which men have greater rights than women to distribute goods outside the domestic group.”

The Indian social structure possesses patriarchal mind-set that drags women in the direction where men desire. They become all-in-all in every decision. The patriarchal mind-set does not allow women to think or make decisions or live the life without support of any male. Thus, males appear protector, supporter or savior to females. It is assumption of the Indian society that women are nothing without men. They are in the society only because of men. Shakutai too becomes the victim of patriarchy in her life. She represents a desperate mother who looks after Kalpana, lying on bed unconscious. The tragic story of Shakuntala is a series of marginalization that is often found in lower class community profoundly. The difference is that most of the time lower class women accept this negligence as their fate. Shakutai becomes the victim of patriarchy. She strives for survival through her life with the responsibilities of her children when her husband deserts her. Shakutai’s tragic story reveals how she copes with the things that are clutched by patriarchy from years to years.

Shakutai frequently comes to the hospital to see Kalpana who is lying unconscious on the bed after the incident of rape. Coincidently, Urmila meets Shakutai in the same hospital. After the conversation, Shakutai sobs on account of the wretched condition of her daughter, Kalpana. The whole tragic story of Shakutai is a chain of inferiority complex. The lives of Shakutai, her sister Sulu,( who is the only supporter) and Kalpana interlink with each other on the common ground of Prabhakar’, a male who is the prime cause of their downfall. He drags all of them on the path of catastrophe. Shashi Deshpande unveils these events dramatically so that the readers feel sympathy for Kalpana and Shakutai.

Shakutai becomes the prey of Patriarchy even after being an earning source of her family. The patriarchal mind-set never allows woman to ask questions if any. The patriarchal mind-set does not try to understand the need of women or urgency of any of their issues. All such things move as per the desire of patriarchy. Consequently, the desire of women and the urgency of the issue always remain at back foot. Thus, patriarchy gets at prime level where everything happens as per its convenience. Here, Shakutai marries a man who is an employee living in Bombay. As Simon
–de-Beauvoir (1997:467) says “---woman finds in marriage at once energy for living and meaning for her life.”

Thus, Shakutai looks at marriage with splendid eyes but even after her marriage she waits for her husband for nearly six months in the village. In the Indian tradition, after the marriage women’s permanent house become their husbands’ house. They cannot live in parental house with the same pride as they get at being in their husbands’ house. In case of Shakutai, her husband reluctantly brings her to Bombay. Eventually; she decides to join him in Bombay at her own risk. Shakuntala arrives in Bombay and comes to know the truth of her husband’s job. Her husband deceives her as he does not have a job; in fact, he does not aspire even to get any job. Shakutai feels distressed because of such cheating by her husband. She becomes helpless even after knowing husband’s deceitful nature. It becomes the first shock for her that shatters her dream of marriage. The Indian social structure does not allow women even to resist. As per the tradition, women must live in the house of their husbands without any complaint. Thus, the lives of women revolve around the patriarchy. Shakutai adapts the situation immediately after knowing her husband’s nature. Factually, Shakutai’s husband never sticks to any job. Despite this treachery, she obeys her husband even though; he never earns satisfactory money to run the house. In the Indian social structure, women do not ask any question to men; even though they become successful or unsuccessful in the field of domestic responsibility. Thus, being a good wife Shakutai lives in the house of her husband’s cousin who works as an employee in police. She never asks and complaints for anything even after such an unbearable shock given by her husband. She makes lots of compromises to make her life smooth. She does not complain anything to her husband but tries to remain happy with him. The patriarchal mind-set permits men to behave licentiously whereas women remain confined to duties. Thus, women cannot ask any question to men. In patriarchy, as Simon-de- Beauvoir (1997:475) says “man marries today to obtain an anchorage in immanence, but not to be himself confined there in; he wants to have hearth and home while being free to escape there from; he settles down but often remains a vagabond at heart; ---“

After some days Shakutai’s husband imposes continuous pregnancies on her who is actually not ready to shoulder the responsibilities of children. She desires to be settled in life and then decide to think of children. But again mutely she follows her husband like an obedient wife and gets
three kids. It appears a tight-rope walking for Shakutai to fulfill the duties of motherhood, of wife and of being a financial supporter to the house. She accepts these patriarchal norms in her life without uttering a single word of resentment. But later, her husband deserts her for another woman by conferring on her the responsibilities of house and children. Shakutai becomes distressed but does not ask any questions to him. In patriarchy, women cannot ask questions but have to celebrate the decision of men even if it may be harmful to them. Shakutai bears infidelity of her husband, his carelessness towards the family duties. She mutually accepts the changes in her life and fulfills the duty of a family supporter and the parent of her three children. Thus, men can leave women at any stage of their lives for anyone and for any reason but women cannot do like this. This is the patriarchal mind-set up that makes women bear anything without any complaint. Thus, Shakutai becomes the victim of patriarchy and embarks her life with one woman show. In this regard, the Indian social structure never condemns men but acquits them from everything

2.3.2 Gender-biased Perception:

Gender-biased perceptions have existed from generation to generation. Although, the constitution of India has granted equal rights to both men and women but still gender disparity remains. Gender-biased attitude impedes an adverse condition on women. Women suffer a lot because of gender-biased perceptions. The lives of women appear to face the threat of mishaps because of gender-biased perceptions. The norms, values and roles in domestic atmosphere or outside are designed for women as per culturally transmitted procedure. On this basis, women face biased attitude relegating domestic duties as well as external duties towards society. In this respect, Michael Haralambos (1980:447) remarks“---Norms, values and roles are culturally determined and socially transmitted from this perspective; gender roles are a product of culture rather than biology. Individuals learn their respective male and female roles. The sexual division of labour is supported and justified by a belief and value system which states that gender roles are normal, natural, right and proper.”

Here, Shakutai mutually accepts her husband and his habits. She compromises with his attitude of negligence towards his family responsibility. She adjusts with all these things because Indian social structure goes always on the side of males because nobody considers female’s feelings. Shakutai’s tragedy does not end here.
2.3.2.1 Deserted Wife:

The lives of deserted women become wretched because of the neglect of responsibilities by their husbands towards their families and children. Women alone have to shoulder the responsibilities of lives more than men have. Men become ignorant towards house hold duties but women cannot do so at any cost. Furthermore, the social view acquits men of every deed but does not acquit women. The social view allows infidelity in case of men but women is supposed to follow tradition of being loyal to their husbands at all costs and every means. The same situation goes with Shakutai who too faces such kind of situation in her life. Shakutai’s grief enhances when her husband discards her for an extra-marital affair with a woman. Financially, socially derelected Shakutai continues with the life of deserted woman. Thus, Shakutai begins to cope with the problems conferred on her being a deserted wife by her husband without having her own fault. The lives of deserted women are much worse than that of widows in the Indian society. Such women always become a stigma on society. Shakutai’s situation deteriorates while facing various issues being a single parent to grow up her offsprings. Here, Shakutai does not retain any chance to revive her life. She accepts the fact and starts to earn more money for her children; as she wants to provide them with proper education, good life, decent marriage and respect from others. The lower class people usually have their own inferiority complex. The same happens with Shakutai who says:

Look at me – what am I? I don’t want my children to be like me. (112)

