CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION
A close study of Shashi Deshpande’s novels reveals her enormous sympathy for women and their travails, provoking reviewers to assume that she has joined the band of feminist writers who have achieved much popularity in the west. She, however, does not approve of being labelled a feminist writer. Though Deshpande refuses to be called a feminist writer, her novels are susceptible to a feminist approach. She has a remarkable insight into the working of a woman’s mind. As a writer, she highlights the secondary position occupied by women and their degradation which is inevitable in an oppressing male dominated society. She gives us a glimpse into the state and condition of modern woman who is intelligent and bold, aware of her capabilities, but thwarted under the weight of male-dominating world. Deshpande’s women are the products of painful period of transition in society where they have a greater share of responsibilities than their predecessors. They attempt to resolve their problems by a process of temporary withdrawal. They have as models not traditional stereo-typed women who were willing to sacrifices their individuality for the sake of traditional norms. Instead “Yathecchasi Kuru” or do as you desire becomes their guiding principle. The social and cultural change in the post independence India has made the women conscious of the need to define themselves, their place in society and their relationship with their surroundings. This awakening among Indian women is largely due to the spread of education and impact of the western life style. Besides, the western influence coming through liberal education, forced new values and norms of life upon women. In spite of educational opportunities and economic independence, women are the victim of domestic injustice and the crude customs of our society. But with the emergence of women writers writing in English in India, there began the battle for emancipation of communicate the world their own bitter experience as well as their ideas of social reform as creative persons.

Shashi Deshpande, not a stern feminist occupies a significant place among the contemporary novelists who emphasize more on the mental
status, psychological probing, the unconscious level of human mind and inner recesses of the human psyche etc. Her protagonists are educated, modern bold but victim of the patriarchal society who share frankly their frustrations and disappointments. The women of Shashi Deshpande’s novels are, however, award of gender equality, egalitarians etc. and yet lack of courage to fight their emancipation. A careful reading of her novels reveals a deep understanding of the female psyche particularly that of the educated urban, middle-class women. But in the end they achieve their individuality by breaking their silence.

Shashi Deshpande has different feminist views. Her protagonists, though middle-class and educated, are firmly rooted in India with the weight of countries of tradition and culture behind them. Deshpande may not be a formal feminist in the strict sense of the word, but it must also be observed that feminism can mean different thing to different people. Arshia Sattar in her thought – provoking article on the position of feminist movement at present observes:

Feminism is no longer a single voice that speaks for all women irrespective of creed and colour. It is rather, a ‘rainbow coalition of rights, desires, agendas, struggle, and victories. Not all issues apply to all women, our battles need not be the same and more and more, we tend to speak for ourselves rather than all of us.


This book highlights the female protagonists of Deshpande who are somewhat feeble at the beginning but emerge in the end to be stronger women with a transformed consciousness. The novelist has chosen, infact, a large canvas to portray and evolutionary and a very comprehensive picture of the Indian women belonging to different educational and economic level. The overall design of her plot is actually centralized on
women characters, their interaction with men and other women, their attitude and values, their tensions, problems and reaction to society. Her women generally have to face a moment of crisis, which isolates them for a temporary exile. This break provides them necessary time and space for self realization. It also enables them to return as a transformed person. Deshpande’s protagonists have gradual changes and each of her novels ends on a note of optimism and determination by its protagonists who resolve to take the reins of their life into their hands.

As a writer Deshpande is influenced by the English writer like Margaret Drabble, Doris Lessing, Bronte Sisters and Jane Austen as well as by the great feminist like Simone de Beauvoir and Germaine Greer. But she denies in being categorized as a feminist writer and the reason of this is misconception of the term ‘Feminism’ in the mind of the people. She is in fact, a strong supporter of a particular type of feminism, which can be said as ‘Indian Feminism’ a trend that suits particularly to Indian women. According to her:

Feminism is not a matter of Theory. It is difficult to apply Kate Millett or Simone de Beauvoir or whoever to the reality of our daily lives in India. And then there are such terrible misconceptions about feminism by people here. They often think it is about burning bras and walking out on your husband, children or about not being married, not having children etc. I always try to make the point now about what feminism is not, and to say that we have to discover what it is in our own lives, our experiences. And I actually feel that a lot of women in India are feminists without realizing it.

