CHAPTER IV

Fractured Consciousness
Shashi Deshpande has portrayed the new Indian woman and her dilemmas, her efforts to understand self and to preserve her identity as wife, mother and above all as a human being in the tradition – bound, male – dominated Indian society. Woman today plays diverse roles both indoors and outdoors. She participates in all the hitherto male – dominated spheres. Still there is something that provokes conflict in her mind and makes her restless. Deshpande’s novels contain the matter that can be regarded as staple material of feminist thought: women’s sexuality, the gender roles, self – discovery and so on. The striving point about Deshpande’s novels is her delineation of the inner psyche of woman where she characterizes the unbroken flow of thought and awareness in the waking mind. Deshpande herself admits to Geetha Gangadharan in an interview that there are few writers who write about human psyche or their fractured consciousness.

We know a lot about the physical and the organic world and the universe in general but we still know very little about human relationships. It is the most mystifying thing as far as I am concerned. I will continue to wonder about it, puzzle over it and write about it. And still find it tremendously intriguing, fascinating.

*(Deshpande’s Interview, Indian Communicator).*

Deshpande’s protagonists are struggling psychologically to find their own voice. In this effort they naturally develop divided mentality which prevails throughout their life. Through this mode of fractured consciousness she explores the full spectrum and flow of a character’s mental process, in
which sense perception mingle with conscious and half - conscious thoughts, memories, feelings, and random associations. Deshpande’s protagonist has many thoughts perceptions and feelings in their mind but some aspects of thought itself are nonverbal. They cannot express their ideas before male dominated society and suffer their whole life. Being highly intelligent and sensitive Deshpande’s protagonists usually end up exhausted. Finally, marriage and social norms bind them completely and there is something that provokes conflict in their mind and makes them restless. For example, Indu in Roots and Shadows is independent and allowed no direct influence upon her husband. She has to reach out beyond herself towards the social milieu only through her husband. But the husband instead of becoming a source of freedom unlike her ancestral home which was tradition bound becomes a barrier for Indu’s development. He is unconcerned and indifferent to her emotional urges. Instead, it is Indu who has to cater to the needs of his inner urges and drives:

But my marriage had thought me this too. I had found in myself an immense capacity for deception. I had learnt to reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to see, to say to him nothing but what he wanted to hear hid my responses and emotions as if they were bits of garbage.

(Despande, Roots and Shadows, P.38.)

When Indu has no courage to articulate her voice, she expresses it through her creative writing. She has relinquished her identity by surrendering before Jayant’s masculinity by becoming his wife. She remains always confused about her freedom. The conflict between emotion and reason becomes a very complex one. In Indian society, women are
educated with a complete knowledge of their future but still they are jerked between the desire and submission to social system.

Deshpande declares that women suffer due to their emotional attachment with home. They do not want to tolerate the pain of being away from home as a wife and mother. But since their sense of individuality has matured by the education, they do not want to conduct a passive married life of a sacrificial and shadowy creature. They expect a measure of satisfaction, when they do not achieve it, they feel frustrated. Promila Kapur, a sociologist, analyses a change among educated females who have different way of thinking:

With a change in women's personal status and social status has come a change in her way of thinking and feeling and the past half century has witnessed great changes in attitude towards sex, love and marriage.

(Kapur, The Changing Status, P.31.)

Shashi Deshpande traces out the tensions and psychological obsession in which the Indian women are caught which arise in such a traditional world. In olden days, the voice women used to unheard in the male - dominated society, now woman have gained legal as well as social liberty to voice their problem and injustices done to them.

In Roots and Shadows Indu is an educated modern who follows the new gospels against the old setup. She panorates and reviews the concept of self, sin, faith, love, etc. But as long as society remains patriarchal in its role allocation and division of labour, the culture of second sex is bound to be eclipsed. A woman’s mind is shaped by hammering constantly that she is weak both physically and mentally and is subordinate to man. In Roots and Shadows, the dominant culture and the marginalized culture are explored in the form of suppression. Indu is confused when she finds
dominant Akka and even the family to be an hindrance in achieving her
goal of attaining Independence and completeness. In fact, this enters
the psychology of unconsciousness that subject woman to silence so as she
dose not identify herself with the masculine imagery as Indu says:

As a child, they has told me I must be obedient and
unquestioning..... You must accept everything, even
defeat with grace because you are a girl.... And.... I
had watched them and found it to be true. When I met
Jayant. And I had found out that he too expected me to
submit. No, not expected. He look it for granted that I
would. And I did it, because, I told myself, I loved
him. As if that Justified everything... I had clung
tenaciously to Jayant, to my marriage, not for love
alone, but because I was afraid of failure. I had to
show them that my marriage, that I, was a success.
Shown whom? The world. The family of course. And
so I went on lying, even to myself, compromising,
shedding bits of myself along the way.

(Deshpande, Roots, P.158.)

Here, the writer has very aptly and precisely put forth the complex
situation, in which young modern women who are sandwiched today
between tradition and modernity. This situation creates psychological
pressure in their mind. Indu is also confused regarding her freedom
because it is only her fantasy that she can be happy and complete after
marriage. Her marriage proves it wrong. She is not satisfied with Jayant
and regrets in her mind for her marriage because she can not express it to
anyone and thinks:

This is my real sorrow. That I can never be complete
in myself until I had met Jayant, I had not known it....
that there was somewhere outside me, a part of me without which I remained incomplete. Then I met Jayant. And lost the ability to be alone.

(Roots, P.34)

Indu believes that she should be true herself in speech as well as in action. Shashi Deshpande brings out the boiling and broiling problem of marriage as an evil social practice because right from the beginning to the end it is a history of woman's suppression, a long drawn-out drama of negotiation in which she feels uncertain and she blurs out helplessly “yes”, whether the man is a rake or an idiot or an uncultured boor. Deshpande is at her best when she dwells upon this subject of suppressed woman in her novel:

Millions of girls have asked this question millions of times in this country.... What choice do I have? Surely it is this, this fact that I can choose, that differentiates me from animals. But years of blindfolding can obscure your vision so that you no more see the choices. Years of shackling can hamper your movement. So that you can no more move out of your cage of no choices.