Shakutai expects her kids to be well-set in life. Women cannot run away from the household affairs and child-rearing duties as men can do. Shakutai’s husband easily deserts her leaving her alone for fulfilling house-hold duties. Nobody condemns her husband but she alone bears pros and cons of the life. She alone handles Kalpana’s mishap when she is admitted to the hospital. The social structure acquits men and victimizes women behind the bars of allegation related to every issue. The desperate mother becomes the victim of a gender biased society. Her husband deserts her when he aspires to do so and runs away from her responsibilities. But male dominated society never asks any questions to Shakutai’s husband who gets acquitted from everything, instead; Shakutai remains to face the charges from society raising the questions about upbringing of her children. Nobody even utters a single word about the carelessness of
Shakutai’s husband towards the kids. Society holds Shakutai responsible regarding her kids whereas her husband runs away from all such charges even though he has not fulfilled his household duties. Shakutai alone becomes responsible for the attainment. Thus, she becomes the victim of gender-biased view of society where she assumes herself guilty for everything. It appears very tough to fulfill the role of a single parent in the male dominated society. But being deserted woman, Shakutai suffers in such an ordeal. While upbringing the kids, She provides them with every lavish object of life to bring smiles on their faces. She says:

‘I don’t want to deprive the children of anything. I even bought them a TV set. Why should my children go to other people’s houses to watch? Are they beggars? I’ve deprived them of nothing.’ (143)

She makes enthusiastic efforts for the betterment of her children. Shakutai knows the social structure where women of their class suffer a lot. She wishes her daughter should get respect and pleasure of life. So, she usually instructs Kalpana about her behavior and is afraid of Kalpana’s beauty and her free conduct. She feels sexually threatened because of her splendid beauty. So, she goes on instructing her about everything. She thinks Kalpana should remain away from an evil eye of the people in the society. Naturally, Shakutai feels reluctance about her make-up. And her apprehension runs in the following words:

‘And you should see the bottles--bottles of nail paint. What do you need to paint yours nails for? I asked her. The first thing she did was to buy herself a mirror. She was forever looking at herself in the mirror. (143)

The agony, fear and helplessness of the mother are implied here. She pines for the safety of her daughter. Being a woman she knows the sexual threat to beautiful girl from her community. It is so because dominant ruling class people always consider beautiful lower class women as their territory. So, Shakutai is involved in diverting her daughter from such temptations of life but Kalpana as an enthusiastic young girl does not understand the paradigm of womanism. Shakutai knows the disadvantage of being deserted so she wants the support of a male in her domestic life. She needs somebody (male) who could solve her daily problems in life. So, she accepts an extended hand of Prabhakar, her brother- in- law; whom she looks as a male-supporter. Women usually get trapped in patriarchy where they remain away from decision making. So Shakutai needs the hand of a male for the welfare of her family. Naturally being the only male in her
family, Prabhakar becomes support system for her to rely on any problem of her life. But she fails to realize the crookedness of his mind for Kalpana. So, in the end after realizing the fact she blames herself for not identifying the mind of Kalpana and cunning nature of Prabhakar.

Now, Kalpana is on the brink of life or death and being a single parent Shakutai nurses her even sparing time from her tight schedule. Before the occurrence of the mishap, Kalpana indirectly tries to show so many things but Shakutai never understands her intention. Regarding Kalpana, Shakutai always feels helpless. She says:

‘She was wearing her first sari. I bought Sulu her first sari and Sulu said,‘When Kalpu grows up, Shakutai, I ll buy her her first sari.” She did. And Kalpana refused to wear it. You know girls these days, they don’t want to wear Saris. But I made her wear it and Sulu took her home and they went to have this picture taken, the three of them- Sulu, Prabhakar and Kalpana. And when Sulu gave us this copy, Kalpana tried to tear it up. I don’t understand that girl, Urmila, What does she want, what does she want?’ (146)

It is the cry of a deserted mother who in the need of a male supporter believes Prabhakar more than her daughter. The male-dominant society never allows women to live alone on their efficiencies. So, Shakutai relies on Prabhakar for every small act and every decision. But Prabhakar takes disadvantage of Shakutai and destroys Kalpana’s innocent life. Thus, now she holds herself guilty for the Kalpana’s tragedy. Despite this, the husband remains away from all these tremors and turmoil of family life. In this canvas of life, the social structure does not condemn Shakutai’s husband for anything. Here, mere Shakutai becomes the cause for the imposed catastrophe.

2.3.3 Poverty Marginalization:

Since poverty has become a social problem it emanates into women’s marginalization. The concept of morality, the norms of upbringing appear different and strict to financially weak people. The white-collar society looks at the lower class community as something disgusting or a dirty object in society. Naturally, the paradigms of being human are different among the minds of these people. These people get habituated to such scornful treatment from the white-collar people. If somebody from their community prepares to walk out of this life-style, the poor class does not allow doing so. It happens so because they repress the thoughts of marginalization in
their minds from generation to generation. Prime Facia, the norms of lower class community becomes stricter especially for women who face double standard marginalization in every walk of their lives. Shakutai too is not an exception from this situation. Regarding this, Simon –de-Beavour (1997:401) utters “virginity is valued so highly in this class.” Shakutai becomes victim of this poverty class and she faces vivid problems being woman belonging to lower class community. Thus, Shakutai represents the frustrated and universal mother who wants to secure the chastity of a girl at any cost. So, the mother brings up her strictly in the bondage of patriarchy. Right from the birth, every mother asks their daughters to be cautious from the stranger men. Shashi Deshpande illustrates:

‘I told her to be careful,’ Shakutai moans. ‘Don’t go anywhere with strangers,’ Vanna cautions her daughter. ‘Why are you so late?’ Inni asks me accusingly if I am a little delayed. I can remember the hysteria with which she greeted me when I came home once unusually late. ‘Why does God gives us daughter?’ Shakutai cried out and I was enaged, but it follows, yes, it follows. (150)

The biological structure and status of girls always make their mothers to be cautious of their chastity. The women’s chastity is highly valued in every society, but paradigms in lower class community appear stricter for women especially for girls. This fear perhaps runs in the poem of Meera who says:

‘Why do I call the child he?’ Yes, Meera, why? Why did you want a son? Is it because you were frightened of bearing this constant burden of fear for your daughter as well? (150)

This fear occurs in the mind of every mother like Inni, Akka, Vanna and Shakutai. Now, Shakutai feels distressed for Kalpana who lies on the bed unconscious after being victim of rape. She gets molested so brutally that Kalpana’s health deteriorates day by day. Kalpana sexually gets humiliated but her humiliation does not stop here. Her harassment enhances after post-rape only because of her belonging to the lower class community. Being poor, Shakutai alone faces the marginalization at the time of treatment of her daughter. Her mind gets engulfed with forthcoming menace to her family. The administration of hospital comes to know about an indefinite critical condition of Kalpana and her poverty also. So, the hospital administration decides to shift Kalpana to other hospital. The white-collar people always look at these people as helpless and defendless. These people remain weaponless to fight against engulfed prejudices.
of the white-collar people. At first, Shakutai receives a great shock on account of the decision taken by the hospital administration of shifting her daughter to some private hospital. Because of her poverty, it appears tough for Shakutai to shift and spend money on her. This shifting brings up various questions in her mind. She faces the question of finance for medication and the management of time to look after her daughter. At present she was able to attend her daughter once in a day but after shifting to her in another hospital may appear difficult to attend to her. It is so because being single parent she must earn money to run the house. Thus, Shakutai again gets marginalized on the basis of poverty and helplessness. The administration wants Kalpana’s bed as they think there is nothing to do with her except nursing. Thus, Shakutai feels unable to spend time and money on Kalpana after shifting to a private hospital. Thus she expresses her helplessness on account of her poverty. She says:

… they tell me they can’t keep her here any longer. What am I to do, Urmila? I can’t go there, it’s too far, even to come here is hard. How much money it’s going to cost me to go there every day, and how will I be able to find the time? When I said this, they told me, take her home then. How can I, Urmila? She’ll die, she’ll just die.’(166)

This explains the poor mother’s helplessness that cannot spend money on medical treatment of her daughter. The white-collar people never consider about health, chastity and name of a poor girl like Kalpana. Urmila decides to help Shakutai in respect of giving justice to her daughter. The hospital administration neglects Shakutai’s needs and helplessness. The dilemma arises in Shakutai’s mind who cannot carry her daughter at home in such a critical condition or cannot shift her to any other hospital because of her weak financial assistance. Urmila meets Malcom, a journalist friend of her and seeks help from him. Urmila thinks it better to share Kalpana’s mishap with him that is why he is able to help Shakutai and Kalpana. So, Shakutai reveals the whole story of Kalpana’s being raped by an unidentified person to that journalist. All the bites of Kalpana get published in the leading news papers the next day. Consequently, the other people in the society come to know all the things. The social psyche is revealed in every of Shakutai that seem helpless on all sides after realizing the boomerang regarding the publication of her daughter’s rape story. The exposure of Kalpana’s story creates various questions before her who feels unable to cope with consequences. She says:
... ‘I knew how it would be, I shouldn’t complain. I had thought, even if my sari is torn, I can wear it so that the rents don’t show, but … What’s the use? That was not to be. Everywhere we go they look at us as if we’re actors in a drama. We stay inside the house; we don’t come out unless we have to. (177)

The suspicious glances of surrounding people make Shakutai and her family humiliated socially. Kalpana’s chastity is put on stake by her community and the white-collar society even without any fault of her own. Kalpana’s life style, her behavior, her romantic attitude and her belonging to poor class raises doubtful questions on Kalpana’s chastity. Consequently, hospital administration stops the shifting Kalpana in other hospital but at the stake of Shakutai’s pride, and after getting huge amount of humiliation. The attitude of society makes Shakutai almost frustrated which appears in her following speech:

‘Sometimes I think, Urmila, I’ve had enough. What have I had all my life but troubles? I should die, I’ve had enough. The kind of things they are saying, the police people, about Kalpana. Such dirt. Her father cried like a child when he read it. She was a good girl, I swear to you, my Kalpana was good girl!’ (177)

The doubtful frowning faces of white collar people humiliate Shakutai’s ‘self’, her ‘poverty’ and her ‘self respect’. Thus, the people of poor class are self– contained and live with nurturing in inferiority complex in their hearts. It is implied in the following words when Urmila calls Shakutai as Shakuntala she says:

‘Shakuntala. Everyone call me Shakutai.’—(59)

The poor class people are marginalized in such a way that they even cannot digest respect from the dominant society. From generation to generation, it is postulated that white color is the mark of superiority and black colour of inferiority. It is displayed in Shakutai’s statement at the time of Kalpana’s birth. She says:

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

Thus, above series of thoughts exemplifies the marginalization of Shakutai on the basis of poverty. Thus, such poverty strangles the individuality of a human being. Shakuntala’s life is the series of marginalization at various levels. The mess of post-rape scene focuses the
marginalization of Shakutai at financially weak level. Especially, the trauma and tremor occur after the publication of Kalpana’s rape. Thus, Shakutai becomes the victim of poverty marginalization.

2.3.4 Sexual Harassment:

The topic of sexual harassment in conjugal life becomes much tough to illustrate or even talk. In the Indian social structure, the marriage becomes a license to have sex in life. Many husbands believe that they do have a choice to do anything with their wives as they are married. But mere married status cannot be the reason to crush and torture the body of their wives. This kind of ignorance in cultured attitude of husbands becomes the cause for sexual harassment of women in their marriage. In this regard, women mere appear a tool to consume the body. This is what the sexual marginalization of women means.

Shakutai undergoes indirect sexual harassment by her husband in her conjugal life. There is resemblance between Meera and Shakutai regarding sexual relations as both become prey of sexual marginalization in their marital status for having an unpleasant physical relationship with their husbands. Shakutai sleeps in the corridor of a chawl with her husband as they do not have a separate place. It becomes difficult for her to have sex relationship with her husband. In this respect, Shakutai says:

‘I, a woman, had to sleep there, in public, with strange men walking up and down. And by husband…’ the voice drops low ‘you know what men are, he wanted to… We’re not animals, I told him. (110,111)

Here, Shakutai feels embarrassed in sexual relations with her husband. But males do not consider aspiration and perception of women regarding sex. Like Meera, Shakutai also conceives unwanted pregnancy from unsettled loveless marriage. It happens so because she recently starts earning money for her family as her husband remains jobless. She is not ready to accept motherhood as she appears the pillar of family as the earning source. The continuous pregnancies intimidate her while earning the money. Every time, Sulu, her sister extends a helping hand to her regarding upbringing of children. This unpleasant sexual relation imposes three children on her shoulders to subsist through life. The lower class community does not feel such issues even unusual in their lives. It is so because women are supposed to carry full responsibility of
domestic affairs. The lower class community structure too never allows women to ask questions to men. The women always remain away from awareness of such incident happening around them. Shakuntala also becomes habituated to such things without making any complaint. Eventually, all these issues offer her turmoil and hardships of life.

2.4 Sulu:

Sulu is Shakuntala’s sister who always comes forward to help her sister. She appears on the canvas of novel indirectly but plays a pivotal role in the plot of the story. She is Prabhakar’s wife and her husband is accused in Kalpana’s rape case. Sulu appears a dedicated wife to Prabhakar. She always surrenders to him in his every deed whether right or wrong. She is mainly responsible for Kalpana’s mishap. The tragic series of her life forces her to make Kalpana as her armor to survive. Her attitude has dragged other women of her family on the verge of catastrophe. The events of Sulu’s life are examples of female marginalization which she bears mutually to survive in her husband’s house. Her inability to beget child and white patches on her body become weak point of her personality to bear the blows from her husband Prabhakar. The general noticed oppression of deserted women too makes her to live in Prabhakar’s house.

2.4.1 Patriarchy:

The male-dominated society manipulates every issue related women as they desire. Sometimes they use women as a tool to satisfy their hidden desires. Generally, husbands serve as authorities over their wives. Women believe that their aptitudes are inferior to that of men. Women remain subdued due to the impact of patriarchy.

