

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Female Body: Site of Domination and Resistance in Shashi Deshpande's**

*In the Country of Deceit*

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**By**

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**Letter of Approval**

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## Abstract

This research is a study of the Indian novelist Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit* which presents the female characters in the continual struggle for their identity and freedom in the patriarchal Indian society. Devayani, a young spinster of Indian society, is the protagonist of the novel. The continual coaxing of her relatives for her marriage shows how female body becomes a contested site of power structures of the society and shows how patriarchal norms and values control and dominate the female body by means of the institution of marriage. The discourses that spinsterhood is immoral and shameful for a family, or female should remain sexually chaste before marriage or the only way for an Indian woman to fulfill her sexual desire is marriage and so on operate in the society to stabilize the patriarchal power center as they help assert the male domination upon the female body. Devayani subverts those discourses, the stereotype of the Third World woman and the restriction imposed on her sexuality by refusing to marry the men her relatives arrange for her and having physical relation to a married police officer named Ashok. She confesses the sexual pleasure in the relation full of love and devoid of control and domination which shows that the love without affection and proper cooperation is no more than the marital rape. Devayani manifests the heterogeneity in the female experiences, with the assertion of her different stance regarding marriage and fulfillment of the desire, rejects the homogeneity of female domination and the notion of global sisterhood as assumed by Western feminism.

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## **I. Resistance against Female Marginalization in Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit***

This research analyzes Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit* from the perspective of Third World feminism. The basic attempt of this research is to project the female resistance against the established social norms and values of the patriarchal society. Devayani, the protagonist of the novel is in the quest for self autonomy or freedom does not remain within the rigid boundary of patriarchal social norms and values rather she challenges them. For the analysis of this text, this research examines the socio-political circumstances of Devayani and her resistance along the line of Third World feminism as the theoretical framework.

Domination and marginalization of female can be traced from the very beginning of human civilization. This tradition even got consolidated during the colonial era and spread throughout the Third World societies. Colonialism is harsher in its consequences upon females than to males. Females' pain has not lessened in post-independence India even after the end of colonialism. Males have transferred their sufferings of colonialism upon females. They have got a sense of freedom but female has not freed from domination and exploitation. Also in the post-colonial period, they are suppressed and oppressed by network of patriarchy. On the account of the influence of the patriarchy, females are doubly marginalized, not only by males but also by females. Women are always manipulated not only individually but also institutionally in the society which is based on the male dominated structure. Yet there are also some histories of females' revolutions. In different spans of time females have resisted boldly for their identities and existence. Their resistance has been physical, ideological or mostly silent in the history of the Indian societies shaped by patriarchal ideology.

This research is a study of the Indian writer Shashi Deshpande's novel *In the Country of Deceit* which is written from the perspective of middle-class Indian women. It presents reflections of their life and their confusing and conflicting relation with males in the society in the form of first person narrative. It presents the major character Devayani's ceaseless struggle for her identity and freedom in the patriarchal society to avoid the patriarchal control over her body in the name of marriage. She is an Indian, a representative Third World woman, a spinster, intellectual, well-educated, devoted to family, well respected, reserved and introspective who represents the Third World female by rejecting the stereotypes about females. Furthermore, this research presents the ambivalent situation of females as most of them are dissatisfied with the patriarchal control over them but they think that they have to bear the patriarchal culture so as to exist in society. Mostly, their resistance is ambivalent as they are confined to the personal sphere to show the tendency of resistance but they hesitate to resist patriarchy overtly as seen with the case of Kusuma in the novel. She kills cockroaches and pulls their moustache as if she is pulling the moustache of her husband to show the resistance against him but she does so only inside the room. The women try to gain autonomous agency of their life but they have been compelled to follow the cultural structure of patriarchal society that never lets them to be autonomous. Devayani dares to make love affair with Ashok who has wife and daughter but she does not cross the line drawn by patriarchy for women. In the same way, Devayani's mother has also wanted to spend the money from her account in her daughter Savi's marriage but her husband does not allow her because of his belief of male superiority.

This research explores the major character's search for emancipation and independence in the male-dominated society where marriage has become a tool for

imposing patriarchal ideology upon the females. In the novel, the protagonist, Devayani, is pressurized for marriage by her relatives like her aunt Sindhu, sister Shavitri and uncle Keshav. But the pressure is indirectly applied upon her instead of telling her directly to marry. They write numbers of letter which are full of emotional statements to persuade her. Capturing the confusing and painful realities of Devayani's relation with the married-man named Ashok, the novel does not only project the differences in forms and degrees of discriminations experienced by the middle class Indian women, but also the various possible strategies for resistance. So, the study of *In the Country of Deceit* engages not only with the sexist forms of discriminations, but also critically analyzes how the strategic use of the same body and space where she has been discriminated- the dialectic scene of gendered discrimination and resistance in the Indian society. The body of the Indian women belongs only to their husband and they should remain chaste and virgin before marriage. There is no chance for them to express their sexual desires before the males other than her husband. The widows need to follow strict codes and being a spinster is regarded as the shame to the family. They have no choice but to marry and let their body be controlled by the males but the males enjoy the freedom and are not subjected to the criticisms even if they have the extramarital affairs. This gender discrimination and patriarchal control over female body has been resisted by the actions of Devayani, first by opting to remain a spinster and second, loving and having sexual union with a married police officer, Ashok.

Shashi Deshpande, born in India in 1938, writes about female issues in the Indian patriarchal social context. She is one of the most overshadowed yet confident voices who explore individual and universal predicaments through the female characters. Her concern for women's quest for self has been reflected in her novels



which are deeply rooted in the line of social-moral-sexual fiction. Her fictions project the characters who are concerned with their 'selves' and they learn to be honest to themselves. Her protagonists are from the middle class educated women who are financially independent and represent a larger part of the contemporary Indian society. Her heroines, sometimes, are attracted to the comforts of traditional society because they find themselves in the situation of uncertainties and doubts whenever they reject the rituals that are the vestiges of past. This situation of both attraction and rejection of society creates a situation of ambivalence in part of the protagonist. But they never compromise ignoring their feminine consciousness to the male dominated society. Rather they seek to justify themselves and become ready to face whatever comes ahead.

Trapped between tradition and modernity, Deshpande's sensitive heroines are fully conscious of being victims of gross gender discrimination prevalent in a conservative male-dominated society. So, they are always in conflict between the idea women have of themselves and idea that society imposes on them of what being a woman is. With the presentation of such female characters Deshpande has re-incarnated the new Indian woman in traditional Indian society and has, thus, reinforced the female dilemma in her novels. Hence, her regard for the social problems especially of the middle class women is evident.

Most of the protagonists of Deshpande are females and the world, which they occupy, is domestic. Her fiction depicts women in their traditional roles: woman as granddaughter, as grandmother, as daughter, as wife, as mother. 'The existential struggle' of the women who refuse to float along with current form is the core of Deshpande's novels. Her characters refuse to surrender their individual selves. Their inability to compromise and surrender inevitably result in isolation and loneliness. In

their existential struggle they suffer intensely and seek to search their selfhood. Her novels are peopled by women who are in perceptual quest for meaning and value of life. Since her novels are woman centered, the "feminine consciousness" becomes the central issue of her novels.

Shashi Deshpande's first book, *The Legacy*, a collection of short stories, is the fictional recreation of India. There is nothing sensational or exotic about her India: any Maharajahs or snake charmers. She does not write about the grinding poverty of the Indian masses; she describes another kind of deprivation- the emotional one. The woman deprived of love, understanding, and companionship is the center of her work. She shows how traditional Indian society is biased against women, but she recognizes that it is very often women who oppress their sisters, though their values are the result of centuries of indoctrination.

One of her well known novels, *Roots and Shadows*, which is also the winner of Nanjangud Thirumalamba Award, describes the break up of a joint family, held together by the money and authority of an old aunt, a childless widow. When she dies, she leaves her money to the heroine, Indu, a rebel. Indu leaves home as a teenager to study in a big city, and is now a journalist; she has married the man of her choice. But she realizes that her freedom is illusory; she has exchanged the orthodoxy of the village home for the conventions of the "smart young set" of the city where material well-being has to be assured by scarifying principles, if necessary. Indu returns to the house when her great aunt dies after more than 12 years' absence. As she attempts to take charge of her legacy, she comes to realize the strength and the resilience of the village women she had previously dismissed as weak.