(Deshpande, Roots P.125.)

Here Shashi Deshpande has portrayed the inner struggle of woman who has many questions in her mind. In this novel when Indu wants to bid adieu to her monotonous service and wants to live her life in her own way, her husband, Jayant, does not approve of this idea. He is a barrier to her individual urge for self-expression since she believes that person like Indu can do nothing against the whole systems:

What can one person do against the whole system. No
point making a spectacle of yourself with futile gestures. We need the money, don't we? Don't forget, we have a long way to go.

(Deshpande, Roots, P.17.)

So, in Indian society women's ambitions are suppressed ultimately. Sarah Grimke also has same opinion about suppressed female. According to her, an expression of the mute and stifled female voice denied an equal freedom of self-expression; feminism is a concept emerging as a protest against male domination and the marginalization of women:

Man has subjugated women to his will, used her as a means to promote his selfish gratification, to minister to his sexual pleaser, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort; but never has he desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill. He has done all he could do to debase and enslave her mind......

(Grimke, Equality of Sexes and Condition of Women, P.10.)

Here, we observe the distorted image of women whose efforts for freedom and equality remain unheard in this patriarchal world. Deshpande has skillful described her females' confused mentality and disability to choose firmly one option. As a woman, Indu is hardly left with one choice. In fact, she starts hating and fighting against the womanhood:

Inner strength..... I thought of the world as I looked down on Mini's bowed head. A woman's life, they had told me, contained no choices. And all my life specially in this house, I had seen the truth of this. The women had no choice but to submit and to accept. I had often wondered..... have they been born without
wills, or have their wills atrophied through a lifetime of disuse?

*(Roots, P.6.)*

Indu recognizes her displacement and marginalization as a woman, and a process of ego-dissolution begins. She finds herself merging into others, experiencing a loss of boundaries. Deshpande has very exquisitely pointed the confused state of Indu's mind who on one hand wants to be independent and on the other she does not want to leave Jayant from her inner heart. Regarding a woman's role-playing, Rosemarie Tong observes:

Sometimes women play their roles not so much because they want to, as because they have to in order to service economically and / or psychologically virtually all women engage in the feminine role playing.

*(Tong, Feminist Thought, P.208.)*

Indu lives in paradoxical situation in which Indian women are enmeshed. She realizes that she has been chasing shadows, leaving her roots far behind in the family and in Jayant. She, being a narcissist, "had locked herself in a cage and thrown away the key." (85). It is marriage that hamperes her individuality and she has regarded it as a 'trap' and not a bond. Now she realizes:

But what of my love for Jayant, that had been a restricting bond, tormenting me, which I had so futilely struggled against? Restricting bond? Was it not I who made it so? Torment? Had I not created my own 'torment?' Perhaps it was true..... there was only one thing I wanted now.... and that was to go home..... the one I lived with Jayant. That was my only home. I would pull all this behind me and go back to Jayant....
I knew I would not tell Jayant about Naren and me..... that had nothing to do with the two of us and our life together. But there were other things I had to tell him. That I was resigning from my job. That I would do the kind of writing I had always dreamt of doing.

(*Roots*, P.187.)

Thus, Shashi Deshpande describes uncompromising and paradoxical female that frantically longed for self-expression, finally finds its roots in the home with her husband. Shadows disappear from her vision and she finds the clear light of day with the realisation and discovery of her authentic self. Negating the idea of non-existence, she says:

No, there is no such Thing. To accept it will be to deny the miracle of life it self. If not this stump, there is another. If not this tree, there will be others. Other trees will grow, other flowers will bloom, other fragrances will pervade other airs..... I felt as if I was watching life itself..... endless, limitless, formless and full of grace.

(*Roots*, P.179.)

The novel ends with a note of affirmation. Indu comes out from her disturbed psyche and asserts her individuality as a woman. Thus Deshpande has succeeded in presenting the diverse role of today's women. Though they have conflict in their mind which make them restless but, ultimately, they come out from their confusion and have their position in society and adjust in this traditional world. According to S.P. Swain, Deshpande has all feminist quality in her character:

Through the character of Indu, Deshpande has registered her awareness of the arrest of feminine
development brought about by an economic system
given to sheer materialistic happiness and inhabited by
philistines like Jayant, and a patriarchal family-
structure which produce in women dependency, in
security, lack of autonomy, and an incomplete sense
of their identity. Indu lives to see life with the
possibilities of growth; she has discovered the
meaning of life in her Journey of individualization.

(Swain, *The Fiction of Deshpande*, P. 96.)

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* by Shashi Deshpande is a totally
different novel in the sense that it explodes the myth of men's superiority
and the myth of woman being a paragon of all virtues. This novel presents
the inner and outer problems faced by the protagonist Saru who has her
own identity in society though not much satisfied with her life. In her
childhood she was an unwanted child of her parents being a girl. She faces
many problems in her life which proves to be the cause of her
psychological imbalance. When her brother has drawn, she is on a
perpetual war with her mother who hates and never forgives her when her
brother is dead. Growing in this environment of hatredness, hostility and
lovelessness Saru naturesthe seeds of rebellion within herself. Infact,
maled-oriented society structures female in such a way that they work
against their own gender. Saru recollects that when she wanted to study in
medical college, her mother has been against her studies and says to her
husband:

You don't belong to that (moneyed) class. And don't
forget, medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor,
you still have to get her married, spend money on her
wedding.... Let her go for a B.sc..... you can get her
married in two years and our responsibility will be
(Despande, The Dark Holds No Terrors P. 130.)