Many women become the victims of such a temperament. The resemblance between Shakutai and Sulu appears regarding the victim of patriarchy due to the conventional social system. Sulu’s story is the journey of a woman beginning from patriarchy and ending in the same subdued status. Sulu remains submissive in such a patriarchal mind-set. Sulu’s story points out the psyche of patriarchy that becomes the cause for her tragedy. Sulu gets married to a person named ‘Prabhakar’ who according to Shakutai is a good man. He never gets addicted to alcohol and cigarettes as the people in those communities usually do. Sulu becomes unable to beget children so she becomes a desperate mother. Before an investigation probes into Kalpana’s case,
Shakutai presents the character of Prabhakar as a gentle man. So, she feels very proud of Prabhakar, till the disclosure of bitter truth at the climax of the novel. Prabhakar never expresses Sulu’s barrenness so she feels it proud to be Prabhakar’s wife. Basically, the patriarchal system always gives importance to motherhood than anything else. Prabhakar does not blame Sulu even though he is deprived of children so she looks at him as her benefactor. From historical times, women are held responsible for barrenness. Men are acquitted regarding this. So, Sulu looks at her husband as demi-god who never complaints of Sulu’s barrenness. Shakutai explains his goodness to Urmì saying:

‘And do you know, he hasn’t said an angry word to her about it – not once. Any other man would have given his wife hell. But Prabhakar… And Sulu knows her luck. Whatever he wants is done at once.’ (144)

Thus, Sulu always appears submissive to Prabhakar but unfortunately her submissiveness and silence becomes the cause of Kalpana’s mishap. In fact, the sour face of Prabhakar remains hidden from Shakuntala who looks at him as the only male supporter in her family. But knowingly or helplessly both Prabhakar and Sulu takes disadvantage of Shakutail’s helplessness. Superfluously, everything appears goody goody and happy but the inner tension mounts in Sulu’s mind day by day that converts into white patches on her skin. Sulu is afraid of the threat of desertion by her husband who usually blackmails Sulu helping him to seduce Kalpana. Sulu starts to shower love on Sandhya, Prakash and especially on Kalpana. Sulu looks at Kalpana as the savior of her own existence. She also hides certain things from Shakutai to avoid her own misfortune. Prabhakar usually harasses Sulu to help him in seducing Kalpana. As Simon –de-Beauvoir (1997:484) quotes “---A wife is what her husband makes her ---.”

The same happens with Sulu who approves everything of Prabhakar without analyzing what is right or wrong. An inveterate obsession of Prabhkar for Kalpana is expressed in the Shakutai’s talk. She says:

‘Sulu says he was always mad about Kalpana. Even then, Kalpana went to live with them, he tried to … he wanted…’ she gives up. ‘She was only a child then, she was fourteen and he thought he could … That’s why she ran away and refused to go back. But she didn’t tell me, why didn’t she tell me? And where were my eyes? I should have guessed. He used to look at her, he used to say things, he called her “My beauty”, he used to praise her looks. I thought, he’s her uncle, he’s
being affectionate. But Kalpana – I can remember how she used to walk out. And I used to scold her for that. (189,190)

The whole story of Sulu talks of the marginalization of being a woman in patriarchy, the helplessness, powerless and submissiveness of woman in patriarchy. She is the best example of patriarchy that tells how Sulu can be a puppet in the hands of men. She buries all these things in her mind till the investigation of Prabhakar’s in case of active participation in rape. Shakutai tells Urmila how and when Prabhakar starts to chase Kalpana and how in this dirty game he uses Sulu as his safeguard.

Thus, Prabhakar becomes mad after Kalpana and the helplessness of Sulu agrees to do it. For Sulu, it is nothing but the marginalization of being a woman in patriarchy. Prabhakar usually black-mails Sulu of saying ‘Get me Kalpana’ otherwise threatens her to abandon her from his life. Here, Prabhakar becomes a single-minded crazy person to hold Kalpana’s hand like Meera’s husband. He manipulates women as per his desire. Sulu keeps proposal of marriage in front of Shakutai according to Prabhakar’s dictation. How such an event can be painful to Sulu to suffer at the hands of her husband mutely? Basically, it is tough to digest such a husband who loves the ‘other’ woman. Many times women try to idolize ‘Sita’ and ‘Savitri’ by fulfilling illlogical things also. In this case, Miller (1976:18) says “The woman is not encouraged to take her own needs seriously to explore them, to try to act on them as a separate individual. She is enjoined from engaging all of her own resources and thereby presented from developing some valid and reliable sense of her own worth. Instead, the woman is encouraged to concentrate on the needs and development of man.”

Sulu also follows the same path as worded by Miller. She acts as per the desire of her husband. Kalpana refuses the marriage proposal by disclosing her love–affair with a boy. After knowing this truth, Prabhakar becomes desperate for her. Kalpana’s decision hurts his male ego and he rapes her brutally on the same day. Consequently, she lies now on the verge of life or death. Prabhakar is the symbol of that male attitude which never likes rejection and superiority of woman. In the Indian culture, the patriarchal mind-set of males always reinforces their own perception on females regarding anything.
Being a devoted wife, Sulu also gives co-operation to her husband’s evil eyes on Kalpana. She becomes obedient only to fulfill the desire of her husband by excluding the thought of right or wrong. By taking the shield of Kalpana, Sulu tries to settle her living with Prabhakar. She notices about his frequent attempts of seduction of Kalpana, but she purposely ignores this. She happens to call Kalpana to satisfy Prabhakar and to keep herself safe. Sulu requests Kalpana not to convey anything to Shakutai and following the conventional image of a woman, Kalpana also keeps mum. But she pays a huge amount of loss for that long silence.

In patriarchy, women are supposed to be the followers of the commands of males without any doubt. If any women ask so, men stop them by physical force. Prabhakar represents this kind of patriarchal mind-set. Women cannot ask any question to men so naturally Sulu becomes the prey of such social-structure and adopts silence. She never goes against her husband’s desire. After raping Kalpana, Prabhakar comes home and talks with Sulu over night. He tells her about movie which he claims he has seen. Next morning; he washes his clothes on his own that surprises Sulu. Basically, Sulu always assists him in every work so she astonishingly inquires about his washing his own clothes but Prabhakar vomits violent anger on Sulu and silences her. When the police investigation goes on regarding Kalpana’s rape, he tells Sulu ‘Tell the police I was at home’. (188) Then, Sulu realizes the whole truth. In such cases, women keep themselves in the room of guilt and consume the punishment of their husbands’ fault for themselves. The same goes with Sulu here who identifying the forthcoming menace, sets herself on fire and commits suicide. She pays the cost of her life of being submissive and an obedient woman in the patriarchal system.

Here, Sulu’s sad demise allows the sympathy and catastrophe of women in the Indian social structure. The life without the husband appears unworthy for such women. The confession of Sulu to Shakutai enhances the wretchedness of women in the patriarchal social system. Sulu knows the soft-corner of Prabhakar for Kalpana but to survive her own life, she deliberately ignores his unpleasant act. Like every common obedient Indian women, Sulu also ignores so many wrong things about Prabhakar for Kalpana. She knows the wretchedness of being a deserted wife. She inflames Prabhakar’s emotions and helps him regarding Kalpana. She wants to remain safe with her husband by taking shield of Kalpana. Thus, in striving for her own existence; Sulu unknowingly becomes the victim of patriarchy.
2.4.2 Sexual Harassment:

In the Indian social structure, sexual harassment becomes the cause for the mishap of women. Sexual humiliations have different exemplifications to reflect in the lives of women. The sex against the ‘will’ projects the label of rape that can happen to anyone in any place. The relation of sexual relation is a matter of ‘procreation’ for women whereas men turn it as a matter of ‘recreation’. In brief, Indian women relate to sex with mind and soul whereas men look upon it as a tool to fulfill the lust. The two different views bring the sexual relation to the different outlooks of life. So, many women look at sexual relation as honor of their selves. The realization of violating this rule turns the whole relation in harassment that makes women repent.