In her next novel *That Long Silence* for which she is awarded Sahitya Academy Award, Deshpande has portrayed the dilemma of a woman writer, who is

also a house wife. Being a writer she is expected to present her views and ideas before the society but she still remains silent probing into her past, struggling with her present and trying to establish a rapport with her future. *That Long Silence* is a heroine-dominated novel and shows a woman facing the problems so frequently discussed by sociologists. The quest for identity is a theme in this novel.

In *That Long Silence*, Shashi Deshpande's achievement lies in the depiction of her central character Jaya who critically evaluates her condition in the society and her actions. She is representative of girls brought up in middle class families in post-independence India, a time when most parents strove hard to provide their children with English education and exposure to western modes of living and thinking. Ultimately, Jaya seeks to break the age-old silence in order to explore the inner world of Indian woman's sensibility.

Another novel, *If I Die Today*, contains elements of detective fiction in which one of the memorable characters is Mriga, a 14 years old girl. Her father, Dr. Kulkarni, appears modern and westernized. Yet he is seized by the Hindu desire for a son and heir, and never forgives Mriga for not being a son; her mother, too, is a sad, suppressed creature, too weak to give Mriga the support and love a child needs to grow into a well balanced adult.

*The Dark Hold No Terrors*, Deshpande's first published novel and also the winner of Nanajangud Thirumalamba Award, seems to be grown out of one of her short stories "A Liberated Woman". The story is about a young woman who falls in love with a man of a different caste, and marries him in spite of parental opposition. She is intelligent and hardworking, and becomes a successful doctor, but her marriage breaks up because of her success. In the novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita, too, falls in love with Manhor, lower in caste than her, and also marries him without

her parents' consent. She resents the treatment of her mother that is lopsided and based on gender difference. That's why she defies her mother to become a doctor, and defies caste restrictions by marrying the man she loves. Her husband Manohar is a failure and resents the fact that his wife is the primary breadwinner. Sarita uses Boozie to advance her career, and this further worsens her relationship with Manohar. Manohar cannot endure her growing reputation among the people, who hardly recognize him. Therefore, he turns out to be a sadist at night. Sarita cannot accept the pain and the way he treats her. So, she leaves him and returns to her parents' house.

Sarita suspiciously observes the family members for she had already rejected them in search of female equality in her stay in her parents' house. Her sense of rebellion too, does not let her endure a life of alienation and isolation in her father's house because she also wants to be incorporated within social system with new vigor. So she decides to meet her husband again with a determination to face whatever comes ahead.

*In the Country of Deceit* is an entirely and distinctively Deshpande-novel; in terms of the texture, the characters, all typically and instantly recognizably of Deshpande's voice and style. In the novel, she depicts the middle class Indian woman who seeks an identity beyond that of the familial one, who seeks a role outside of the culturally prescribed one, and this protagonist is no different, except that she is one of Deshpande's most quietly radical protagonists to date. Devayani is a self-proclaimed spinster as she herself chooses her life as a spinster refusing to marry, an intellectual, well read devoted to family, well respected, reserved and introspective. She has challenged patriarchy being a spinster and taking the responsibilities of family after the death of her parents. She falls deeply and earnestly in love with a police district

superintendent, who is a married man with a daughter. But she has not got chance to marry with him because she has compelled to follow the line drawn by patriarchy.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande's novels are concerned with the women's efforts for self discovering; an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist's place in it. The movement of Deshpande's heroines from their parental home to the outside world, through education and marriage, do not really initiate them into knowledge of the self.

This novel *In the Country of Deceit* is set in post-independence India. The setting gives platform to explore the growing sense of autonomy and freedom in Indian women. The novel is in first person narrative where the story unfolds in the form of letters sent by protagonist's relatives. It also depicts the conflict between the male and female. Through the novel, she attempts to explore the impact of patriarchy which is harsher and chain upon female. While doing so, she has created the female protagonist, Devayani is victimized or suppressed and bounded from male dominated society. The protagonist can be taken as the representative of marginalized females in the Indian territory though she is an educated middle class Indian woman. The novel projects not only the differences in forms and degrees of institutionalized discriminations experienced by Devayani, but also the various strategies for resistance. She is intellectual, well respected, reserved and introspective woman who resists third world patriarchy being a spinster, mistress and taking the responsibilities of family after the death of her parents. Being spinster is a form of resistance against the patriarchal control over her body in the name of marriage. In other words, the central character represents the Third World female by blurring the stereotypes about the females.

Actually, in the male dominated society marriage is a major tool for imposing patriarchal ideology. Devayani has also got numbers of letter from her relatives which are full of emotion to persuade her. On the contrary, she does not want to trap herself in the net of marriage. She loves personal autonomy and peace so is living alone in her home where she had spent childhood with her parents and sister. But now her parents have been died and sister has got marriage. Even then, she is not ready to leave the place where she has endured a lot of struggles in the early age of her life. It shows her resistance against cultural structure of third world patriarchal society where a spinster is not taken as moral.

Devayani has family got responsibilities as a son of the home for which she has no agency in the society where she lives. It shows female resistance against male-dominated Third World culture. In other words, her activities have strongly resisted the patriarchal norms and values of the Indian society forcefully. She explains her struggle to challenge the society. She relates her situation:

All these years, I had been the accompanist to other people's lives. First I had been a follower of my spirited, beautiful older sister, then in charge of my parents' lives, the observer of their tragedy. For a brief while I had acted as my cousin Kshama's helper and later I had been Sindhu's attendant after her surgery. Now for the first time, I had to play solo. I had no one else to look after, no one to think about. (8)

Devayani spends her most of the time to take care of others. In other sense, family responsibilities have come one after another upon her but she does not run away from them rather she copes as a responsible family member. Moreover, her work has challenged the patriarchy and now, she is feeling free and solo. She has blurred the stereotype of the third world women by stepping on complex way of life. Her work is

not lower than a respected male in patriarchy. In this way Devayani has crossed the line drawn by patriarchy.

In the novel, the female body has been presented as the site of domination in the patriarchal, Indian society. Females have been exploited not only in the society but also at their own home in the patriarchal Indian society. Furthermore, an unmarried daughter is taken as burden and obstacle of family's prestige. The very situation is vividly seen in the novel where Devayani's mother has suffered from epilepsy when she was a child, and though she recovered, she was, as far a marriage proposal went, the girl who gets fits. Her father could have found her a man who would marry her for his money. But he refused to do this; he preferred the humiliation of having an unmarried daughter at home. He had his eyes on a young man working in his bank; a man whom he had first spoken about his daughter had refused, saying he could not marry as that time because of family responsibilities. On the way, her father wanted to marry his daughter not for her happiness rather than to release from burden and clean obstacle of prestige of his family.

Similarly, females are highly manipulated by long span of patriarchal ideology where everything is right whatever a male does at home. Women have no consent and agency in simple domestic affairs like males. For that they need to take permission from their father, brother and husband. The very suppressed or oppressed situation can be clearly visualized in the following lines of Devayani. She affirms the hierarchical treatment of females in her family:

In my mother's eyes, my father could do no wrong. She gave him her complete loyalty; she never argued with him about anything he did, she never complained about the hardships that she asserted herself was when she remade her jewelry for Savi when she was getting married.

They argued about this; he was deeply unhappy, but she insisted. For the first time in their life together, there was a division between them.

(62)

Additionally, most of the females do not have own bank account. By the way, if they have money in their bank account they won't get permission to spend in the family affairs. In the same way, in the novel, Devayani's mother could not get authority to use her account in her daughter's wedding. The very situation can be known by the following lines of the central character. She recounts further:

After my father's death, we found out that there was enough money in my mother's bank account to pay for the wedding ' why didn't you use this? I asked her in astonishment. My father would not let her; he would not permit his daughter's wedding to be paid for his wife's money. And she went along with him. I could not let him be humiliated, she said. (63)

Unfortunately, willingness of Devayani's mother does not fulfill because of so called superiority of male. Her husband captures all the authority over their daughter's marriage. In this sense, he has ignored the solution of problem and brings difficulties in his life because of his pride of being male. In other words, male ideology has not provided female involvement in familial affairs. So she has compelled to loss participant in domestic function.