This meditates that girls have seen as belonging to a different family altogether and their socialization stresses their future roles as wives. Veena Das quotes an informant saying:

Daughters are comparable to something keep in trust for another (amanat). you have to care for them, love them, and you will be held responsible for them but you are destined to lose them. Once a daughter is properly married and goes to her own house it is like a debt that has been paid.

(Veena, Reflection on the Social Construction, P.93)

Thus a girl has to adjust herself twice: at her father's house as well as at her-in-law's house. During these adjustment a woman sacrifices various of her ambition and develops many psychological knots. Saru's involvement in her profession creates communication gap with her husband and she fails to understand his dual behavior which ruins her physically as well as psychologically She can leave neither her husband nor her job. She tells about her confused situation: “She could not, would no, draw aside the curtain that hid it (the crime) from the world.” (97)

Here Shashi Deshpande has skillfully described her female's confused mentality about her own life where she is disable to choose firmly one path. For a world, she is a lady doctor with a loving husband and two lovely kinds but, in reality, she is a victim of the most unkindest act of all. In such situation, she feels psychologically obsessed. With the duplicity of her life that has been killing and choking her real self. But her capacity to endure pain is exhausted one day. The true substance of the novel lies in
the mental process that Saru goes through during her apparently eventless existence at her father's home. She analyses all the dark corners of her life. She has many questions in her mind like: why these women can not go against their husband or why they do not complain about it. She tries hard to overcome her psychological fears:

The dark holds no terrors. The terrors are inside us all the time. We carry them within us and like traitors they spring out, when we least expect them, to scratch and maul.

(Deshpande, The Dark, P.85.)

Saru's character can be truly understood only in the light of psychological maxims. First, she carries within her the sad effects of gender discrimination. Saru's feminism springs out as a reaction to this discriminatory psychological setup of society at large and her parents in particular. Secondly, Saru also has a deep-rooted mentality of an unwanted child. Psychologists have dealt in detail with the mental make-up of an unwanted child. Thirdly and most tragically Saru suffers the bruises of a terrible physical trauma on her psyche.

Social stereotypes about gender roles are stronger than we can imagine them to be. One can present hundred of examples. A gift for a male kid-electric train, and for a female child - a doll. Why should a child's sex have anything to do with whether that child is given electric train or Barbie dolls to play with? B.Elton has investigated extensively about these stereotypes and finds that:

There is a sizable difference between the subject’s descriptions of males and of females. Men were constantly described as being more aggressive, independent, dominant, active, competitive and self-
confident than women. Women were concisely described as being more tactful, gentle, sensitive, emotional, expressive, neat and quiet then men. But, such stereotypes can be dangerous. The stereotypes are misleading because they encourage us "to overgeneralize, to assume that the stereotypes can never accurate in this blanket sense, as evidenced by the existence of large numbers of ... submissive men and insensitive women."

(B. Elton, The Psychology of Being human P. 391)

When we come out to our Second psychological concern, the mind of unwanted child, we find that the psychologists have dealt more with the after effects of being unwonted rather than the causes. A child who is not loved or cared by her / his parents is likely to develop deep-rooted sense of fear, insecurity and rejection. Angelino and his associates (1956) discovered a relationship between the environment and the kinds of fears and said:

Being unwanted has a disastrous effect on one's self-esteem. People with low self-esteem feel isolated, unloved, incapable of expressing of defending themselves and too weak to confirm their deficiencies.

(Tersaid, Marka and Jersid (1960)

coming to the third point, psychologists have discussed much more the mind of the criminal rather than the victim in case of physical assault against women: According to Claire:

Such a woman is broken mentally. She is a pessimist to the core. She hates touch. She abhors men, each one
of them. She is haunted by traumatic experience. She is perplexed and lost and sometimes secretive. She is definitely suspicious. She is revengeful.

*(Claire, Violence against women, P. 72)*

In the light of these psychological points of views, Saru's character gets fully revealed. Social prejudices have damaged Saru's personality to a big extent. Her mother childies her not to go out in the Sun as her complexion will suffer whereas her brother is allowed to do what he wants. Saru remembers her conversation with her mother:

"Don't go out in the Sun, you'll get darker."

"Who cares?"

"We have to care if you don't. We have to get you married."

"I don't want to get marry."

"Will you live with us all your life?"

"Why not?"

"You Can't."

"And Dhruva?"

"He is different. He is a boy."

*(Deshpande, The Dark P. 45.)*

This statement is firmly implanted in Saru's mind paving away for her rebellious nature in future. Saru's mother's obvious preference for her brother, Dhruva, creates a sense of alienation within her and precipitates a sense of rootlessness and insecurity. In her life she feels lack of an anchor.
She is "Like a homeless refugee... which is my room? I have none." (32) She can not enjoy her life because her mind is convinced that she can never be loved. That is the psychology of an unwanted child as well as Saru's. While introspecting, she confronts her fear of rejection:

The fear was there; the secret fear that behind each loving word.... lay the enemy, the snake, the monster of rejection.

(The Dark, P. 66)

Saru is perplexed about her freedom. The mental confusion prevails permanently in her mind. Whys and how never leave Saru. She has many questions in her mind:

How could I be anyone's beloved? I was the redundant, the unwanted, an appendage one could do without.

(Dark, P. 66)

Arnold Buss, a psychologist, has stated the condition of her mind and says:

That the core of self-esteem is formed by the unconditional love of parents. Since Saru has not been fortunate enough to receive the unconditional love of her parents, the level of her self-regard is low. She is uncertain about her birth and her place in the world.

(Suman, Women in Novels of S. D., P. 74.)

Saru reaches to the height of her mental stress when her husband assaults her physically. In that state of life, she feels loneliness and compelled by her inner self to leave her husband. When her femininity is
being brutally crushed, she loses forever the dreams of sentiment and passion. For her everything is meaningless as she says:

All that is physical is filthy. Love? Romance?

Both I know too well, were illusion and not relevant to my life.

(Deshpande, Dark, P. 113.)