Here, Sulu’s story expresses the story of sexual marginalization which is difficult to be unveiled to society. Sulu is usually afraid of her husband who would threaten to throw her away and take another wife. The severe tension results into white patches on her body that is why Prabhakar stops touching her. Sulu never tells all these things to Shakutai. She feels humiliated, sidelined in her life. Prabhakar’s rejection of sexual relation with Sulu makes her depressed and feels her below dignity. She hides the grey shade of her husband. Sulu is aware of the madness of her husband for Kalpana and how he happens to keep his hand on Kalpana indicating his sexual lust towards her. But being selfish, Sulu hides such things from Shakutai and warns Kalpana not to tell anything to her mother. He never touches Sulu and her desire of sex remains repressed. Her torture regarding sex goes beyond imaginative mental trauma. Moreover; he keeps murmuring the name of Kalpana in front of her. Her mental trauma cannot be healed by anything in the world. Still she bears all these things and remains silent. Perhaps she may be expecting some positive change in her husband’s personality. Prabhakar’s behavior marginalizes her at sexual level by rejecting her desire, her existence and her status in his life. For Indian women, healthy sex relation appears symbol of their honor, their existence, and their love for husbands and other related things. Naturally, rejection of sexual desire of women when they aspire goes on the side of harassment that is exactly seen in the character of Sulu in this novel.

The analysis of the characters of Kalpana, Shakutai and Sulu points out their victimization in the conventional social structure. They three meet the tragic end of their lives on account of one male namely Prabhakar. All are marginalized at different levels but appear parallel in betrayal and hatred and sufferings of their lives only because of one male Prabhakar. The catastrophes of
these three women never give them any chance to revive their lives. They become the victims of the above factors in their lives.

2.5 Yamini alias Inni:

Yamini alias Inni is another neglected woman who is Urmila’s mother. She too appears the victim of Indian social structure but is annoyed to disseminate the truth of her life to the daughter. Inni’s life is always designed by Urmī’s father and she mutually approves everything of her husband. Her life is also marginalized but she remains in the custody of her emotion and even afraid to release it after her husband’s death. This act throws light on the repressed mind of women regarding their marginalization. Inni appears to love make up and neatness. Urmī too fails to understand her mother. She argues to her mother for every small deed. After her husband’s death, Inni comes to live with Urmī. She looks after Urmī’s house and her son. Inni establishes a strong bonding between her and her grandson.

2.5.1 Patriarchy:

Women always remain subdued in the patriarchal structure. They do not utter a single word about the vestiges of rigidness of patriarchal mind-set on their lives. In fact, they obey every word of their husbands. Women try to get habituated to this rule without uttering a single word. Moreover, they do not disseminate their hidden trauma in public in order to respect their husbands. It becomes the matter of pride for men to enjoy the dependence of their wives on them. This reliance underlines their honor in society. Naturally, women get under the same impression of thought and bear every obligation of men as a part of duties of wives. The same happens with Inni.

Inni discloses the truth of her life in the flow of Kalpana’s incident. Inni’s life story articulates her victimization on account of the patriarchy. She appears to be a frustrated mother who led by her husband’s single side decision. Urmī’s father bestows Inni with household duties. He does not expect any sort of ignorance towards these duties on the stake of other concerns. All these occurrences speak on unwritten rule of patriarchy that drags women whenever they wish. Indian social structure always appears partial that always defend the side of male and digs bars of tradition to confine females. To grow up the children becomes an unwritten responsibility and
mandatory duty of women and not of men. They cannot bear any ignorance to it even they themselves become vagabond relegating this. Inni’s motherhood becomes the symbol of such women. The motherhood always imposes women with unquestionable responsibility even if they show readiness to shoulder it or not. Urmila’s father feels that Yamini is unfit for nurturing the toddler. So, he decides to send Urmila to her grandfather’s house in her small age. Inni says about the obstinate nature of her husband:

‘It was because I… because your Papa- he didn’t trust me, he thought I couldn’t …wouldn’t look after you properly. I went out one day, I didn’t leave you alone, I swear I didn’t, Diwakar was there. Then Papa came home and found you crying and I wasn’t at home. And he … oh my God, he was… (199)

A single occurrence of carelessness of women appears to be a cognizable offence for men. From one such single incident Urmila’s father feels that Yamini is not an apt person to nurture the baby. So, he himself decides to take Urmila away with him to Ranidurg to his own mother’s house. He feels Urmila unsafe in the hands of servant, Divakar, who is a male. In the Indian social structure, the helplessness becomes the second name of women. Inni also does not have a daring to protest against her husband. He becomes a single- minded person to implement his decision. It occurs in the patriarchy where men themselves make decisions without considering women’s view. The one sided declaration by her father is reflected by Inni when she says:

‘Then he decided he would take you to his mother. He didn’t say anything to me, he just took you away. I never imagined he wouldn’t bring you back I thought this was just to teach me a lesson, to punish me, but… I begged him, Urmi, I cried, I promised him I’d never leave you alone, but he wouldn’t listen. Nothing could make him change his mind. (199,200)

The Indian social- structure does not allow women to express their opinions or perceptions. Inni gets trapped in patriarchy by denying her the right of motherhood by her husband. It assaults the ‘self’of a mother. Here, Inni begs her husband for daughter but her own right of motherhood gets denied by her husband’s patriarchal mind. Thus, Inni too gets trapped in set up of patriarchy and even after such a long time even after her husband’s death she could not cater daring to disclose the social structure to Urmi. It shows the impact of culture on the mind of women.

2.6 Akka:
Akka is Kishore’s step-mother and Kishore is Urmi’s husband. Urmi has immense understanding of Akka as a woman than her step-mother-in-law. She feels nearer to her on the ground of being a woman. She works as a teacher in the school and allows Vanna her daughter to become an independent. She nurtures an understanding of Meera, as a woman. Both are the wives of one person who tortures both of them at different levels. She appears in the novel as one of the minor characters but her understanding about life, her relation with her husband and her status in the house indicates her marginalization at various levels. She lives the life of ignorance with accepting a long silence.

2.6.1 Patriarchy:

The rule of male-dominant society becomes a mandatory design imposed by men as if for the welfare of women. They address themselves as ‘savior’, ‘protector’ and benefactor of their lives. They look at the things of life through their point of view. They ignore the world of women, their desires, their pinning and their striving to justify themselves to the idols of ‘Sita ‘and ‘Savitri’. They become single-minded men to manipulate the lives of women. Such patriarchy plays a crucial role in the lives of women.