*In the Country of Deceit* (2008) has been discussed by the scholars in manifold ways. In other words, many critics along with philosophers have come up with the criticism to the fore to criticize her novels. Nevertheless many book reviewers put their perspective on these differently. The reviewer Rekha Narula states in her review “Dispelling of A Chimera: *In The Country of Deceit*”:



*In the Country of Deceit* is the love story of Devayani, a young and creative woman. She is quite happy with her single state in life when the novel opens up. However, it is soon disturbed when she meets Ashok, the newly posted DSP of Rajnour at her friend Rani's house . . . . At the same time one cannot overlook the fact that the author has a very balanced approach. She is meticulous about the socio-cultural milieu of the society for which she writes. The love story of Devayani had no future and she was fully conscious of it from. (199-204)

In the review Narula has dealt about the theme of love in the backdrop of the feminine sensibility, the author goes on to describe the protagonist's quest in search of answer to some of the existential questions of life. Moreover, Narula shows protagonist's resistance against the socio-cultural norms of the society.

Similarly, P. Ramamoorthi in the essay "My Life Is My Own: A Study of Shashi Deshpande's Novels" writes, "Shashi Deshpande's novels are concerned with a woman's quest for self; an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysterious of life and the protagonists' place in it" (38). Here the essayist has dealt with the influence of Third World feminism on Shashi Deshpande's heroines.

Devayani, the heroine of the novel, explores the female possibilities in the Indian society that makes them autonomous from her own experience of female predicament of an oppressed creature. Issue of feminism is the core of his analysis. Another critic R. Mala in the essay "Sexual Predicament and Shashi Deshpande's Woman" observes:

Deshpande's protagonists have generally followed the course and concern of the own life: of young women, career –oriented, getting married, having children and the then wondering "What Next". Her first person narrators are for the most part intelligent, educated, and

contemporary life. The vitality of her characterization stems from her own sense of perception and her experience of life. (51)

In her analysis, Mala has focused on the protagonists of Deshpande who are educated, married and having children within the search for their won roots and identity. On the contrary, in the novel *In the Country of Deceit*, Deshpande's protagonist, Devayani, is a spinster who takes all responsibilities of family after the death of her parents. In other words, Deshpande has blurred the stereotype of the women of the Third World that has been created by western feminism.

Thus, different critics have analyzed Shashi Deshpande's *In the Country of Deceit* relating them about of love in the backdrop of the feminine sensibility, domination and search for identity or emancipation. This research however, does not deny various views rather attempts to explore the marginalization of female in the third world male-dominated society that is one of the major issues throughout the novel. Taking a leaf out of such criticisms as above, the proposed thesis reads the issue of female body as domination and resistance. In order to explore this, the novel is approached from the perspective of Third World feminism.

Third World feminism is a criticism that deals with the unique experiences of the women in the non-western countries. The feminists who are engaged in such activities are known as Third World feminists. They see the loopholes of Western feminism in its inability to address the history and heritage of the Third World cultures. It is due to such inability of the Western feminism to understand the cultures of the Third World countries; they fail to address different types of suppression and marginalization of women in different scenarios of global and local patriarchy. It also sees the vicious functioning of matriarchy that functions as a unique experience of those cultures. Third-world feminism commenced as a

response to perceived failures of western feminism in the early 1900s. It seeks to challenge the essentialist definitions of femininity of western feminism, which are over-emphasized and generalized versions of the experiences of upper middle-class white women.

Different theorists like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ketu Katrak and Uma Narayan have criticized Western feminism because of its ethnocentric orientation and neglect of the unique experiences of women from third-world countries or the existence of feminism(s) indigenous to Third World countries. According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, the experiences of the women on "internal racism, classism and homophobia" are denied and they are marginalized. (49)

Mohanty in her work *Feminism without Borders* (2003) recognizes a deep belief in the power and significance of Third World feminist thinking in struggles for economic and social justice. It emphasizes an enterprise and a project that embodies the international commitment for best feminist practices. Through this commitment, she is urging the possibility of the border-less feminism. She argues:

Feminism without borders is not the same as "border-less" feminism. It acknowledges the fault lines, conflicts, differences, fears, and the containment that borders represent. It acknowledges that there is no one sense of a border, that the lines between and through nations, races, classes, sexualities, religions, and disabilities . . . a feminism without borders must envision change and social justice work across these lines of demarcation and division. (2)

In her analysis, the speaking of plurality and crossing the narrowness of borders avoiding the silences and exclusions is evidential. For her "Feminism without

Borders" stresses the most expansive and inclusive visions of feminism thereby transcending the very borders of feminism established by the western feminists.

There is an important difference between Western and Third World feminism in terms of conceptualization of woman as a subject of struggle. Western feminists make equality between men and women as the centre of their struggle. According to Saunders, Third World feminism stresses on the "satisfaction of basic material needs as a pressing issue in the context of disadvantageous international economic order" (6). In this way, the principle struggle of women of the Third World should have been centered on the satisfaction of basis needs, and basic rights. They believe that women should attain freedom not only from gender related equalities, but also from those related to race, class, and national asymmetries.

Gayatri Chakarvorty Spivak examines the effects of political independence of subaltern of inferior women, blacks, and other marginalized women or female subjects by dialogue between male dominated West and male-dominated East. She argues:

In subaltern studies, because of the violence of imperialist epistemic, social and disciplinary inscription, a project understood in essentialist terms must traffic in a radical textual practice of difference. . . . Subaltern historiography must confront the impossibility of such gestures. The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us the imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme. ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 27-28)

Spivak sees the epistemic violence as a bitter side of colonial experience. She even takes the same tool to strike back to imperial thinking and behavior. Her critique is rather academic because she sees epistemic violence as a naughty face of colonial

stigma and violence. Therefore, she despises the essentializing, dominating, and coercive Western male and female tendency thereby valorizing the subalternity of the then so called colonized countries.

Ketu Katrak, another prominent theorist, defines Third World women's body under the title "Theorizing a Politics of Female Body" and says that women's body has been colonized by patriarchy. Therefore, Third World women writers try to decolonize their body in their writing and resist the patriarchy through internal and external exile. Mostly women have dominated through language and their sexuality in so called patriarchal society. By using the English language, colonizers impose hegemonic dominance in racial the native language and culture. Ketu Katrak argues that, "The uses of English over indigenous languages, imposed by colonialism and how linguistic choices encode cultural belonging or alienation and second the female body and generated inequalities in patriarchal postcolonial society" (1).

Uma Narayan in *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* (1997) aims at the related notion of nation, identity, and tradition to show how western and third world scholars have misrepresented third world culture and such as nationalism, post-colonial studies and the cultural politics of debates over tradition and westernization in third world context. According to her, since western feminism cannot locate the unique experience of third world cultural designations, it is invalid in such context. She argues, "[T]hird World feminism is not mindless mimicking of Western agendas" (13). She further sees:

[W]omen in Western contexts might be unfamiliar with the violence against women connected to the contemporary functioning of the institution of dowry and arranged marriages. They have no strangers to battery and violence prevalent within their won various forms of

marriage and family arrangements. They are no strangers either to the sense of shame that accompanies admitting victimization, or to a multiplicity of material, social, and cultural structures that pose serious impediments to women seeking assistance or to their leaving abusive relationships. (13)

In such designation, it shows that western feminism cannot address different and so-called unique experiences of patriarchal domination, body politics, caste and racial hegemony of the third world women. Their continual ignorance to address the cause of dowry murders, dowry related harassment, issues relating to women's poverty, work, health and reproduction shows that they are unable to address the social cultural experiences of Third World societies.

In this research, there are three chapters; the first chapter contains general introduction of the research that is based on the analysis of the novel from the perspective of Third World feminism, particularly the ideas related to the subjugation and control over the female body. The second chapter embodies the discussion of tools as well as the textual analysis. Third World feminism has been discussed under the concepts of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ketu Katrak, and so on. It explores the components for the suppression of female in various forms such as cultural conflicts, manipulation of female body to suppress them and religious and superstitious beliefs. The very exploitation has been presented on the basis of textual evidences. The final chapter deals with the conclusion and findings of the research of that have shown how the female body becomes a site of domination and resistance at the same time.

## **II. Female Body as the Site of Domination and Resistance in Shashi Deshpande's**

### ***In the Country of Deceit***

This research is a study of the Indian writer Shashi Deshpande's novel, *In the Country of Deceit* from the perspective of body politics and the Third World feminist critics. It focuses on the major character Devayani's ceaseless struggle for her identity and freedom in the patriarchal society and how her body has become the site of patriarchal domination and the articulation of resistance in the novel. The female characters of the novel want their autonomous self but they are compelled to follow cultural structure of patriarchal society. It is an attempt to explore the major character's search for emancipation and independence in the male dominated society where marriage has become a tool for imposing patriarchal ideology. Marriage is the social mechanism of patriarchal society that lets the males possess, control, regulate and dominate the female body. So, it is the major site of domination of female body in the patriarchal Third World societies.