Here, through the character of Saru, Deshpande mentions the dual life of educated Indian women. The protagonist Sarita, a possessed and psychotic woman, is ready to ride roughshod over every male. Is she supposed to be role model for the new women? What a nightmarish world she inhabits? Intolerant nagging mother, indifferent father, sadist husband, womanizing professor, and lecherous sex-hunting colleagues it is a world crowded with too many dark creatures full of dark desires. It is but natural that women like Sarita must raise above all this, putting their dark knowledge viciously against them and declare boldly: "The Dark Holds No Terrors." This is no world for the sane men and women.

Thus Deshpande presents Saru's both phases in this novel. Here, she effectively brings out the psychological problems of a career women and explores the inner and outer condition of Saru. She also concludes with the result of this divided mentality. But finally her character overcomes with this weakness and her anguish. And, in the end of the novel she attains peace of mind by her own efforts and becomes free from fears and pains. Thus the final efforts of her survival are appealing. Charu Chandra also agrees with Deshpande's concept of feminism where achievement of individual identity and female autonomy must not be the only goal of feminism but there should be the balancing of life in family and career:

After having accorded that autonomy to her, she should be brought into accept the basic human values
like motherhood and responsibility of the family, thereby, of the society, at least on her own terms. There is a need to harmonies the man-women relationship as equal partners. Victory is there, not in the subjugation and destruction of the male, rather in bringing him to see the indispensability of each other's space.

(Charu, Women in Novels of S. D. P. 86.)

Shashi Deshpande avoids the western feminist's concept of emancipation and presents the Indian version of the modern women who search for the whole of their 'identity'. Having suffered the long conflict between the emotions and reasons Saru establishes herself neither as a totally liberated woman, the typical western nor as an orthodox Indian but as a complete female. Deshpande believes in a note of positive affirmation by offering Saru the realisation that if life is an illusion, it is the only reality that we know "Therefore the only think is to go on as if it is real knowing all the while it is only an illusion." (220) So we should not be appalled with darkness.

With the Social and cultural change in the post-independence India, women find themselves standing at the crossroads. The consciousness of a changed time on the one hand, and the Socio-cultural modes and values that have given them a defined role towards and values that have given them a defined role towards themselves on the other which precedes to the fragmentation of the very psyche of those women. Caught between the two worlds they need to define themselves, their place in society and their relationship with their surroundings. In, Shashi Deshpande has portrayed the fresh insights of a woman writer who is also a young wife. Being a writer Jaya is supposed to conjecture her views and ideas before Society but she remains silent probing into her past, struggling with her present
and efforting to establish a rapport with her future. It is true that Deshpande's protagonists raise their voice against the straight - Jacketed role-models of daughter / sister / wife and mother, and refuse to be the object of culture / social oppression of age-long patriarchal society. It is also true that being sensitive, intelligent, career oriented middle-class women of a changed time, they feel suffocated and engaged in the male-defined codes of life. Jaya is a well-educated wife of Mohan but she is supposed to live her life according to her husband's desire. In earlier days of her married life, Jaya acquiesces to her husband's decision and accompanies him. But her inner conscience is not ready to accept it and she gets psychologically disturbed. It is here, in the intolerable period of waiting and rising hysteria, that the process of self-examination and self-criticism begins for Jaya. In Jaya's case, expression of anger is not a direct outburst as it is with Saru and Indu as Adesh Pal says:

Her first and only outburst with Mohan soon after her marriage result in days of Mohan's Silence. Since then, she adopts the silence stratagem and withdraws under it. She turns the direction of her anger on herself and her anger becomes self-destructive.

(Adesh, Women in the Novels of S.D. P.101.)

To come across as a wife and mother, she suppresses her own emotional needs and she is afraid of acknowledging her desires decisively even in petty day-to-day affairs. She is afraid that a frank admission of her ambitions may disturb the delicate balance of her relationships. She can not share her feelings with her husband instead of it she is more concerned with the eternal gloss or sheen of it:

Ours has been a delicately balanced relationship, so much so that we have even snipped off bits of ourselves to keep the scales
on an even keel.

(Deshpande, *That Long Silence*, P.)

The suppression of self and emotions, and worry to keep the exterior smooth, gradually create a strain in her mind. The repetitive nature of household chores and emotional loneliness procreate monotony in her life and she finds family life unendurable,

I had to admit the truth of myself that I had often found family life unendurable. Worse than anything else had been the boredom of the unchanging pattern, the unending monotony. I remember now how often I had sighed for a catastrophe a disaster, no, not a personal one, but anything to shake us out of our dull grooves...like the chorus of green drama, we were distanced from suffering; for us, there was just living - one foot in front of another, until death came to us in a natural form.

(Deshpande, *Long Silence*, P.4)

When Jaya stays in Dadar flat, she reconsiders her life with some objective detachment and finds out the vanity of life which frustrates and angers her with finality. She realise the futility of a life which is built around the needs of a husband only,

The truth was that we had both lost the props of our lives. Deprived of his routine, his files, his telephone, his appointments, he seemed to be no one at all...... There was nothing he needed, so there was nothing he needed, so there was nothing I had to do. My own career as a wife was in Jeopardy.
Deshpande suggests that the educated woman can never be satisfied by doing only daily chores of life because they have creative mind and a quest for their selfhood to achieve some position in society. Such is the case with Jaya that she gets bored by routine work of house. She experiences a strange sense of undulated freedom when her work has finished. The woman's work within house dose not create anything permanent as she says:

And yet I had a curious sense of freedom. There was nothing to be cleaned nothing to be arranged or rearranged.... I was free, after years, of all those monsters that had rule my life... those clothes, God, all those never ending piles of clothes that had to be washed and ironed, so that they could be born and washed and ironed once again.

(Deshpande, Long silence, P.25.)