Akka appears a desperate wife who strives for her husband's love throughout her life. She becomes the victim of patriarchy by getting married to a man whose wife was dead. In the zest of career, Akka crosses the marriageable age and weds a man who was looking for mother and not a wife. In the Indian patriarchy, the marriage becomes mandatory for every woman whether willingly or unwillingly. The parents feel it a kind of burden on their shoulders and they want to release themselves from such a burden as early as possible. The same goes with Akka who crosses common age aspiration for marriage. In this whole procedure, the aspiration of Akka, her desire gets marginalized and nobody considers what she wants. They never think the inner waves of feelings of Akka. She just plunges deep into the well of life which appears full of darkness and hurdles. She does not know how she will face her own marginalization that goes in the form of solitariness. Her life after marriage begins with solitariness. This isolation appears at physical level as well as mental level also. Akka moulds her life in accordance with her husband. In this regard she says:
‘It was your aunt who told me this, she did it the day I entered this house. But she’d warned me even earlier, “My brother was crazy about his wife,” she said. “I’ve never seen any man like that and since her death,” she said, “it’s his son.” He brought the day –old baby away with him the day after the funeral, she told me, nobody could stop him. What he really wants now is a mother for that motherless child.’ (47)

This statement illustrates the cruelty done to Akka. She also mutually accepts every occurrence in her life. The patriarchal tradition does not allow women to discard their husbands even they wish to do so after realizing betrayals. Naturally, Akka also accepts everything mutually of her husband’s attitude. She gets marginalized in her life without having any fault of her own. So, in her whole life nothing comes in front of her but the compromises of her ‘self’ in conjugal life. She remains away from the love of her husband and lives a life of ignorance. She bears her husband’s detachment throughout her life.

Once, all three women sit together to discuss, to recite the poems of Meera. Akka cries after reading the Meera’s poems that appears astonishing for everyone. If seen deeply, Akka and Meera share equal stage being women in their respective lives. For Meera, her marriage becomes a loveless marriage that always dislikes her husband. However, Akka’s marriage also appears loveless marriage that she always pines for her husband’s love that she never receives till the end. Her husband does not notice even her existence in the house. He never looks at Akka as a human being. She always remains as a mother in the house and not a wife. Akka accepts the fact and gets mingled with this outlook of life. She never receives a chance to convey her emotions to her husband. Her heart burns inwardly throughout her life. So, perhaps she weeps while reading the poems of Meera. Thus, Meera and Akka becomes the victim of their husbands.

2.6.2 Sexual Humiliation:

Marriage appears a bond of trust and that of affection. So, husbands exercising sexual superiority forcefully or on demand cannot be a part of the marriage institution. It happens in conjugal life most of the time and women become the victims of sexual harassment. They conceal it apprehending the consequences and that is a taboo. Such harassment never confers on them any happiness of life.
Akka faces sexual harassment in her conjugal life that appears different from other women depicted in the novel. Meera’s sexual relation presents like a rape in the shelter of marriage and the same goes with Akka where her husband never considers her emotion. Both live in the form of solitariness of their lives. Akka feels humiliated in sexual relationship because she never senses her husband’s love in regarding sex. Their sexual relation goes without love only to fulfill the religion of bodies. Naturally, Akka feels humiliated in such a relationship which is devoid of love. Urmî’s statement seems much significant to illustrate the mental state of both these women. Meera too feels the same about sexual relation even after the birth of Kishore.

The same happens with Akka, whose daughter Vandana enters as flower of loveless marriage. Her sexual harassment goes full of plight as she knows her husband does not love her. He simply fulfills his own body’s desire and not of Akka. So, Akka feels humiliated at the sexual level where she faces solitariness in her mind which cannot be filled with anything in the world. Being, an Indian woman she can not reveal her suppression to anyone in the family. Consequently, when she reads Meera’s poems she bursts into tears. These poems become the media for Akka to express her feelings. The pursuit of her happiness never gets recognized by her husband. Being woman Akka’s grief appears beyond words. She never cries even when Vanna goes to Bombay for study, but when she reads Meera’s poems, she weeps. The agonies of both these women mingle at the same level. Akka perhaps suffers more than Meera but remains silent throughout her life. Regarding this, Mrinali Sebastian (2000:159) says in following words.

“It is this male questioning which makes it clear that Meera has been selected because of her ability to articulate: to write poetry, to write confidential diaries. ---It is through this act of writing that the story of Meera gets preference over the story of Akka, who must have had a worse marriage because her husband married her to get a mother for her son. Why is there no talk about ‘rape in marriage’ in the case of Akka?” Mrinalini raises a very genuine question regarding Akka’s sexual suppression. She dares to place this sexual relation at the rape level. Meera at least expresses these repressions through her poems and escapes from the suffocation but Akka’s suppression goes beyond this because of her adoption of grave silence. About this situation H.C. Mathur (2009:69) says “The central characteristics of maturity is the idea of learning from experience and this includes accepting some less pleasant characteristics in our partner or respectively, be in an ideal relationship. The concept of mature love shows an optimistic picture of love in the face of difficulties.”
Being a mature woman, Akka accepts the fact of her life. But her silence does not conceal the fact of being marginalized at the sexual level. Thus, she is a victim of sexual marginalization in her life.

2.7 Baijaji:

Baijaji is Urmi’s grandmother who appears in the memory of Urmi. Like Meera, she too is dead when the novel opens but her image appears in front of her through the memories of Urmi. Baijaji looks after Urmi with lot of care in the village where Urmi’s father drops her. So, naturally there is a perfect bonding between the grand-mother and the grand-daughter. After realizing the character of Meera, Urmi looks at the Baijaji through the glasses of being a woman. Here, she senses the marginalization of Baijaji at a different level.

2.7.1 Patriarchy:

The male-dominant society draws the code of conduct around the women. Women are supposed to behave inside the circle without any complaint. They expect that women should be ready to adopt and adapt themselves according to the aspirations of their male partners. Women can not violate this rule of conduct forced on them. Urmi’s grandmother appears on the canvas of novel as a woman whose life is also driven by her husband’s aspiration. She remains obedient in her husband’s house and becomes much submissive to him. The male dominant society always postulates women as per their convenience. In patriarchy, men become dominant and single-minded and impose various things on women for their own pride or happiness. Naturally, it becomes mandatory for wives to grow up to their mark. The same happens with Baijaji, as Aju (her husband) suddenly determines to let her learn English as demand of his status. So, he deputes an English woman as tutor to teach Baijaji English. At first, Baijaji is reluctant to learn it but for her husband’s wish she attempts to do so. The academic and all types of growth of women depend on their husbands’attitude. The impact of patriarchy commences right from the birth of a girl-child who faces the difference in upbringing the boy and girl babies as the parenting rely on gender discrimination. The parents develop the girl in order to access the husband’s attention as bride. Baijaji becomes the victim of such an attitude in her father’s house. Her father switches her from Kannada school to Marathi to secure a better husband. Baijaji accepts this shift and again switches to Hindi, in response to Gandhian movement as per the
desire of her father. Thus, Baijaji represents those women who always accept everything mutely and move as per the desire of men.

From generation to generation, the classes of women have remained alive under the shadow of marginalization. The women in the past and in the present become marginalized at above such a level. Their marginalization makes the reader to ponder over these facts. Women in the new generation have still remained under the burden of marginalization, but their subaltern status differs from that of their previous situation.

2.8 Vandana alias Vanna:

Vandana alias Vanna is Urmi’s friend and sister-in-law. She is the employee in one of the hospitals where Urmi meets Shakutai and the whole plot of the novel. Vanna is a modern woman who maintains career and looks after the household duties. Many times, she becomes exhausted by doing double work but does not receive any help from her husband. On the contrary, she tries to behave as per the demands of her husband but this exertion always results into her anger, complaints and tears. She feels it difficult to manage both the things at once. Vanna and Urmi, both are very good friends of each other and maintain proper rapport between each other. There can be the changes in the pattern of marginalization in modern world but it is true that still women become victims of marginalization at different levels. Vanna too becomes the victim of marginalization.