In the novel, the protagonist Devayani has to bear a lot of mental pressure for marriage by her relatives like her aunt Sindhu, sister Shavitri and uncle, Keshav. The pressure is in indirect form but it is clear that the emphasis given to the heterosexual marriage has a patriarchal body politics embedded in it. They write many letters full of emotions to persuade her. On the contrary to their insistence for marriage, Devayani does not want to enter in the net of marriage because she understands how the body of the Third World women has become subject to the male control and marital rape, the sexual exploitation without love in the very institution of marriage. She loves her autonomy instead, so, she is living alone at her home, the home where she had spent her childhood with her parents and sister. But now her parents have been dead and sister has got married. Even then, she is not willing to leave the place

where she has endured a lot of struggle in the early age of her life. It shows her resistance against cultural structure of Third World patriarchal society where a spinster is not taken as moral.

The novel begins with the demolition of the old house which belongs to the central character Devayani that symbolizes the resistance and need of restructuring of ancient values, concept and structure of society. Protagonist's education helps her to resist them and want the restructuring of the old patriarchal values. Devayani, an unmarried, educated, twenty six years old Kannada woman and her elder sister Savi, who is already married to Shree, are remaking a big house after demolition of the old one after the death of their parents. Only after the house has been completed, Savi, Shree and the children come to live in the house.

The setting of the new house is very important to analyze the novel. It symbolizes the domain of autonomy and freedom for the Third World woman protagonist Devayani where the patriarchal control over her body is resisted. The house has got large rooms. The light and air come in from the huge windows, the broad sills on which they can sit; there is the sense of openness- all these are a total contrast to the dingy, dark rooms they had lived in. From the dialogue of Devayani it becomes clear how she and her sister Savi, had lost freedom in their old house with the narrow rooms. The writer emphasizes on the agency of females with the depiction of proud moment after making the new house as Devayani says about her sister Savi, "We had gone through, she turned to us, to Shree and me and spreading her arms wide, said, 'I did this'" (4). Devayani and her sister have the agency as they designed and made their house even if most of the decisions about the house are taken by the males in the Third World societies. Savi says, "I did this" which shows her self-



empowerment and affirmation, thus, the autonomy and the agency of the woman has been reflected. Woman becomes an agent instead of a patient or instrument.

There is a gathering of the closer ones like Savi, Devayani, Shree, Gundu, and Devayani's aunt Sindhu after the completion of the house. In that gathering, Savi and Devayani's aunt, Sindhu, calls them "children" even though they all are grown up (6). When Sindhu goes to America to live with her sister Tara, she writes letters to Devayani to convince her to marry. She addresses Devayani as "putta" (17) or the little one, thus she regards the unmarried persons as immature and socially the inferior. The naming is itself the site of oppression and control as Ketu H. Katrak writes in the "Preface" to her book *Politics of the Female Body*:

I acknowledge the power of naming forms of women's oppression, such as sexual harassment or marital rape, I consider it important to name this field of study postcolonial, or third world. While noting the inadequacy of both terms, I still perceive a political need to name this geographical terrain for ourselves, using a term that asserts solidarity even as it recognizes commonalities and differences. (xii)

Naming as the form of control has been clearly emphasized by Katrak in her above observation about the Third World society. Devayani also highlights as she says how her Keshavkaka names her aunt Sindhu "Sindhuri, Sindhura, and who knows, many other variations, other pet names I know nothing about, each one declaring his love for her" (28). Even though, the marital rape is not the concern for Devayani as she is unmarried and not named yet by a male, but for Katrak it clearly shows the power of males exerted by naming their wife in the name of love. Moreover, Devayani's mother wanted bravery on woman, so she named the central character Devayani. The familial

and cultural controls have been exerted upon Devayani and certain roles have been expected in her mother in naming her. She says with Rani that her name:

. . . was [her] mother's choice. She named [her] Devayani' (I stressed the vowels) because she wanted another brave woman's name. So [her] mother decided to call me Devayani. Her story is in *Mahabharat*. I told her the story of the reckless, arrogant, stupid girl who . . . fell in love, twice, with men who didn't want her and married the second man, a king, against his wishes. And then had to live knowing to humiliate, was her husband's dearly loved mistress. (35)

Devayani is wary of the cultural implication and the ordeals born by mythical character Devayani in her love life. The mythical woman loves the king but the king loves the maid.

The life of Devayani as a spinster refusing to marry to the man like Alex her aunt Sindhu suggests and leading the life in family responsibility and the autonomy of her choices is at the core of Deshpande's novel. Similarly, Devayani's sister, Shavi, has also been ruled by the patriarchal ideology so that she forces to her for marriage. Her view can be known by the following lines of Sindhu's letter written to Devayani:

Your sister has gone crazy. She's very upset you rejected Alex. Can you believe what she said? She said it was a mistake building the house. Now that you're comfortable, she said, you won't want to move from there and so you will go on refusing marriage. If you had had to stay in your old house, you'd have snapped up any chance to get out.  
(40)

Devayani's relatives call her crazy for not marrying the person they suggest. Her aunt Sindhu's mind is full of patriarchal ideology who believes on the traditional marriage

and tries to arrange Devayani's marriage as she sees a suitable boy named Alex in America. She writes letters to Devayani trying to persuade her for the marriage. But she protests the proposal as she believes "Anything is to be preferred or endured rather than marrying without affection" (28). Devayani has strong heart who dares to fight against the patriarchal codes of the society and any difficult situations in her life. She does not like sympathy from others. So she wishes to be free and autonomous as she says, "I had wanted to go to a place where no one would know me. Away from where my mother had suffered and died, where everyone I met would talk about my mother and sympathize with me. Away from a place where people would ask, 'And when are you getting married?'" (15)

Devayani's refusal and resistance to traditional marriage is a good example of female resistance and it goes closer to the view of Simone de Beauvoir. When asked in an interview by Yolanda Patterson what advice she would give to women who wanted both to have children and to "maintain their own identity and independence," Beauvoir said, "One must really follow one's deepest desires. Otherwise one feels unfulfilled. . . . But one should be very careful not to become enslaved" (332). In other interview with Alice Schwarzer, Beauvoir says:

I think a woman should be on her guard against the trap of motherhood and marriage. Even if she would dearly like to have children, she ought to think seriously about the conditions under which she would have to bring them up, because being a mother these days is real slavery. (73)

As the assertion of Simone de Beauvoir suggests, Devayani guards herself against the traditional marriage and the role of a wife in the expense of her freedom.

Devayani has taken family responsibilities as a son of the home which is not her authority in the society where she lives. It shows her resistance against third world

male dominated culture. In other words, her activities are the scathing criticism of the society. The very idea can be understood by her lines as:

All these years, I had been the accompanist to other people's lives. First I had been a follower of my spirited, beautiful older sister, then in charge of my parents' lives, the observer of their tragedy. For a brief while I had acted as my cousin Kshama's helper and later I had been Sindhu's attendant after her surgery. Now for the first time, I had to play solo. I had no one else to look after, no one to think about. (8)

Instead of caring about Devayani's desire, the English experience of Jane Austen that a woman must marry a man at any cost, has been forced to her in Keshavkaka's letter that voices the view of aunt Sindhu suggesting her to marry Alex. He writes:

You remember our old joke about you and Jane Austen? Remember how I used to ask you, 'and what does your Jane Austen say?' because you were constantly reading her and quoting her books? I want you to think of this– doesn't every heroine get married at the end of the story? (27)

The imposition of English experience is thus, helps patriarchy make its argument to force an Indian woman to marry. The heroines of the novels of Jane Austen are discursive constructions and to look for the direct relationship between the discursive representation of women and the real women of the Third World is very hegemonic and objectionable. But Keshavkaka himself being an acolyte of hegemonic patriarchal social order promotes the western hegemonic discourse to hegemonize Devayani further pushing into the trap of marriage. To this connection, Chandra Talpade Mohanty in her essay "Under Western Eyes Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" writes:

The relationship between “Woman” – a cultural and ideological composite Other constructed through diverse representational discourses . . . and “women” real, material subjects of their collective histories – is one of the central questions the practice of feminist scholarship seeks to address. This connection between women as historical subjects and the re-presentation of Woman produced by hegemonic discourses is not a relation of direct identity, or a relation of correspondence or simple implication. It is an arbitrary relation set up by particular cultures. (304-5)

The relationship between the real Third World woman Devayani and the constructed heroines of the western hegemonic discourse of Jane Austen’s novel is arbitrary and it is constructed by hegemonic, patriarchal and colonial western culture. Third World feminism critically engages this issue to decolonize the female body of the Third World women setting it free of the hegemonic imposition of female stereotypes.