Here, Deshpande's concern is to exhibit the root cause of the fragmentation and to explore what happens in the psyche of these educated women in the process of individualization. Deshpande's protagonists suffer from ego-inflation on account of their unusual childhood and improper child - rearing. Being a convent educated Jaya feels suffocated and tapped in the traditional Sita-role defined in patriarchal society. She refuses to surrender her name Jaya (victory) for Suhasini, given by her husband at the time of marriage. Similarly, in her parental house too,she gets deeply hurt when Ramukaka (Jaya's parental uncle) sketches the family tree and informs her:

Look Jaya this is our branch. This is our grandfather - and here is father and then us - Laxman, Vasu and
me.... Jaya questions this patriarchal tree: "I'm not here" Ramu kaka gets irritated and says: "How can you be here?" you do not belong to this family. You have no place here.

*(Deshpande, Long Silence, P.143.)*

Here, the loss of place in the family tree is symbolically the loss of identity which wounds Jaya. She dreams to find a place in Mohan's family but after marriage, she is surprised when Mohan fails to be a "sheltering tree". Then many questions strike in her disturbed psyche like where is the real existence of a woman? Which is the time, she should live her own life? And her all dreams that she will lead live her own life after marriage, are shattered thoroughly and she gets distracted mentally.

Further when Mohan is in danger of being caught and defamed for some malpractice in his office, he being a traditionist expects Jaya to share his anxiety as Indira Bhatt opines:

> Wishes to use his wife as buffer, an opiate to soften the impact of the forces he has set into motion again himself.

*(Indira, Indian Women Novelists, P.157.)*

But Jaya belongs to modern generation and reacts to the situation differently. Although she has lack of communication with Mohan which later results out in anger. But in the beginning, she fails to break her silence:

> I was full of a sense of angry confusion. What was he charging me with? And, oh God, why could not I speak? Why could not I say something? I felt foolishly inadequate having nothing to offer him in exchange
for all the charges he was pouring on to me.... I could say nothing. I sat in my place, pinned to it by his anger, a monstrously huge spear that went through me, excruciatingly painful yet leaving me cruelty conscious.

Shashi Deshpande delineates the real condition of Indian women’s psyche through Jaya. That Long Silence also shows psychological progression as the protagonist undergoes a kind of transformation through self – recognition. Jaya makes an introspective study in the end and like Lear, asks a question: “What have I achieved by this writing?” She gets an easy answer to her question:

Well, I’ve achieved this. I’m not afraid anymore. The panic has gone. I’m Mohan’s wife; I had thought and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan’s wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible.

(Deshpande, Long Silence, P.191.)

This implies that she comes out from her disturbed psyche and she would not accept the earlier image of a pair of bullocks yoked together, signaling a loveless couple:

Two bullocks yoked together – that was how I saw the two of us the day we came here, Mohan and I now. I reject that image. It’s wrong. If I think of us in that way, I condemn myself to lifetime of disbelief in ourselves. I’ve always thought – there’s only one life, no chance of reprieve, no second chances. But in this life itself there are so many crossroads, so many choices.
In the end of the novel, she sorts out her problems with optimistic hopes. She becomes a mature woman and fills with vigour and buoyancy and thinks: "We don’t change overnight; it’s possible that we may not change even over a long period of time." (193);

But we can always hope. Without that Life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this: Life has always to be made possible.

In *The Binding Vine* is shown the perennial truth of how all the human beings in life – parents and children, relatives and strangers, men and women are bound by the Vine of emotional attachment and struggle to enjoy the beauty of life and overcome the ugliness in various ways. In maintaining this emotional touch they also face some psychological problems. Shashi Deshpande has expressed the inner world of woman mainly through the consciousness of Urmila, the female protagonist, and partly through the consciousness of other female characters like Vanna, Urmila’s friend, Mira, the mother – in –law and Shakutai. The author’s femininity, obviously, has helped her to depict the mind and heart of the protagonist microscopically and with an insider’s authenticity of exercise. Urmila’s happiness is marred by the unexpected death of her female baby. She fights with the memories but also realizes that forgetting is betrayal:

I must reject these memories, I have to conquer them. This is one battle I have to win if I am to go on living. And yet my victory will carry with it the taint of betrayal. To forget is to the betrayal.

(*Deshpande, Binding Vine, P.7.*)
After death of her baby child, Urmila becomes disturbed and her reaction to resultant depression and inner journey enables her to look around her analytically. In her fractured consciousness, she touches on the various roles played by women in the family setup. She decodes Mira’s frustration when she is christened Nirmala – the first estrangement of her identity in her laws’ house:

Nirmala they call, I stand statue – still, do you build without erasing the old?

A tablet of rice, a pencil of gold can they make me Nirmala? I am Mira.

(Deshpande, Binding Vine P.101.)

Mira does not want to change her name from her inner heart but she could express it out, in her lifetime. Mira’s poetry is “like a message being trapped on the wall by the prisoner in the next.” (P.115) Urmil visualizes the obsessed psychology of Mira through poems because none wants to change her identity from one’s heart. Urmil says:

I can see her stealthily, soundlessly getting out of bed sitting down on the floor by the window perhaps, forgetting everything while she wrote.

(Deshpande, Binding Vine, P.127.)

Through Mira, Shashi Deshpande represents the true picture of old educated women who have no courage to go against social system rather they should suppress their feelings. Mira’s diary also recalls the views of conservative male society through the remarks of venu, a grand man of Indian literature. In a meeting, when Mira gives him some of her poems to read, he reacts so bluntly:
Why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for young women like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men.

(*Deshpande, Binding Vine, P.127.*)

This is also a kind of brutality because even to force your will upon another is to be brutal. This reflects the agony and confusion of a creative woman in an andocentric world where even an educated men have such opinion about female and suppress her talent. In Indian society, it is very difficult to change men’s views. But Mulk Raj Anand disagrees with this idea when he says:

This is the subordination by domestication and it handicaps of women writers in a male chauvinist society.

