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**A Comparative Analysis of Marital Disharmony in the Selected Novels of Shashi  
Deshpande and Varsha Adalja**

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### Abstract:

The paper attempts to compare the marital disharmony in the selected novels of Shashi Deshpande, Indian English Writer and Varsha Adalja, Gujarati Writer. Through his paper, the effort is made to know the cause and results of the marital relationships of different female protagonists, portrayed by both the female writers. Shashi Deshpande's major concern is to depict the conflict and anguish of the modern educated Indian woman caught between patriarchy and tradition on one end, self-expression, individuality, and independence for the women other. Varsha Adalja, too, has depicted the plight of the women, caught in the wrongly chosen marriage partner. Both the novelists show the journey of women, who are in search of love and peace. Through this comparison, this paper will analyze the condition of women, due to disharmony in marriage.

**Keywords:** Marital Disharmony, Conflict, Anguish, Individuality, Love, Peace

### Introduction:

Indian English literature has shown the deep interest in the plight of women in the rapidly changing milieu. There are many writers who have made conscious and constant efforts to analyze the situation of women and they have attempted to give voice to this plight from different angles. The reasons behind the suffering are multi folded but one common reason identified is disharmony in the marriage. A woman can be a doctor, a professor, a lawyer, a novelist or a scientist, but she cannot escape her ordained responsibilities as a wife or a family member. Many women novelists have tried to concentrate on such issues and have demonstrated the realistic problems in the fiction. Sarita in *Dark Holds no Terror*, Jaya in *That Long Silence* are the female protagonists who are compared with Varsha Adalja's Vrunda in *Khari Padelo Tahuko* and Ashumi in *Trijo Kinaro*.

In this phase of suffering, they initiate the process of self-discovery in them which ultimately leads them to self-analysis and their perceptions for life change. By the end of the novel, they are in the state of compromise with the life's problems, though initially they showed the lack of confidence to do so.

In her novel *That Long Silence*, Deshpande critically analyses the marriage system in the



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contemporary context. She reflects upon the condition of a woman trapped in the marriage and the situations that cause the problems. The problematic relationship of a husband and a wife indicate the suffering of a wife who is entangled between the powerful currents of tradition and patriarchy, suppression and domination. This is illustrated through the character of Jaya who is suffering even after almost two decades of her marriage with Mohan. Jaya has maintained the silence for the longest period and this silence causes the damage to her internal peace.

Jaya has suppressed her creative skill, her feelings and desires for seventeen years. According to her, to be a good wife is better than to be a good writer. She considers her existence totally dependent on her husband. Unaware of her potential, she lives her life as per the wish of her husband. Mohan has always neglected the desires of her wife. When he is accused of corruption, he expects the support from his wife. He is confident that his wife will help him even in his wrong doings. Mohan expects that his wife would understand his unspoken need of her support and Jaya expects that her husband would communicate his problems to him.

She is absolutely deserted and incapable to do anything to recover her situation. She longs to be called an ideal wife. She revolts in silence contrasting her husband's views on women. She says,

He saw strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw a despair so great that it would not voice itself. I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was the only weapon. Silence and surrender (36).

In her physical relationship with Mohan, she remains silent. She has to tolerate everything. She admits,

The emotion that governed my behavior to him, there was still the habit of being a wife, of sustaining and supporting him (98).

Their physical relationship always ends up with Mohan's question whether he has hurt her. It shows a forced relationship and not a natural one. Jaya, even though married to Mohan, grieves from loneliness. She feels



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lonesome. Her husband cannot understand her feelings. And as a result, she is torn from within. Deshpande comments on her married life as follows,

A pair of bullock yoked together... a clever phrase, but can it substitute for reality? A man and a woman married for seventeen years. A couple with two children. A family somewhat like the one caught and preserved for posterity by the advertising visuals I so loved. But the reality was only this. We were two persons. A man. A woman. (8)

Jaya agrees to marriage as a natural consequence of growing up - "it was not love, but marriage that was the destiny waiting for us" (LS 91). For Jaya, marriage is a getting away from her present world of dependence.

Jaya hopes that intimacy will come slowly but this is not the case for Mohan. For him, it was exceptionally simple, "we were married, we were husband, and wife, so everything according to him, was permissible". In a way, it works out and after an initial fumbling things fall into place. Jaya experiences a sense of fulfillment,

All those vague longings, all those suppressed thoughts, all those whispers, the hurts, even the things we had so blithely called love and romance. It was then that I had discovered what it was all about - the songs, the poems, the stories (24)

Marriage is a bond to many a woman, but it is not necessarily the same kind of bond. Some are protected by it, some created their own space, and others are irked by the dependence and the bondage it imposes on them. Yet, marriage is valued by society because widowhood circumscribes a woman's life and is considered inauspicious.