(Holmstrom, Interview “Shashi Deshpande Talks to Lakshmi Holmstrom,” p.26)
The focal point in this work is to bring forth the various feministic elements in her women characters and also to focus on the issues like degradation, subordination and the inequality that they experience in family and in society. An effort is made to reveal the inner working of female psyche, their genuine problems, and the strained human relationship which they carry on, their search for identity, their divided mentality regarding freedom and responsibility as well as the various factors affecting the harmony of their married life.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter ‘Introduction’ traces the background and formative influences of Indian English fiction. It shows that the decade of 1930s was indeed a blooming period for the Indian English fiction. It has the appearance of the first novels by the big three: Anand’s Untouchable (1935), Narayan’s Swami and Friends (1935) and Raja Rao’s Kanthapura (1938). These writers brought in new themes, new techniques, new styles and new approach to the form of the novel. But after independence the Indian society faces an unavoidable conflict between tradition and modernity resulting many social familial and even individual problems which we observe in the novels of that period. Now- a -days writers are attempting to change age- old myths related to the man – woman relationship and some have succeeded in their attempts. In twentieth century, feminist movement is an analysis of women’s subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it. Though Indian English novel remained male- dominated for quite sometime, as all the major novelists in the pre – independent period including the three greats, came from the male section of the society, yet in the post independence period there appeared the contribution of women novelist in Indian English fiction who records that in spite of the educational Opportunities and educational independence, how are women the victims of domestic injustice and crude customs of our society. But with the emergence of women writers in English in India, there began a battle for emancipation to communicate to society their own bitter
experience as women, as well as their ideas of social reform as creative person.

The second chapter ‘Feminism’ unravels the development of feminist movement as it is started in the west in 1960’s. Feminism gradually spread across the world demanding complete rights for women- social, political, economics, educational and individual. The programme of feminist movement is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, to develop new modal based on the study of female experience, rather than to adopt male models and theories. Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Freidan, Kate, Millet, Germain, Greer, Margret Drabble, Doris, Lessing, Irish Murdoch and Margret Atwood are pioneer of the feminist movement. These feminists purpose is to bring about a moral revolution for betterment of the world and seek more meaningful reality based on trust and companionship than on power politics where one sex dominates the other. It has elevated women to such a position where their presence can not be over looked or ignored. The most remarkable achievement of the women’s liberation movement is the creation of a change in female consciousness. Women have gained confidence to assert their distinct identity independently. This movement has improved women’s live by equipping them to accept the responsibilities and challenges life almost equally with men. Naturally in recent times, the women’s movement has come to occupy a central position and has caused a great deal of controversial arguments regarding its success and failure, its impact on the life of man and women and the challenges it has posed for the social structure accepted for centuries. This movement has also influenced Indian writer and has done a great deal in gaining women recognition as a force to reckon with, as an integral part of domestic, social and political life with can no longer be ignored, neglected or taken for granted.

The third chapter ‘Quest for Selfhood’ unveils the fragility of the male ego and struggle of woman for self – hood or
independence. In her novels, Deshpande portrays a various description of conventional and unconventional female world. In the beginning her protagonists do not revolt but after sometime they have gradual changes and each of her novels ends on a note of optimism and determination by its protagonists who resolve to take reins of their life in to their hands. In this way, they become quite sure of themselves, of their rights and their place in society. They become aware of their existence and no longer submissive or living in silence. According to Indian Nityanandam, Indian women are raising their voice against all kind of exploitation and injustices:

Freedom for Indian women meant freedom not merely from British rule and its Concomitant tyranny but simultaneously a release from centuries of male domination and male-ordained social and cultural norms. Though the Indian women did not have to struggle like her American counterparts for universal suffrage, she had to strive to attain recognition of her individuality and acceptance by society of an existence even beyond her gender based roles. Patriarchy had compelled the Indian woman to be totally subservient to the male in both the social and economic spheres. She now sought to change all this....... Instead she attempted to effect a slow but sure change within her own home.

(Nityanandam, Indian Women Novelists, P.11.)

We observe this change in most of the Indian woman that provides the mainstay for much of the fiction written by women in post – independent India. Shashi Deshpande is one of the novelists, who voices to arrive on the same. Deshpande realizes that freedom lies in having the courage to do what one believes is the right thing to do and the determination and the tenacity to adhere to it- that alone can bring harmony in life. Deshpande’s protagonists are generally educated females and they struggle to define and
attain an autonomous selfhood but to evolve their selfhood they must first fight patriarchy. With their new found sense of liberation also comes the realization that any freedom they device must be with in the boundaries of their obligations and responsibilities. As The Dark Holds No Terrors is a typical example of a husband’s inability to come to terms with his wife’s superior social and economic status in society. Saru liberated herself and is no longer afraid of the dark. Kamini Dinesh’s observation aptly sums up Saru’s development as an individual in her own right.