(*Mulk Raj, in Yam’s Hell: Indian Writers in English, P.2.*)

The same kind of anguish was given a vent by Kamala Das in her poem “An Introduction”:

Dress in sarees, be girl.

Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,

Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. oh

Belong, cried with categories.

This is the condition of depriving women in Indian society. Who are supposed to be fit only for homely task. But now time has changed and women have power of communication. So it would not be out of place to see what Cora Kaplan says in this context:
To be a woman and a poet presents many women poets within such a profound split between their social, sexual identity (their human identity) and their artistic practice that the split becomes the insistent subject, sometime overt, often hidden or displaced, of much woman’s poetry.

*(Kaplan, *Culture and Feminism*, P.70.)*

Believing in the same ideology, Sahshi Deshpande presents the silent efforts of Mira in this novel, who uses her pen as a weapon to save herself from abuse, anonymity and mutilation in the prison of her husband’s home.

Urmi, a confident woman, shares the obsession not only of her mother – in-law Mira, but also of Kalpana – a girl who becomes a prey to her own relative who molesters her. Shakutai is frustrated in her life both as a wife and as a mother although she believes that marriage can save her daughter from other men. Henna same views about uneducated women says:

Marriage in the life of such women acts as prudah or view which serves a “provision of symbolic shelter”.

*(Henna, *Separated Worlds*, P.7.)*

Urmi is not agreed with Shakutai’s view of doing Kalpana’s marriage. Urmi is resolute to break the silence of women which disturbed inner psyche. She observes theses mishaps from the female point of view and makes severe attack on arranged marriage because in such a marriage the girl’s feelings are ignored and she suffers and remains vanquished throughout her life. Vanna and Shakutai’s marriage are examples of their failure. Vanna is really unable to assert before her husband even in matters where her say should be important. Soon after the birth of the second
daughter her husband decides to have no more children although Vanna would have personally loved to have a son. "You should have told Harish that, "Says Urmila to Vanna, to which Vanna replies:

I did. And he quoted population figure at me. And he said, one surely I’m not the kind of woman who craves for sons, am I? And, two what makes me think the next one will be a boy? He is right, only......... I wouldn’t have minded taking a chance.

(Deshpande, Binding Vine, P.81.)

When Vanna says this, it makes Urmila furious and burstout: "you let him bulldozer – you crawl before him." (81) Shashi Deshpande portrays the servile attitude of woman through Shakutai and Vanna although they are suppressed by their husband. Urmila is also frustrated in her own married life like Shakutai and Mira, but in a different way. When her husband lives far away from her due to job, Urmila longs to have him permanently with her at home but in her psyche she never tries to look at another man for amour and becomes a chaste wife. Thus, in spite of psychological obsession, these three women endeavour to chanalize their emotions in different ways because of their strong urge to survive. In the beginning they have confusion in their mind but in the end of the novel they comeout from their disturb psyche as Ashok Mahasahabe says about them:

Although Urmila, Mira, Vanna and Shakutai suffer from discontent, they do not rebel against the system probably because they have a feeling that things are gradually improving although their pace is very slow.

(Mahasahabe, Fiction of Deshpande, P.143.)
Thus, through the female characters of the novel, Deshpande gets into the root of existence itself. Male or female, there is a division within ourselves that leads us to love and hate, to be gentle and good and at the same time become an agent of cruelty. This is the message of the novel. Human nature itself is the “hardest to bridge, the hardest to accept, to live with.” (201) In such a complicated life it is very difficult to live life without problems. It is such moment of tender love, however rare they may be, that make life tolerable and worthliving. So, for human being life as well as death both are terrific. Here Deshpande has no moral conclusion to the reader. Through these lines Deshpande has actually seems in mood not to give any guide line or code of conduct for women rather she has left it to them to decide what will be the right course for them. Urmila recalls such moments of true love which acts as “the spring of life”:

And yet I think of Vanna, heavily pregnant, sitting by me, holding my hand during the pains before Kartik was born, I remember Kishore’s face when he first saw Anu. I think of Akka crying for Mira, of Inni’s grief when papa told her about his illness, of papa’s anguished face watching her, of the touch of grace there was in Shakutai’s hand when she covered me gently at night while I slept, of the love with which she speaks of her sister, of Sandhya.........

(Deshpande, *Binding Vine*, P.203.)

Although Shashi Deshpande has tried to articulate the hurts and agonies of women experienced in a male-dominated society, her vision of life is not pessimistic. This is evident from “the spring of life” Urmila searches for in *The Binding Vine*.

Shashi Deshpande’s *A Matter Of Time* has a different theme and presentation. For the first time in this novel she makes a man protagonist
and also represents his mental condition. But this does not mean that she shifted her focus. A close study of the novel reveals that she represents the three generation of middle – class Indian women who have psychological obsession because their husband leave them due to some reason or other. Deshpande’s earlier novels delineate the inner heart of women protagonists but here she portrays the inner conflict in a man’s mind though it is sparingly used in parts of the novel. In her latest novel, she is eager to concentrate on larger issues pertaining to human life. She told her interviewer M. D. Frankly in 1968:

I have now reached a point........ at which I feel there must be change in my writing. I do not know what kind of change this will be. One gets stale after a while.

(Riti, “There Is No Looking Back” Interview 18-24 June 1988, P.28.)

The following extracts from two other interviews also testify to Deshpande’s urge to write on issues of a wider dimension:

But you know, sometimes I feel trapped in this woman’s world – you can see that in “That Long Silence” I do want to get away.......... so may be I want to reach a stage where I can write about human beings and not about women or men.


In this novel, Deshpande sketches how Vithalrao and Manorama, Kalyani’s parents, are not blessed with a son. So, how Manorama frustrates in her life due to lack of her son. She is tormented by the fear that her husband Vithalrao might remarry to have a son who would rightfully inherit his property as generally happened in Indian society in old days:
To add to her insecurity, that main crutch, the one most women depended on, a son, was denied to her. All that she had was a daughter, Kalyani, who would get married and become a part of another family.