2.8.1 Patriarchy:

Patriarchal mindset enforces the supremacy of men in the domestic world. Nobody can challenge their words. They strategically strengthen their power in the house in such a way that even in their absence everything goes as per their desire. They imprint their mark in such a way that women do not have the daring to fight against it at any cost. The dependence syndrome always appears in the personalities of women.

Among all above marginalized women, Vandana (Vanna) represents the modern generation. Vanna represents the stereotyped image of an Indian woman who feels proud to follow the path paved by her husband. Instead of considering her career, Vanna always desires to get married, have children and look after household duties. Her mother; Akka insists on her to pursue career
but she usually likes to clean her house and get engrossed in house-hold duties. Vanna tries to balance at both the levels but she does not receive any kind of help from her husband.

In patriarchy, women always suppose to be bestowed with household duties. And this has such immense an effect on their personalities. Vanna too is addicted to the house work as she wants Harish to be happy. Harish does not like any kind of mess so Vanna untiringly does all the work to satisfy her husband. Thus; unknowingly she gets driven by her husband.

2.8.2 Gender-biased Attitude:

Gender-discrimination points out the unlimited favour to men regarding every house hold duties or supremacy. Women remain at inferior level who merely obeys the orders of males. They can be exempted from domestic duties even being careerist women. They never obtain any concession in domestic duties however they have to do it profoundly. On the contrary, she copes with the situation alone and men remain careless. Vanna is a careerist woman who faces the same problem in her life.

Vanna becomes the victim of gender biased society in every walk of her life. Being a woman, she performs the duty of looking after her offspring. Women usually face the gender biased attitude of society while performing the job. Like her husband Harish, Vanna too does her job, but her efforts are neglected in the house. Harish never shoulders any responsibility as a result Vanna suffers at both physical and mental levels. She gets tortured by such double burden. She performs the role of a dutiful wife, a caring mother and an impressive employee. But everywhere she faces biased view of society. Once, a single act of negligence towards her sick daughter brings guilt to her mind. She remains in the smoke of doubt from children’s point of view. In all this tight-rope duties of house and practical world, Harish gets acquitted from every charge of negligence. On the contrary, Vanna faces everything regarding domestic duties as well as child-rearing task. Harish never remains at home for any issue but nobody even her daughter also does not show her anger towards him. Instead, Vanna goes in the cage of doubts for every single incident by her daughter, by society and by her own mind. Basically, Vanna also performs a job like Harish but her tiredness gets ignored by everyone. She walks on a strict path because of being a woman whereas Harish remains on the safe side of being a man. Vanna’s daughter Mandira does not want to listen to anything from her mother. She looks at her mother as an
irresponsible and careless mother. She always develops the same complex in her mind about Vanna’s behavior that is why Mandira happens to sense negligence by her mother. Basically, Vanna always remains at her kid’s service, but her work, her devotion becomes sidelined in everybody’ eyes. But her children do not understand it. Vanna faces gender-biased attitude in her home. Her husband Harish stays away from house but it does not become an uncognizable offence in society. But a single occasional absence of Vanna from house appears to be a major offence. The biased social view accepts Harish’s absence by default but the Vanna does not receive the same treatment in the social atmosphere. Mandira, her daughter always condemns Vanna for every single trivial matter. It happens for years and years in the Indian culture that the distribution of house-hold duties always are made on the ground of gender biased perception. The mother, being a woman always becomes responsible for every incident regarding family affairs or kids whereas males are acquitted conveniently away from all this mess. Men keep themselves aloof from domestic duties. And even nobody blames them of neutrality. Vanna say:

-----Urmi, why is it nobody thinks of blaming Harish? He's never around, but it's never his fault. (75)

Vanna’s soul is in agony because of imbalanced distribution of domestic work. Naturally, women get under the burden of domestic duties. According to, Simon-de-Beauvoir, (1997:492) “woman is doomed to immortality because for her to be moral would mean that she must incarnate a being of superhuman qualities: ‘the various women’ of proverbs the ‘perfect mother’, ‘the honest woman’ and so on.”

Here, Vanna too endeavors to be superhuman in the house and at her job also. She gets crushed in the unfavorable distribution gender-biased society.

2.8.3 Submissiveness:

The Indian social structure expects submissiveness among women. It is said that women should surrender to men all their means. They dedicate themselves to their husbands regarding every issue whether inside the family shelter or outside the world. Many mythologies glorify the submissive image of women in the Indian social structure. Thus, they always try to be so. Here, Vanna looks very much submissive to Harish. She surrenders herself by devaluing her own
image. Thus, submissiveness of women glorifies woman’s personality in myth which is implied in Meera’s lines also:

Fixed forever in your places, face to face the two of us, like Siva and his nodding Bull. (82)

Here, the women are the symbol of ‘nodding bull’ who looks quite inferior to male. Majority of women in the Indian society submits themselves to their husbands to forget their own existence. The novel *The Binding Vine* carries the portrayal of these women who appear submissive to their husbands in regarding every issue. The reason behind this submissiveness is the impact of culture that admires and glorifies the submissiveness among women.

“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. (83)

Vanna uses the language of Harish in his absence. It shows her submissiveness to him. Her every word revolves around ‘Harish says’, ‘Harish likes’. Vanna’s willingness does not become important than Harish’s word. Harish anticipates Vanna without her own ‘image’ and ‘self’ and should mingle with him forgetting her own existence. Naturally, the male – dominant society desires the same kind of conduct from every woman. Vanna never goes against her husband’s wish though even if she feels otherwise. Urmi does not like Vanna’s submissive nature. The Indian social culture marginalizes women in such a way that women also ‘self’ marginalize themselves on several grounds.

Every single thing runs as Harish’s desires. In his absence also, Vanna follows the same attitude and expectation rigorously. She never violates the rule carved by her husband. In the global world, the nature of submissiveness goes different which becomes visible in Vanna’s mute understanding. At the time of birth of Pallavi, Vanna wants to have another baby boy but her husband ignores her wish by illustrating various things in such a philosophical way that Vanna dismisses her demand and agrees with him without complaint. This also reflects in the following conversation where her ‘wish’ gets marginalized conveniently by Harish:

‘Two is enough. But Urmi,’ She said, her face wistful, ’I’d have loved to have had a son.’ ‘You should have told Harish that.’
'I did. And he quoted population figures at me. And he said, one, surely I’m not the kind of woman who craves for sons, am I? And, two, what makes me think the next one will be a boy? He’s right, only. . . I wouldn’t have minded taking a chance.’ It was her face when she said that made me furious. I burst out, ‘You let him bulldozer you, you crawl before him. . .’ (80)

Thus, Vanna’s desires are always dismissed by Harish on the ground of population figures or any other rational issues. He intends only to reinforce the dominance over his wife in every matter. Vanna also works but she does not escape from domestic work such as cleaning the house, rearing children and so on. Harish, being a male, does not help her by adhering to the excuse of tiredness. Many women suffer from such wretched conditions without uttering a single word. Women always cope alone with the house-hold duties. Thus, Vanna becomes such a lady whose life relies on the rock of Harish. In the absence of her husband, and she follows the same life style carved by Harish. In this regard Beauvoir (1997:450) says “wife looks after his children and guards of things of the past that she has amassed. But she has no other job than to maintain and provide for everyday life in an orderly way; she perpetuates the species without change, she ensures the even rhythm of the days and the continuity of the home, seeing to it that the doors are locked. But she is allowed no direct influence upon the future nor upon the world; does she reach out beyond herself towards the social group only through her husband as intermediary.”