According to Katrak, the very Englishness is the barrier for the Third World women to express their desires as its canon is designed as patriarchal. Criticizing the English taught at the Indian schools, as the very Englishness has deprived the Third World women of the expression of the Indian experiences, culture and femininity, Katrak writes:

At school, English words, English literature, history, and geography came to us from the lips of Indian teachers with our own Indian-English accents. I too had the all too familiar experiences of having to rhapsodize with my female classmates over Wordsworth’s daffodils, or Keats’ nightingale without ever having seen or heard either one. The

curriculum, canonic and male-centered, did not speak to our experience, culture, or femininity. (xiv)

The lack of expression of the Third World culture in English language is evident in Bhavani, a Kannada woman and a student of Devayani, who wants to learn English with her. In the process of learning new language, she finds no respectful words and phrases which she gets in Kannada, for her husband. In the simple terms, she feels her husband is a great person and herself is simple so she needs to respect her. It also shows the feature of male dominated society of Third World where females need to take their husband as god Maheshwar. She is hunted from the patriarchal culture which is illustrated in the narration of Devayani:

The English word 'husband', for example was a huge obstacle for her. She did not like it; too blunt (direct) and not respectful enough, she said, 'Determined to give her husband his rightful place in this alien language', she tentatively offered me various words, one or two literally translating the Kannada phrase for husband and finding them so ridiculous that she laughed at herself. Finally, we compromised on 'My Mister'- her own suggestion, though I had to work hard to convince her that it had to be 'my mister', not 'our mister', which she thought was more respectful. 'If you say our mister, you're saying he has many wives'. (46)

Thus, it is evident from the obstacle faced by Devayani while teaching English language to Bhavani, the language devoid of the culture and experience of the Indian society. From this, English language can be seen as imposed, hegemonic, canonic and patriarchal.

Karlene Faith writes in the essay “Resistance: Lessons from Foucault and Feminism” about the resistance of the power structure of the society from the perspective of gender as “resistance to power is resistance to specific strategies by which power relations are patterned. Gendered power relations are specifically organized according to the interplay among the traditional discourses which have controlled women’s bodies” (58). As we see from the assertion we see the interplay among the traditional discourses about marriage and the social codes that control the female body and her autonomy in the novel as the traditional discourses try to control the body and sexuality of Devayani.

The core of the novel is the resistance of Devayani, a third world unmarried woman, who favors the life of a spinster over the servitude of the marriage. Though her family feels great responsibility and burden for not getting her right man for her, Devayani finds her love in already married man Ashok, the District Superintendent of Police and has the physical relationship with him. In doing so, she challenges the social norm that a girl should remain virgin before marriage. She flaunts the resistance against the patriarchal structure of the third world society with her refusal that a woman should serve as a sex slave to a particular person whom her family arranges her marriage. When Savi knows relation about Devayani and Ashok, she blasts at her showing her anger. Savi is the follower of the traditional discourses and she cannot go beyond them. She says:

He'll sleep with you and dump you. He's using you, he needs your body, that's all he wants'. I tried to speak but she wouldn't let me. 'I know these policemen', they get their subordinates to get them woman, some women, they're cheap, disgusting, and didn't you hear about the policeman who got his girlfriend killed . . . (184)

The urge to control Devayani's sexuality is the foremost priority of Savi, her elder sister, Shree, her brother-in-law, Sindhu, her aunt and her other relatives because they are patriarchal in their attitude about marriage. By controlling the sexuality, the female body is controlled as Katrak asserts:

sexuality as the arena where patriarchal control is exerted most distinctively over the female body— whether in overt domination as rape, or in a variety of controls of the female body through “traditions” of the obedient wife, self-sacrificing mother, and in discrimination against girl children in terms of malnourishment, or, as in the last twenty five years, technological deployment of amniocentesis being used as an instrument of female feticide. All these have a direct impact on women's bodies. (xi)

The control is also seen with the demand of chastity and virginity in the girls before marriage. The Indian patriarchal society regards woman as impure and whore if she has the sexual relationship with anybody in her choice before or after the marriage. Unlike women, men are free from the concerns of virginity, chastity and being untouched. When Devayani reveals the secret that she is having sexual affair with Ashok, Savi desperately wants her to marry. Savi and Devayani talk full of emotion as:

'You should get married putta'.

‘To whom?’

'We'll find someone'.

'And will you tell him I'm virgin? Will you say I'm pure and chaste and untouched? That I'm not second-hand goods?'



She looked blankly at me and said, 'Oh god! You, of all the people! I don't believe it.' (184)

The protagonist has blurred the stereotype of Indian, third world woman. She strongly stands for her relationship with married Ashok. She challenges the notion of virginity before marriage as it is one of the foundations of patriarchy and the discourse to control the female sexuality. She reacts when she reads Shree's letter that regards her wrong-footed with her affair with Ashok:

Wrong? Why is it wrong? Why is it that you can have your beloved and I can't have mine? You knew when you chose Savi that your mother didn't want her, but you went ahead and married Savi, though you knew it would hurt your mother. You know as well as I do, that there are no boundaries for love, that you cannot draw a line and say, 'I will not go beyond this line'. It makes nonsense of what love is, of what it means. Your Ajji loved Savi and me as much as she loved Bakula and you she loved my mother like a daughter. She didn't draw lines, did she? (199)

Even though she knows the ordeals she has to face in the society, Devayani has deep love towards Ashok. In other words, she has rejected social norms and values which are created by patriarchy on their favor.

Feminists have come with the critique of marriage when it has to be chosen for the sake of the benefits of family, economic necessity and they advocate the need for the freedom of choice. But Devayani is not given the freedom of choice and her life as a spinster is discarded by the society. Her family and relatives want to get her married to mitigate their burden of a spinster. Wollstonecraft insists that women have an independent right to education, employment, property and the protection of the civil

law; she argues this is needed to ensure that women are not forced into marriage through economic necessity, and that the wives are not entirely dependent on the goodwill of their husbands. Women therefore need legal rights in order to make independent rational choices and achieve virtue; a woman who is forced to perform the traditional female roles will do so very badly, but if men “. . . would . . . but snap our chains, and be content with rational fellowship instead of slavish obedience, they would find us more observant daughters, more affectionate sisters, more faithful wives, more reasonable mothers – in a word, better citizens” (Wollstonecraft 263).

As the above argument suggests, Wollstonecraft does not expect that education and freedom of choice would lead most women to reject their traditional role, but argues that they would enable them to perform it better. She does not accept the public/private split that runs through liberal thought and which insists on the superiority of the former over the latter. Rather, she seeks to ‘envalue’ women’s domestic responsibilities. She also tries to show that domestic duties, properly performed, were a form of rational citizenship: that is, they were to be seen as public responsibilities rather than a source of private satisfaction or tribulation. We see the family responsibilities performed well by Devayani and she is rational in her actions. But her freedom of choice and autonomy have been constrained by the patriarchal social structure and the value associated with marriage and motherhood.

Janardhan Rao, son of Devayani's grandfather's partner, writes in his letter about her family history. According to the letter, her grandmother was powerful than her grandfather. He writes, “She made his life hell. But my father said he never spoke a word against her. Your ajji always thought she was superior to your ajja” (101). Additionally, he writes in the letter:

I heard that Kamala's son died some years back. Please tell his sister how sorry I am. When I heard of the boy's death, I thought of the great celebrations that had happened when he was born- the first male in the family. It shows great happiness of getting male child. Here a question comes would they have celebrated if they had got female child?

Answer is 'no' because in patriarchal society only male child brings the luck by birth but not female. (101)

Furthermore, female exploitation is clearly explicated in the case of Devayani's mother's treatment. She suffers from epilepsy from her childhood but she does not get good treatment earlier because she is female not male. In hospital the doctor asked Pushpa's father why they didn't take her to a doctor earlier. He tells him that her mother had taken her to a vaid. Even worse, he accepts it bluntly. The truth is that he has no answer to his question. Here, he tries to console himself by regarding Pushpa's mother negatively and feeling guilty for not thinking of the treatment earlier for her but because she is a daughter he is unwilling to treat her properly spending money. But after her treatment, he is compelled to think about it. So he writes following lines in letter to Shri Vasudev, "But now I have to ask myself a different question. If Pushpa had been a son instead of a daughter, would I have behaved in the same way? The answer is 'no'. I would have gone from doctor to doctor, from hospital, I would have spent any amount of money" (102).