Sarita in *Dark Holds No Terror* falls in love with a man and marries him much against the warnings of her mother. At first Manu, Saru's choice, seems to be a means of taking her away from the insecurity that she felt in her home. Initially, with Manu she felt love as a firing passion. She admits,

I was hungry for Love. Each act of sex was a triumphant assertion of our love, of my being loved, of my being wanted (35).



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Her marriage to Manu begins to crumble when she becomes a famous doctor and independent woman of high repute in her profession. And as a result, Manu feels inferiority and jealousy, he begins to assault her bodily during night. The financial ascendance of Saru also makes him feel impotent and as a result he desires to exhibit his potency and masculinity through sexual assault / bodily harm upon Saru, which for him, becomes an assertion of his manhood leading to a sort of abnormality-during day he is a cheerful, normal human being and a loving husband turning into a rapist at night. It terrifies and humiliates Saru. She begins to feel disenchantment and imbalance as separation becomes inevitable. As a result of an acute confusion, she admits,

... The dream, the nightmare, whatever it was, continued, changing now, like some protean monster, into the horror of rape. This was not to be death by strangulation; it was a monstrous invasion of my body. I tried to move, twisting my body, wriggling under the weight that pinned it down. It was impossible. I was pinioned to a position of abject surrender of myself. I began, in sheer helplessness, to make small whimpering sounds, piteous cries. The small pains merged all at once into one large one. And still the body above mine, hard and tense, went on with its rhythmic movements. The hands continued their quest for new areas of pain. Now the horror of what was happening to me was lost in the fierce desire to end it. I could not, would not bear it. I began to fight back, hopelessly, savagely. And suddenly, when I thought I could bear it no longer, the body that was not mine relaxed. The release was so abrupt, it soaked me into an unfamiliar faintness. When the syncope wore off, I realized I was free. There was no weight pinning me down now. But I could not move. It was just no exhaustion, though there was that too. It was more as if my mind had deserted my shamefully bruised body, disowning it, making it insensate: And then -the two came together, I knew where I was and what had happened. Panic and sensation came back simultaneously. I turned my head slightly,



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fearfully, and saw him beside me, snoring softly. No more a stranger, but my husband.

(11-12)

Her constant suffering makes her feel like stone. The relationship between Saru and her husband is the typical example of male domination. The disturbed marital life hunts her even more. The indifferent behavior of her husband increases the anguish and pain.

Adalja too has depicted the theme of disturbed marriage life in her novels. Vrunda does not want to give birth to her second child due to her seeming distance with her husband, the emotional as well physical distance. She needs her husband's love and attention but he is occupied in his work. Tired of waiting, Vrunda decides to give birth to the child thinking that the child will bridge the gap between the two. The initial days of the new born baby are fun filled. Vrunda is happy too. However when her daughter Shyama's physical problem is revealed, she finds it challenging to get the help from her husband. He becomes busier in his work and Vrunda's complete energy goes into taking care of her daughter.

Ashumi's happy life with her husband is described very beautifully in the beginning of the novel *Trijo kinaro*. Nil and Ashumi meet in the college days and fall in love with each other. Though Ramola, Ashumi's mother is against this marriage, as she is not happy with the social status of Nil, Ashumi still marries him. She is ready to make any adjustments to live happily with him. She manages the house perfectly, fulfilling the needs of her husband very well.

Her dreamy world shatters when she suddenly comes to know about Nil's affair with Nima. Nil disagrees to accept his affair initially, but later he accepts it boldly, as if he has not done anything wrong. After long internal conflict, Ashumi decides to leave her husband's house. On which, Nil tries to persuade her. He even disrespects her by saying,

Nakkar hakikat kahu chhu. Nakkar vastavikta ae pan chhe k tane aavde chhe shu? B. A. ni degree nu farfariyu? Jat-jat ni degree ni arjio ly ne hajaro loko nokri mate rakhadta hoy chhe khabar chhe tane? Te duniya j kyare joi chhe? ....Tara ma 100 rupiya kamavani





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takat nathi to karshe shu? Bhukhe marshe? Bhikh magshe? (145)

I am telling you sheer truth. The sheer reality is that also what is your capability? Just the paper of B.A. degree? Do you even know that people have to roam here and there with the degree in the hand to get the simplest job? Have you even seen the world?... You don't have capacity to earn even 100 rupees, what will you do? Will you strive? Or beg?

This shows Nil's superiority complex. His male domination is clearly reflected in his words. Adalja has attempted to show the bold woman who is independent and confident enough to leave her husband's house.

### Conclusion:

Thus, both the novelists have depicted the female protagonists who are sufferers due to the disturbance in their marital life. Deshpande's protagonists display a remarkable expansion of the phase of suffering. Adalja's protagonists immediately take the action. All the protagonists are educated and seemingly independent, but their emotional dependency on their counterpart, make them weak. All of them have strong sense of desire, they need attention and love from their husband, which are not fulfilled. This leads to the dissatisfaction in their life, which ultimately leads them towards depression. However, Adalja's protagonists are bold enough to take their own decisions and they are ready to live their lives without the help of their husband.



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