To be true to herself, the woman has to excoriate the film of superimposed attitudes and roles. Her emancipation is not in repudiating the claims of her family, but in drawing upon the untapped inner reserves of strength.

(Kamini, “Moving out of the cloistered self” p.204)

So, in the end of the novel, Saru stands poised to receive her husband secure in her new found confidence in herself and she has courage to fight against all odd circumstances. She realizes that she is not the only one facing the predicament of loneliness but everyone has to face it boldly otherwise she will sunk in darkness. So she should find happiness with the boundaries of home and responsibilities. Most of the times, the novelist, has an optimistic end in her novels with a feeling of contentment and positivity, her protagonists generally begin their lives quite discernible in the end of her novel. For example, in concluding lines of the novels Small Remedies, Deshpande shows healing power that after the death of one person, nothing is changed. This concept resembles with ‘Bhagvatgeeta’ that “like a wave of sea, life is the routine of coming and going:

\[ JATASHYA HI DHRUVO MRATYUDHHRUVAMJANMA MRATASYA CHA \]
\[ TASMADAPARIHARYA THE NA TWAM SOCHITUMAHARSHI \]
It means who is born, his death will be definite and after his death rebirth is definite. So we should not be regretful in unavoidable subject. Thus, Deshpande's protagonists are the women struggling to find their own, and in spite of challenges and hostilities, remain uncrushed and achieve space for themselves. These protagonists categorically exhibit the belief that women should have an assertive role in their lives, yet their economic and intellectual emancipation does not negate their responsibility of nurturing various relationship which the society and their biological nature have imposed upon them.

The fourth chapter 'Fractured Consciousness' concerns with Deshpande's delineation of the inner psyche of Indian women where they characterize the unbroken flow of thought and awareness in the waking mind. Deshpande has portrayed Indian women's dilemmas, their effort as wife, mother and above all as a human being in the tradition-bound, male-dominated Indian society. Women today play diverse roles both indoors and outdoors. They participate in all the hither to male-dominated spheres. Still there is something that provokes conflict in their mind and makes them restless. In this chapter, Deshpande's protagonists struggle 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 Deshpande explores the full spectrum and flow of character's mental process, in which sense perceptions mingle with conscious and half-conscious thoughts, memories, feelings and random associations. Deshpande's protagonists have many thoughts, perceptions and feelings in their mind but some aspects of thought itself are nonverbal. They are unable to articulate their ideas before male dominated society and suffer in their life. Deshpande declares that woman 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, but when they do not achieve it, they feel frustrated. For example, Jaya in That Long Silence 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 uncle) sketches the family tree and ignores her existence, ‘you do not belong to this family. You have no place here’ (143). So, the loss of place in the family tree is symbolically the loss of identity wounds Jaya. 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 her own life after marriage, are shattered thoroughly and she gets disturb mentality. But Jaya belongs to modern generation and reacts to the situation differently by breaking her silence. Deshpande delineates the real condition of modern Indian women’s psyche who undergo a kind of transformation through self recognition. But Shashi Deshpande also traces out the tension and psychological obsessions of her old educated protagonists who are caught in a traditional world and they have no courage to go against social system rather they should suppress their feelings. For example, in The Binding Vine Mira’s diary 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 a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men (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 androcentric world where even educated men have such opinion about female. In Indian society women’s ambitions are suppressed ultimately without knowing their desire. 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. Deshpande has
skillfully described her female’s confused mentality and disability to choose firmly one option but finally find their roots in the home with heir husbands. Male or female, there is a division within ourselves that leads us to love and hate, to be gentle and good at the same time become an agent of cruelty. In the end of all her novels shadows disappears form their vision and find the clear light of day with the realization and discovery of their authentic selves. Thus, she gives the bridge, the message that human nature itself is the “hardest to bridge, the hardest to accept, to live with”. (Binding Vine, p.201). In such a complicated life, it is very difficult to live life without difficulties. It is such moment of tender love, however, rare they may be, that make life tolerable and worth living. So, for human being life as well as death both are terrific. Here, Deshpande has no moral conclusion to the readers rather she has left it to them to decide what will be right course for them. Yet we observe that Deshpande’s protagonists become mature women and fill with vigor and buoyancy and think that they don’t change overnight but they should have always hope. Without that life would be impossible.