The attitude of father to spend any amount of money for a son's treatment and neglect the daughter is because of her gender. So it is one of the bitter examples of gender discrimination. Katak highlights the prejudice over the females in the patriarchal third world society as:

Female sexuality has many expressions, only one of which is mothering. Motherhood is one concrete manifestation of fertility, and related roles of childbearing and child-rearing are performed often entirely by women. Women writers evoke the troubling internalization of patriarchal values where sons are valued over daughters who may suffer prejudice, malnourishment, neglect, or abandonment. (213)

Pushpa suffers the prejudice and she is not treated well of the epilepsy because she is a daughter. Even after her marriage, she continues to suffer from it and gives birth to Savi and Devayani. Whatever be the consequences, she has to bear the children and die from the disease. The gender discrimination makes them neglected.

In patriarchal Indian cultures, sons take care of their parents in old age. Son gets authority to cope with parents. But in the novel, Devayani and her mother have challenged the structure of the society by caring their parents. Devayani's mother, Pushpa brought her mother home to live when she could no longer be left alone.

Devayani says;

My mother had suffered from epilepsy when she was a child had become a victim of her mother's fury after that, or who knows, even before that. Yet she had come through it unscathed, her eyes clear and eager, her smile that of a child. She brought her mother home to live with us when she could no longer be left alone. The old woman, senile by then and without any inhibitions, used words that made my mother blanch. Worse, she began to accuse her daughter of stealing her money and jewels. My mother bore it all historically. (106)

We observe from the quote that women are marginalized by customs and culture made by males. In the patriarchal Indian culture, widow women are taken as polluted

and symbol of bad sign. In the novel, Devayani's grandmother thinks in terms of the patriarchal codes most of her life but at the last period of her life she resists it. The following lines give clear sense of domination and resistance, "The old woman, who had begun observing all the rules of a widow's life after her husband's death, who had become obsessed about purity and bathed each time she thought she was 'polluted', refused to have a bath in her last few years" (107). The resistance of widow against the patriarchal social codes is exemplified in the quote. Devayani's grandmother has resisted the harsh codes for the widows refusing to have bath in her final years of her life. Katrak draws the difficult situation of widows in the third world society as she observes, "Widows in the Indian context, subject to cruel treatment and malnourishment live on the margins, though widows . . . resist and gain authority in the community" (244). The cruel domination to the widows is reflected in the instance of Devayani's grandmother but she challenges the authority with the resistance to the codes which are harsh for the old women like her.

Devayani's grandmother had to resist the strict social codes imposed to widows. But, her aunt Sindhu is lucky to be married again being a widow once. Keshavkaka falls in love with her and they both defy the social codes regarding the widowhood. Katrak writes about the pathetic condition of widows and the harsh codes observed by them in the third world situations:

Contrary to most of our middle-class expectations, the most heart-rending stories pour out of the mouths of young women who are widows, rendered "single," and socially censured and enjoined to adhere to drab dress codes, no jewelry (a deprivation especially significant in the Indian context), strict dietary abstinence, rigid limits

upon who they are able to associate with. These women are generally expected to accept a kind of living death. (xi)

If Sindhu had not met Keshav, she would be the victim of the strict codes set to normalize and control the sexuality of a third world widows' body. Sindhu has got second marriage after the death of her first husband that also projects resistance against third world prevalent custom. She writes, "My first marriage was very brief and he was sick most of the time, but I got a kind of preview and when he died I knew I would like to be married again" (26).

Devayani's uncle Keshav's mother, being a female, is also victimized by male dominated patriarchal belief. There, she is not ready to accept a widow, Sindhu, as her daughter-in-law. Keshav, her son has hopelessly fallen in love with Sindhu but his mother would not allow him to marry her. It is narrated as, "He saw her and fell in love with her, but he knew his mother would never let him marry a widow. He waited until his mother realized that if he did not marry Sindhu he would remain unmarried. She finally relented and they got married" (28). The hegemonic and marginalized condition of widows in the Indian society is clearly highlighted in the instance.

Domination upon the women can be seen throughout the novel. Domination of male over female is also explicit in the case of KN's mother's life too. His mother was deserted by her husband running away with a younger colleague. But her mother challenges the society by bringing her sons up on her own. It is explored from the history of KN's family that is narrated by Bhavani like this, "His father had been a school teacher who had, as she put it, 'run away' with a much younger colleague, abandoning his wife and two young sons on her own" (47). Males can do anything and they are free to express their sexual desire and run with the girls they want but the

females have to bear the family responsibility and they are restricted in terms of the expression of desires. It is evident in KN's mother's instance.

Western feminism fails to see the diverse range of different forms of domination as in the case of Sindhu, Devayani, KN's mother, Bhavani, Devayani's grandmother and so on. There is difference in their experiences in terms of the domination they face and the forms of resistance they adopt to challenge the dominant social codes and patriarchal structure of the Third World. Their experiences are local and cannot be confined within the experiences promoted by English writers and literature as discussed above with the instance of Jane Austen. So, each female character of the novel discards the stereotype of the third world female.

Due to the varied female experiences and varied forms of resistance, there is the diversity in feminism itself. There is not a single, homogeneous feminism but there are multiple feminisms shaped by the differences in local experiences of the women in different socio-cultural circumstances. But western feminism supplants other culturally, politically, and historically shaped heterogeneous notions of womanhood and feminisms, effectively erasing them within Western feminist dialogues and beyond, as the reach of Western feminist scholarship is far. Conjointly, when Western feminists place themselves at the center and cast third world women into the periphery through inaccurate and ahistorical concepts, a universalized image of the typical Third World woman begins to arise. Mohanty discusses it in her book *Feminism without Borders*:

This average Third World woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being 'Third World' (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family oriented, victimized, etc.). This, I suggest, is

in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decisions. (22)

Devayani refuses to be stereotyped Third World woman with her unique and local nature of experiences and resistance to the social codes. Like the Western women, she exhibits the qualities being educated, having control over her own body and sexuality and the freedom to make her own decision. Devayani is the typical representative of the Third World women who disrupts the monologic and hegemonic discourse of Western women about the Third World women stereotypes by making her own decisions about her sexual choice. She resists the socio-political domination, the constrained sexuality, and goes against the tradition which is reflected in her bold decision to love Ashok and engage sexually with him despite the fact that she is an unmarried girl and he is a married man. First, she refuses the social codes which do not let the women the freedom to lead the life of a spinster and second, she continues to defy the patriarchal social codes having sexual relation with him.

In male oriented society all property of the home belongs to male rather than female but in the conversation with Iqbal Vakil, Devayani proudly claims that it has her own garden. By making possession over the garden and house she tries to resist patriarchal norms that can be seen in the following lines, “It's mine, 'I said with the same proud with which Savi had claimed the house.' The house is Savi's plan, but this is mine. We had the neem and the parijaat and I planned everything round them” (55).

Devayani has made a pond for the frogs. The pond symbolizes autonomy and freedom. There is no confinement and restrictions for the frogs. They are free to come and go wherever they like; there is nothing like strict norm in the frog pond but the sense of freedom of choice is there. In other words, making the frog pond without any



codes for the fogs, she fights against the trend of the society as it is full of the harsh social codes. She also desires for freedom in her life as frogs.

Women of the patriarchal Third World societies are exploited at their own home and unmarried daughter is taken as burden and obstacle of family's prestige. The very situation is vividly seen in the novel where Devayani's mother has suffered from epilepsy when she was a child, and though she recovers, she becomes the girl who gets fits. Her condition was not much improved as far as a marriage proposal comes. Her father could have found her a man who would marry her for his money. But he refuses to do this; rather he prefers the humiliation of having an unmarried daughter at home. He had his eye on a young man working in his bank, a man whom he had first spoken about his daughter, had refused, saying he could not marry as yet because of family responsibilities. In the way, her father wanted to marry his daughter not for her happiness rather than to release himself from burden and clean obstacle of prestige of his family.