This is nothing but the submissiveness that becomes the feminine trait. The careerist women need to walk on the tight rope every day by balancing domestic work as well as performing work. Now-a-days, women become educated but unfortunately they need to cope with many more things around them. Thus, Vanna too bends with various kinds of expectations. Now-a-days women like Vanna pursue double duties – i.e. to perform exclusively at office level and satisfy the family members also. The word ‘career’ makes the women conscious of themselves. However, she gets more tightened with household duties that impart nothing but mere mental exploitation. Vanna’s helpless behavior makes thereader ponder over her situation. Urmī says:

I remember how Vanna, who had known Harish for two years before she married him and had come to know his family too, had thrown herself at me, sobbing, as soon as she saw me, the first time I visited her after her marriage. ‘I’m all right. They’re all very good people, but. . .‘She could explain. ‘You’ll known when you get married yourself,’ she said at last. (100)
This illustrates the mental trauma which she is unable to express in words. Right from her birth, Vanna feels ignored by her father. She becomes nostalgic of expectations of her daughter, Mandira from her. She recalls the memories of her childhood days of how her father ignores her existence. For him, there is no existence of Akka and Vanna. Both do not make any difference because he never gets connected to them by heart. Thus, Vanna becomes the child of loveless marriage and is deprived of the love of her father forever in her life as a child. She remembers her father who never considers even her presence at home. In this regarding this Vanna says:

I remember I always felt a little sorry for him; my last memories of him are of pathetic, faded, ghost-like man in a wheelchair. Before that he had been a cheerful kind of man, hopefully offering us jokes that were hard to laugh at (---) Vanna however, never failed to laugh at his jokes. She was a kind girl. Or was it sycophancy? Maybe she laughed so that he would notice her. But he never did. For him, there was only Kishore. (52)

Thus agonies of pining for love make her depressed for paternal love. So, perhaps she becomes so submissive to her husband in order to maintain her existence in the house.

2.8.4 **Quest for Identity:**

A journey of quest for identity emanates from an awareness of marginalization. This consciousness makes the women to think of their own image or own existence. Vanna lives under the sublimation of suppression that is expressed in the following statement:

well, I’m lucky,’ Vanna said matter-of-factly, my father expects nothing from me. Infact, I wonder whether he knows I exist! (53)

It appears like a mental trauma of identity crisis. Vanna feels neglected and humiliated mentally by her father. She uses to wait for the favour of her father but never obtains even any glance of love from him. She expresses a futile attempt in the following paragraph as conversing with Urmila regarding her father’s love--

‘For years I kept hoping that my father would begin to know me, to love me. And then I saw you and your father together. You cleared up the house after your grandfather died, do you remember? You were there for a month, just the two of you. After seeing you, I knew my father didn’t love me, no he would never love me. I gave up that hope then.’ (174)

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Vanna discloses the bitter reality of her father’s attitude towards her that makes her pain more poignant. In spite of this, she deals with the entire situation with love and respect even forgetting her own marginalization. Vanna’s identity-crisis goes at this level where she expects her existence recognized by her father. She tries to do so many things that could attract her father and make him happy. But all her attempts prove futile. So, perhaps she becomes submissive to Harish in order to get identified, to get satisfied by his fatherly figure to get protected. Thus, her life journey becomes the path of identity-crisis.

2.9 Urmila:

Urmila is the central character and the protagonist also in the novel *The Binding Vine*. She is the dot from where all relations of women emanate. She is a lecturer in college and appears to be very strong woman. She is the only assertive character in this novel. Her husband lives away from her in order to earn money. So, Urmila lives in the house of her mother, Inni. An untimely sad demise of her daughter namely, Anu throws her in the pool of depression. As a result, she gets secluded from everyone and lives in her own shell of solitariness. For her, to forget her daughter means to wipe her out from her own world and that becomes prime thought in her mind. So, she clings to the grief of Anu till she meets Kalpana, a more depressed tragic woman and her mother Shakuntala and Meera’s compositions. The met with Shakuntala makes-over her life and it gives her a new outlook of society to subsist. Urmila is modern and strong lady. She is always aware of her existence in life but even at some certain cases she gets marginalized being a woman.

2.9.1 Gender-biased Perception:

Urmila faces inequality in her upbringing with her brother, Amrut. Once, Inni goes outside for work keeping baby girl in the hands of Diwakar, an old servant who looks after a baby girl with proper efficiency. But Urmila’s father does not like her upbringing in the hands of Diwakar, a male. This gender-biased attitude transports Urmila to her grandfather’s house where she continues to live without her mother. But this does not happen with Amrut, who enjoys the happiness under the roof of parents. The gender biased perception prevents her away from the love of parents. The chastity of women becomes the prime cause of marginalization at every level. Regarding
social equality, Beauvoir (1997:14) writes “I can not be just to books which treat of woman as woman---My idea is that all of us, men as well as women, should be regarded as human beings.”

It is the regret that society never appreciates and celebrates women at an equal level. The language used by men and women disseminate the psyche of gender role. It reflects in the speech of Amrut while talking to Urmila. In India, certain words are used by males only and certain words are restricted to women only. The conversation of two males is treated as intellectual discussion whereas talk between women becomes gossiping. Urmila becomes aware of such spoiled male dominant view regarding language so she objects whenever gets a chance. Amrut, her brother sardonically uses the following specific ‘word’ about females which unfolds the deep rooted view about women in the society:

---, what happened between you two in the morning? ‘Don’t say “you two” in that superior manner-arbitrating between two silky quarrelsome females. ‘Well, what happened between you two superior beings- if an inferior male may ask?’(25)

The tone of Amrut’s statement becomes sardonic because Amrut represents the male oriented society. He is also under the same impression of male-female language. Basically, Urmila appears confident and contented with full of life. When Urmila declares of her rejoining college, Amrut calls her ‘Bossy female’, who rules the class. Thus, dog-determined and self-willed women always get underestimated by the conventional men. They do not believe in their performance and drag them to the ground level of common traits of womanism. When we look at all these women characters, Urmila appears a self-controlled lady who looks at all these incidents as ‘sprouts of spring’. She sidelines her grief under the carpet of female sensibility and says:

‘After Anu died, the voice stopped. Then I saw Kalpana, I met Shakutai, I read Meera’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’m saying Vanna? They never had a chance. (174)

Despite this, all women have a feeling of springs of hope in their minds. They meet their apolocapsies being women, being devoid of power and still have rays of hope in the forthcoming future. This spring of hope keep them alive for perpetuating their happiness. This pursuit of happiness touches Urmila’s mind and commences to make her feel the touch of womanism through all these women. Through Urmila, Shashi Deshpande expresses the predicament of

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women in three generations. The women in the past, present and future that speak out about women’s plight and predicament when they are trapped in the cage of patriarchy, convention and gender biased social structure. Urmi becomes the medium to analyze the woman in the direction of marginalization. *The Binding Vine* is an extension of Shashi Deshpande’s desire of asserting that woman should register their voices to protest against and to shatter the idealism of patriarchal conventions.