(Deshpande, A Matter of Time, P.128.)

In Indian society, if any woman does not have a son, it also becomes the cause of her frustration. Son has great importance in an Indian family and it also disturbs the life of Kalyani as observed that she is disturbed in her marital life because of the loss of her mentally retarded son. She also feels frustrated and alienated when she comes to know about Gopal’s desertion of his family. She would never like the tragedy of her life to resurface in the case of her daughter and cries:

No......... no, my God, not again, pathetically, “sounding so much like an animal in pain”.

(Deshpande, A Matter, P.12.)

Kalyani takes the entire responsibility of Sumi’s “carelessness” on herself. She says:

But.........how could she have known what being a good wife means when she never saw her mother being one? I taught her nothing, it’s my fault, Gopal, forgive me and do not punish her for it.

(Deshpande, A Matter, P.47)

So, this is mostly the condition of innocent Indian women who have been suppressed by the Indian males and they can not go against them. In both cases of Manoroma and Kalyani, they are never responsible for not having or the loss of their son but they are deserted by their husbands.
Moving on the portrayal of the inner world of second generation, Sumi is more disturbed in her psyche than Kalyani because without any reason, she has suffered from her husband. In Indian society if husband leaves his wife, only females are regarded responsible for their discord or separation. Sumi feels alienated but does not ask him for an explanation. In her innerself she has many questions to ask but she dares not to put up them before him:

\[
\text{……... \ If I meet Gopal I will ask him one question}\\
\text{……... the question no one has thought of. What is it,}\\
\text{Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in this age of}\\
\text{acquisition and possession walkout on his family and}\\
\text{all that he owns? Because ……it was you who said}\\
\text{that we are shaped by the age we live in, but the}\\
\text{society we are part of this society, turn your back on}\\
\text{everything in your life? Will you be able to give me an}\\
\text{answer to this?}\\
\]

(Deshpande, A Matter, P.27.)

Thus, the desertion of her husband brings disgrace and humiliation for herself which disturbs her inner psyche but she understand that “the reason lies inside him, the reason is him.” (24) Deshpande’s protagonists have some misunderstanding in their marital relationship but they do not submit their existence and achieve their individuality out of their disturbed psyche. The third generation, in the novel, is represented by Aru, the eldest daughter of Sumi and Gopal. She is self – conscious and observes silently the others and feels their predicament. She has rebellious nature so Gopal’s walking away from his family is, according to her: “Not just a tragedy, it is both shame and disgrace.” (13) Deshpande has given no clue of her frustration in the novel. Inspite of this, she is bold and daring who represents new generation as Deshpande measures her:
She is trying to make sense of what is happening, her consciousness moving outside herself and reaching out of the others as well, embracing, in fact, the whole of what is happening. It is hoped that true “understanding” would come to her in due course and her “ambivalence” would disappear.

(Deshpande, A Matter, P.185.)

In A Matter Of Time, Deshpande, for the first time, writes from a man’s point of view. She gives the clear idea of the insecurities and complexes of men too. Generally a father’s feelings usually find no place, specially in the writings by women. But in this novel, Deshpande, however, gives a sparingly honest account of Gopal’s emotions as a father:

But I glimpsed it even then, the truth that would soon confront me, I saw it when Sumi put the baby to her breast. For I knew, when I looked at them that they belonged together as I never did. Even when Sumi was impatient, when she showed a flash of temper as she often did for being deprived of her sleep, they were together in that magic circle. Woman and child. And I was outside. A man is always an outsider. I envied Sumi for this. And for this too: for a woman, from the moment she is pregnant, there is an overriding reason for living, a justification for life that is loudly and emphatically true. A man has search for it, always and forever.

(Deshpande, A Matter, P.68.)

Thus, Deshpande breaks herself from the cordon she had earlier built around herself and successfully articulates the doubts and fears of her
male characters with the effortless ease as she written about her women protagonists. In an interview, she expresses her desire that she has not only expressed the emotions and thoughts of women’s mind but is also equally sensitive to male psyche:

I am always concerned about people, their predicament and moral values. It is a search in every human being; something more that mere mundane life.

(Stanley, “Everyone has a Right to Choose a Language” The Sunday observer, 11 Feb, 1990)

Deshpande writes about her character as an insider not as a viewer and expresses that Gopal is not fascinated with the worldly things. In his conscience, he feels much frustrated. When Sumi’s sister Premi attempts to ment the rift that has set in life of Gopal and Sumi, he discloses loss of faith in life which disturbs his inner psyche. He tells her of the greatest wonder of the world:

We see people die and yet we go on as if we are going to live forever. . . . . . . . It’s the secret of life itself. We know it’s all there, the pain and suffering, old age, loneliness and death, but we think, somehow we believe that it’s not for us. The day we stop believing in this untruth . . . . . . . it will become difficult, almost impossible to go on. . . . . . . it happened to me. I stopped believing. The miracle failed for me and there was nothing left. You’ve got to be the Buddha for that emptiness to be failed with compassion for the world. For me there was just emptiness.

(Deshpande, A Matter, P.133.)
This is the reason when Gopal comes to realize the hollowness of all human – relationship. Illness and death of husband of his sister Sudha also strikes him with the truth that one has always to be alone. As one hears about the death and gets the realization of one’s inescapable loneness, it becomes most painful and oppressive for him:

Emptiness.... is always waiting for us. The nightmare we most dread, of waking up among total strangers, is one we can never escape. And so it’s a lie, it means nothing, its just deceiving ourselves when we say we are not alone. It is the desperation of a drowning person that makes us cling to other humans. All human ties are only a masquerade.

(Deshpande, A Matter, P.52.)

This passage delineates a lot of frustration on Gopal. His desertion of his family signifies the Vedic renunciation freeing “himself from bondage” of life. But, in the last, he admits that there are other kind of attachments from which he is not free.