Women are highly oppressed in long span of time ruled by patriarchal ideology where everything is right whatever a male does in home. Females have no choice and authority also in domestic affairs. The very suppressed or oppressed situation can be clearly visualized in the following lines:

In my mother's eyes, my father could do no wrong. She gave him her complete loyalty; she never argued with him about anything he did, she never complained about the hardships that came her way when things went wrong. The one time she asserted herself was when she remade her jewelry they for Savi when she was getting married. They argued about this; he was deeply unhappy, but she insisted. For the first time in their life together, there was a division between them. (62)

Most of the women do not have any bank account of their own. Even if they have money in their bank account, they won't get chance to expend in the family affair. In the same way, Devayani's mother could not get chance to use her account in her family's work. As Devayani reveals the patriarchal domination to her mother:

After my father's death, we found out that there was enough money in my mother's bank account to pay for the wedding. 'Why didn't you use this? I asked her in astonishment. My father would not let her; he would not permit his daughter's wedding to be paid for with his wife's money. And she went along with him. I could not let him be humiliated, she said. (63)

With the searing experiences of the patriarchy and its domination to females gained from her mother and other female relatives and friends of, Devayani lays the condition of love before marriage. Rejecting to conform to the stereotyped image of Third World woman, the Devayani wishes to break the social barriers living the life of a spinster and making her independent sexual choice. After reading the of her uncle's letter, Devayani says following lines denoting she is able to think and lead her life by herself and her relatives no longer need to advise her what to do quoting Jane Austen's character Elizabeth in reply to Keshavkaka; "But I will quote Elizabeth's words in reply; 'Let me shift for myself.' Yes Keshavkaka, let me. Shift for myself" (28). Further, she rejects the belief of rebirth and thus rejects the Western stereotype of the Third World women as superstitious, spiritual and ignorant. She wants to enjoy life with Ashok breaking the social codes forever. She says; "Yes, I too (as my mother) don't believe in rebirth, but if I could have Ashok again, even for such a short time, even in this way, I don't mind being born again. *Punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam*. Once again birth, once again death. But only with Ashok, only for Ashok"

(224). When Devayani and Rani visit the monument where the British officers dead in the battle had been buried, Devayani tells Rani the story of a local queen that subverts the stereotype of Third World women as pathetic, submissive, illiterate, coward, weak, inactive, and passive.

Devayani reveals dissatisfaction of the Third world women in their allocated social roles. She unravels Rani also loves emancipation and freedom so that she had always longed to return to her working life and own a car. To her it is a sign of both independence and success. She had bought herself a car with the money she got from her first hit movie. Devayani sees Kusuma's behavior as resistance against patriarchy as she narrates her:

Kusuma's four- and- a- half- feet of intrepid woman was frightened of nothing, not even cockroaches. I had seen her swoop down on as swiftly racing- away cockroach, squash it with her plan and, picking up the dead insect by what she called its 'moustache', carry it to the trash can like a trophy, exclaiming triumphantly 'got it!' I wondered whether each time she killed a cockroach, she thought of her husband, the man she had walked out on the first time he raised his hand against her.

Perhaps it was that experience which had left her deeply suspicious of all men. (107)

This quote highlights that the women of the Third World face variety of problems because of the heterosexual marriages, patriarchal and social codes. They are not able to raise their voice against the domination in manifest way but they resist the social codes by variety of ways. Pulling the moustache of the cockroach gives Kusuma the sense of avenging her husband and the pulling of male moustache means turning him socially powerless and devoid of prestige as moustache is connected to social prestige

of the men in Indian society. Due to the differences in the experience about the domination and the forms of resistance, the Third World women in the novel defy the homogeneous notion of the global sisterhood in Deshpande's novel.

Global sisterhood, also referenced in literature as universal sisterhood or international feminism, came under fire in Chandra Mohanty's *Feminist Encounters: Locating the Politics of Experience* in which she posits an alternative conceptualization to global sisterhood. Mohanty calls this framework the "politics of experience" (8). Oppression is experienced differently by different women and varies according to the separate experiences, a view that influenced Mohanty's derivation of Adrienne Rich's politics of location as Rich points the monologic discourse formation about women as she says, "The faceless, sexless, raceless proletariat. The faceless, raceless, classless category of "all women." Both creations of white Western self-centeredness" (8). Mohanty's politics of experience is grounded in historical, geographical, and cultural loci in which women's experiential differences are accounted for and political agency is emphasized, a change from the ahistorical context within which global sisterhood functions. Mohanty disputes claims to a global sisterhood, stating that the assumption of women's sameness is "predicated on the definition of the *experience of oppression* where difference can only be understood as male/female" (463). Mohanty charges the problematic of Western feminism as it considers only one difference, the difference on the basis of sex, to address the female experience of oppression thus; it erases the large number of local circumstances that are responsible for the oppression of the females worldwide. The close examination based on the analysis of local circumstances is needed to understand the resistance of the Third world women like Devayani going beyond the tendency of the western feminism that regards all the women around the world as a homogeneous category.

This necessity of understanding the local experiences is underscored by the Third World feminists resisting the so-called 'global'. Devayani highlights the difference between her and other family members and relatives rejecting to conform the homogeneity as she says; "I was on the fringe, never really one of them. Now the age difference no longer mattered as much as it had when they had been adolescents and I was a child. But I was still different. I was not married, and, except for Gundu, the only one still living in Rajnur" (7).

Devayani, in the realization of her limitation in the family dominated by the patriarchal hegemony starts to see the lack of any possible communication between her and her relatives about her sexual choice, thus, is constrained by the legitimization crisis in her local context of Indian third world. When Savitri scolds Ashok because of his extramarital relationship with Devayani, Devayani tries to stop her by saying 'Savi, please, please, please don't say anything more.' . . . 'I love him, Savi. It hurts me when you talk that way to him, about him. I love Ashok, can't you understand' (221). It shows the lack of communication or the understanding between the two sisters. Actually, there is no mutual understanding between the Devayani and Savitri as Savitri is obsessed with the patriarchal codes and tries to repress the sexual expression of Devayani. Because the ground they stand are different which do not allow them to communicate. As Amanda Anderson, in *Tainted Souls and Painted Faces: The Rhetoric of Fallenness in Victorian Culture* (1993) discusses the theory of communicative competence formulated by Jurgen Habermas, she underscores the need of recognition of the relationship between language and thought. Habermas's theory of communicative action focuses on "mutual understanding," a concept that extends beyond the realm of language to that of thought. In fact, Anderson claims:

Habermas's account of the relationship of reciprocity and recognition that are presupposed in any action oriented toward reaching understanding disallows the radical rupture between ethics and epistemology . . . [His] discourse ethics insists that the higher level of argumentation required in any self-reflexive democratic process is an extension of the more primary mode of action that is oriented toward reaching understanding. (222)

Since Devayani feels there is no democratic process "oriented towards reaching understanding", she chooses her own mode of love affair neglecting her relatives. She disrupts the social discourse that females are dependent to their relatives to decide about their sexual fulfillment, live sexually repressed life and the Western feminist biases that the third world women can't make decisions about their lives. Her new discovery of her independent self is radical and typical third world model of resistance. It is the outcome of her rigorous self-assessment and use of her conscience accordance with the development of the local circumstances and rational self-analysis in her retrospection.

Society does not allow a spinster like Devayani to stay single. For the society, Devayani has to perform the role of the traditional gender roles marrying a man and running a house in the expense of her freedom. So, the society wants her to perform according to the social codes and if she fails to perform accordingly she turns to be faulty and pathetic creature. Shree's mother, the staunch advocate of patriarchal ideology and Devayani's marriage, reveals the patriarchal sentiment and the lack of Devayani caused by her own choice of free life. Like others, she thinks Devayani should get marriage because she is going too old. Her opinion reveal from the

discussion between Shavi and Devayani. Shavi narrates her conversation with Shree's mother to Devayani:

'Do you know, Devi, each time she says your name, she has to say *Bicchari*? She keeps suggesting 'boys' for you. The last 'boy' she suggested was more than forty. He was a widower with two children I said, he's too old. And she said, but poor Devi is nearly thirty. And I said no, she's only twenty-six...'

'Twenty-seven soon.'

'And she said, poor thing, it'll get harder and harder. We must get her married soon. As if we want her help!' (182)

This conversation shows the social expectation towards Devayani to perform her social role and the repression of her desire controlling her sexual choice. She has to perform properly so as to exist as the social being otherwise she remains powerless and pathetic. Judith Butler writes in her book *Bodies That Matter* about the performativity of the body:

The forming, crafting, bearing, circulation, signification of that sexed body will not be a set of actions performed in compliance with the law; on the contrary, they will be a set of actions mobilized by the law, the citational accumulation and dissimulation of the law that produces material effects, the lived necessity of those effects as well as the lived contestation of that necessity. (12)

We can generalize the law as the social codes in the novel. Generalizing thus, we see how desperately the social codes try to form Devayani as the submissive subject to the social codes. Subjecting her sexuality and freedom, the society devises the necessary

condition of marriage for her. She has to perform her role as if it is her necessity to exist, reproducing and appropriating her role in the society.

Devayani describes the bliss of love with Ashok with whom she can never marry or publicly show up as a couple. She describes the moment after the sexual union with Ashok very frankly as she says:

Nobody has the words for what sex with your beloved is like. It's same with music. You have to hear it, you can't describe it. 'You want sex,' Savi had said, crudely savagely, deliberately trying to shock me. Perhaps. But there was much more. Only this man could give me such ecstasy, only he could give me such joy with love making. Ananda, Sindhu had called it. Yes, more than joy. Bliss . . . . It was this man, not the sex. This man's love, not the sex. And yet, the sex too. (193)

Revealing the sexual pleasure full of affection and bliss, she resists the notion of sex in the society which controls the female body and freedom in the name of marriage and forces women to the marital rape. Her body and sexuality is controlled socially and culturally which can be observed in the attitude of Savi while talking about her affair with Ashok. Savi has reacted about the affair rudely and savagely that is the manifestation of repressive social codes and patriarchal discourses. But, rejecting the social codes of which Savi is very protective, she openly confesses the bliss of sexual union. She regards sex as the music. It is ananda, the moment of ecstasy for her. Her frankness about the sex resembles with the frankness about the sex of past, of the time before the socio-cultural discourses derealize it. The sex became the matter of secrecy when various discourses and social codes came into the existence. Michel Foucault writes about the history of sexuality and its condition in the seventeenth century in his essay "We 'Other Victorians'":



At the beginning of the seventeenth century, a certain frankness was still common, it would seem. Sexual practices had little need of secrecy; words were said without undue reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had, a tolerant familiarity with the illicit. Codes regulating the coarse, the obscene, and the indecent were quite lax compared to those of the nineteenth century.

(292)

Unlike the society unmediated by the strict social codes and discourses, the Indian society has controlled the sexuality. It is regarded as the secret matter. Devayani's assertion of the bliss and ecstasy of sex as an Indian woman is, thus, the strong resistance to the repressive discourses and codes of the society. The sex is to be restricted, controlled before marriage is nothing but a discourse to control the sexuality and so is the female body is the possession of the husband and so, she should be faithful to her husband in sexual activities. So, going against the social codes and the dominant repressive, patriarchal discourse, Devayani, stands as a strong Third World rebel rebelling against the patriarchal set up of the society. The repression of the sexuality began in the west during Victorian period but it has become more just now because of the various protests and movements of the women rejecting such injustice. Foucault traces the discursive restriction on the sex and sexuality describing the condition before the restriction on sex as twilight and the Victorian discourses that restrict the sexuality as night:

But twilight soon fell upon this bright day, followed by the monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie. Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction.

On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. (292)

The silence about the sex is expected in the third world societies where the patriarchal discourses have confined the sex indoors, only between the married couples like Victorian society. Law intervened the private domain of sexual activities terming the married couple as legitimate and the unmarried lovers as illegitimate. Sindhu speaks about the restriction of the female sexuality in the Third World in her letter to Devayani as; “The body is important and so are the demands of the body . . . you are still young, your natural desires will be with you for many more years. Our country does not allow women to fulfill these desires without marriage” (43). Sindhu lets Devayani the glimpse of pleasure about the sex but she suggests her to achieve the pleasure in the similar way like the Victorian women, entering into the marriage and the patriarchal domination. Sindhu’s focus is only the body and the body is to be gained only from marriage for the sake of sexual pleasure. But she is unaware of the oppression on the female body if female gets the male body through marriage to fulfill her sexual desire. Devayani understands it and so she resists the marriage without affection and care rather she gains the sexual pleasure from an already married man Ashok who has got the affection and the care for her without controlling her body. Devayani defies the stereotype of the Indian woman, valorizes her local experiences instead of global, and refuses to let her body become the site of patriarchal domination rather she professes the resistance by the means of her body and expression of sexual desires.

### **III. Devayani's Body: Site of Subversion of the Patriarchal Domination**

Beginning her novel with the demolition of the old house and making more free and spacious new house, Deshpande's novel *In the Country of Deceit* resists the traditional, patriarchal discourses which are like the old house with the narrow rooms. Devayani, a third world spinster, subverts the stereotype of a third world women rebelling against the negative attributes attributed to the spinsters in the patriarchal societies and advocates for the female autonomy. From the beginning, she is critical of the tendency to name the unmarried people as children even if they are mature and independent. She sees such naming as the site of hierarchy, domination and control that manifest the patriarchal ideology that one must marry and serve her husband to be regarded as a mature woman. Devayani also presents the example of her Keshavkaka naming her wife Sindhu as Sindhura, Sindhuri and so on to show how the males name their wives so that they could control and dominate them in the pretention of love. For Devayani, the names given to the women of the Third World society have the cultural expectations. Savitri for example, refers to a mythical woman who is faithful to her husband in very difficult situation. Devayani also charges the culturally imposed names like Savitri, Devayani, Bhavani and so on as they demand certain ideals to be followed by a Third World women and they are expected to internalize the ideals to serve the patriarchy within the cultural control.

The family and relatives want Devayani to marry with the man they arrange for her. The marriage is a patriarchal institution in the Third World that appropriates the male power over females allocating the certain gender roles. Devayani sees the marriage without love and affection as the marital rape so rejects to marry with Alex, who is prescribed to her by her aunt Sindhu from America. When she refuses to marry resisting the traditional, patriarchal marriages without affection in expense of her

freedom, her aunt regards her as a crazy girl. Thus, her relatives are full of patriarchal ideology even if they are women themselves. Rejecting to marry the men they suggest, Devayani resists the patriarchal domination over the female body on the one hand and subverts the stereotype of a third world woman on the other. She goes along the Beauvoir's suggestion that the women should follow her deepest desires and resist to be enslaved.

English experiences of women of Victorian era have been imposed on the Third World women without caring about their local experiences. It is seen in the letter written to Devayani by her Keshavkaka from America trying to convince her to marry Alex. In the letter, Keshavkaka tries to impose the ideals of the heroines of the English novels of Victorian era. The heroines of the Austen's novels are discursive constructions and to look for the direct relationship between the discursive representation of women of the Victorian era and the real women of the Third World is full of colonial and patriarchal ideology. So, Devayani resists conforming to the ideals the heroines of English novels, rejecting the proposal of her uncle and aunt, and does not let her body to be colonized and controlled. In the colonial and patriarchal discourses the female body has always become the site of domination and control. Devayani, true to her experiences as the Third World woman, resists the hegemonic discourses and leads the life of a spinster which is regarded as immoral in the third world societies and shatters the traditional notion that female body and virginity only belong to her husband by having affair and physical relation with a married man, Ashok.

Devayani manifests the differences of the experiences of domination and control and the forms of resistance in the third world women that sharply resist the assumption of the western feminists that there is the similarity or homogeneity in the

female experiences around the world. She shows how the female child is neglected in the third world society and lives the pathetic life suffering from serious problems as seen with the case of Pushpa, her mother. With the example of her grandmother, the strict social codes observed and resisted by widows have been criticized. Lack of autonomy to spend her money even in the marriage of the daughter is seen with the example of her mother. In this valorization of the difference in the female experiences and resistance, Devayani resists the notion of global sisterhood assumed by the Western feminists and advocates the valorization of local experiences and manifests her body as the articulation of resistance forbidding it to be the site domination.

Devayani's assertion of sexual pleasure with Ashok resists the strict sexual codes of the society, in which to get married is the only option to fulfill her sexual desire. The confession of the extra-marital loss of virginity and gain of the bliss of the sexual pleasure with a married man resists the strict social codes that control her body and her sexuality. Her sister Savi is worried about her as she is having illicit affair with a married man but Devayani boldly stands to defend her choice. We see her as the rebel who revolts against the discourses of sexual purity and secrecy. She unveils the sexuality with the resistance to the discourse that it should only be confined inside the institution of marriage, thus, subverts the stereotype of Third World women.

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