I thought I’d left it all behind, but I haven’t, it’s herewith me still........ and comes at a weak moment.

Thus, we find that Sashi Deshpande is successful even in the portrayal of male character’s psychology and his doubts and even his phobias. In this novel, Deshpande gives message that human beings are time’s captives; only the creator is free, only the creator can be free because he is out of it all. Human beings are not free from bonds. So it’s very difficult to be separated from fractured conscience until they find full knowledge. The following words of Gopal sum up the finding of the novel:
If it is indeed true that we are bound to our destinies, that there is no point struggling against them, even then this remains— that we do not submit passively or cravenly, but with dignity and strength. Surely, this, to some extent, frees us from our bonds.

(Deshpande, A Matter, P.46.)

Shashi Deshpande’s latest novel, Small Remedies is the most confident assertion of her strength as a novelist with her deliberate denial of sentimentality and her total control over the unwidely material. Structured as a biography within a biography, it is about Savitribai Indorekar, the ageing doyenne of Hindustani music, who denies a marriage and a home with a view for pursuing her genius. But Deshpande does not give any clue of her disturbed psyche, rather fills her with full confidence. It also delineats with the story of Leela, who gives up her respectability in order to gain love and unhappiness in equal measure. At the center of this sprawling narrative is Madhu, who is a narrator of Savitribai, Leela and Munni’s lives and hopes to find a way out of her own despair. She has fractured memories about the life of Savitribai from her childhood. In her childhood Madhu has witnessed to the rejection of Savitribai by conventional society because there are different yardsticks for men and women in our society and to learn music for woman was too humiliating.

Another memory of Madhu’s life is that her father with his unorthodox ways was an oddity. Being a widower and bringing up a daughter of his own with only a male servant at home, observing no ritual or religious customs and openly indulging in a drink or two every evening, he obviously stood out in a conservative place like Neemgaon. But looking back, Madhu realizes that while people willing to overlook her father’s eccentricities and his foibles they were not so generous when it came to accept Savitribai. “Being a man he could get away with much. He could
live the way he wanted without open censure or disapproval.” (139) It is only when a women dares to defy convention that people are shocked. As Madhu observes,

In a sense, neither of us belonged. Munni’s family, with her singer mother, absent father and another man – a muslim – sharing the home, was of course radically, shockingly different.

(Deshpande, Small Remedies, P.138.)

Madhu’s estrangement with her husband, Som, began earlier from her son’s death, when Madhu, waking up after a nightmare, one night, revealed to him a secret which she had locked up on the innermost recesses of her mind:

He slept with me, I was only fifteen then. He- I don’t think he meant it, but it- it happened. And that’s why he that’s why he died. He killed himself because of what he did to me.

(SmallRemedies,P.262.)

When she discloses the truth of her life, being an Indian husband Som is unable to accept the truth of his wife. As one who had been a good husband by any standard and shared a wonderful relationship with his wife. He is totally devastated. So, this incident becomes the cause of Madhu’s disturbed psyche. While Madhu wants to realize him that she has been raped but it’s the act of sex that is spoiling their marital life

:But it’s the single act of sex that Som holdson to, it’s this fact that he can’t let go of, as if it’s been welded into his palm. Purity, chastity, an intact hymen- these are the things Som is thinking of, these are the truths
that matter. I know this when I see his face, when I feel the hurting grip of his hands, when he says, ‘Tell me, go on, go on.’ Go on with what? There’s nothing else as far as I’m concerned.... But Som wants facts, hard facts. How often had this happened, how long had it gone on? Tell me, Tell me. Only once. No, never again. No, never before, either. Som cannot believe me. He thinks I’m holding back. When I say it’s all very vague, he thinks I’m evading him, when I tell him I’d forgotten about it, he goes rigid with disbelief and anger.

(Small Remedies, P. 263.)

While it doesn’t matter that Som himself had a full-fledged relationship with another woman before marriage. It is a typical situation in Indian society where a man may have numbers of affairs but expect his wife to be a virgin. So, it’s all the more indigestible to Som that his wife had been a willing partner. This incident shakes the inner psyche of Madhu because a victim, not a participant. She reconsiders the moment over and over again, she asks herself – why does she tell him? Why does she express it to him? She knows the moment she thinks in her inner mind that she has done wrong when his face expresses the enormity of her wrong act. Madhu’s words can’t wear the weight of the truth, they can’t contain the vastness of it; they can only give a partial picture, a distortion often, of the truth. Som can’t believe Madhu and supposes that she is holding back. When she realizes him that it’s all very vague, he considers she is evading him. From Madhu’s response, he becomes rigid with disbelief and anger. It’s true but it’s hard for Madhu to untangle this one event from the many things that happened then. It remains part of a confusing blur of event – her
father's illness, his going away to Bombay for surgery, his death. All the other happening whirled round this central fact of her father's death, this column that stand out clear and tall, dwarfing the rest. But in the end, Madhu breaks the silence and confesses to Som that he has told him the things I had left unsaid earlier:

Even this is not easy. It is hard to speak of something that happened without words, there are no words to frame it in. I see it in my mind like a silent, wordless play unfolding itself, an almost ascetic union of two bodies, the eroticism played out not in lust arabesques, but in spare, straight lines. Nevertheless, I speak to Som. I tell him that I did not speak of this incident to him not because I wanted to conceal it from him, but because I had lost it, I had misplaced it in the chaos of my life after my father's death. Memories denied it, put it away. Som listen to me silently until I am done. He says nothing even after that. Both of us know it is too late for these revelations, for any explanations.

(Small Remedies, P. 269.)

Even it is not easy for her to close the door that had been left ajar but she wants to be free from the burden of disturbed psyche so she does it courageously. A close study of Deshpande's novels reveal that inspite of being frustrated her protagonists find a way out of their despair. In Small Remedies, Deshpande's protagonists are confident and this is the reason that they come out from their disturbed psyche. Whatever they think, they do that in their lives.