The fifth chapter ‘Feminine Awareness as Marital Discord’ discusses Deshpande’s attempt to venture into an area of marital discord of Indian women through her protagonists. In her novels, heroines are courageous and educated but in order to seek their individuality sometimes they revolt against the prevailing social system and that becomes the main factor of marital discord. Deshpande also concentrate on the theme of meaninglessness and sexual confusion suffered by women, in tradition-oriented institutions. The woman in order to achieve the liberty seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. She resents about the role of a daughter and looks forward to the role of a wife with the hope that her new role will help her in winning the liberty. But marriage proves to be another trap and woman feels like a caged animal. Marriage is, perhaps, the most complex of human relationship so it is unavoidable. It is not simply a social institution. It is inextricably linked
to religion and determines more or less the code of conduct in marital relationship. It is also fact that since time immemorial woman has been given an inferior position in society as the bible tells about woman “Wives submit yourselves to your husbands as to the lord” (Bible 5:22). Thus, it is clear that even though the husband be a bad character and seek pleasure elsewhere he must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife. Woman does enormous scarifies on their profession and self-desire, and she understand that marriage obstructs her growth as individuals because in this male-dominating world, a woman is not supposed to behave independently. Still, in this educated epoch women are not free and they have many obstacles in achieving their awareness. Woman is like a fluid which has no form or shape of its own. If she has any shape or strong opinion about others most of the times it becomes a solid reason for her marital discord.

Deshpande expresses not only the condition of women but also of male. In her novels, she exposes the shame and hypocrisy prevalent in the so-called urban, educated men who belong to sophisticated society but at home they remain conventional husband expecting his wife to play a very submissive role. The Dark Holds No Terrors is a glaring example of men with fragile egos, who find it difficult to accept the superior of their wives in society. Through this novel, Shashi Deshpande proves that in the institution of marriage, an economically independent woman is still bound in shackles and must forever live in fear of getting hurt egos of her husband in Indian society. And to prove her point she does not miss even to refer an algebraic expression in her novels The Dark Holders No Terrors:

A + b told us in mathematics, definitely is equal to b + a. But here a + b was not, definitely not equal to b + a. It becomes a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsided, unequal, impossible (42).

Deshpande proves it wrong that women would be independent after marriage but it is only possible when he they will assert themselves and do
not submit before man. Now-a-days Indian fiction has entered a new phase- the phase of an inimitable representation of the new Indian women who are dissatisfied with the inhibiting cultural, natural or sexual roles assigned to them from the unconscious dawn of the patriarchal India. A woman can be only a daughter, sister, wife, mother, woman, professional, but never her real “she”. What does she want? Is the freedom to think and decide for herself and the liberation and her woman hood? For she finds her “womanly self” trapped and suffocated within the family which sometime creates marital Discord in her life. Deshpande traces out another example of her suffocation and suppression in the following speech of Jaya in That long Silence:

Where was it that I had read an account of how baby girls were done to death a century is so back? They were, I had read in horror, buried alive, crushed to death in the room they were born in, and immediately after that, a fire was lit on the spot – to purify the place, they said. Perhaps it was to ensure death. All those agonies – for days I had been unable to get it out of my mind. But now I wondered whether it was not more merciful, that swift ending of the agony, once and for all, than prolonging of it for years and years.

(Long Silence, P5.3).

Above lines clearly express the deep agony of a woman which she has to tolerate till the end of her life. The novelist even does not hesitate to approve the tradition of a girl infanticide. She calls it ‘more merciful that swift ending of the agony, once and for all’ while the life of a lady is actually a prolonging of agony for years and years. Thus, That Long Silence is a muted and essentially sympathetic treatment of the problem of marital relationship; maintaining a credible balance between the sexes. Deshpande protagonists are able to escape their cultural bound roles, especially their role as sexual partners. They are passive feminist. They are
highly intelligent women who confirm their problems inwardly, and analyze it objectively. The result is even love marriages become meaningless and they lose their status as props of life. Deshpande’s protagonists have incompatibility with their husbands when they realize their suffocated selfhood. This is the reason that we observe in most of her novels, the protagonist shares a greater level of compatibility with a man other than her husband. This incompatibility often leads towards crossing of the boundary of platonic friendship and progress towards physical attraction even they have love marriage. But Deshpande’s women do not overstep the limits of propriety except in the case of Indu in Roots and Shadows who resorts to an extra-marital relationship with Naren is an attempt to assert herself. Most of her protagonists have sexual starvation other than their husband but they refuses to let, themselves be enticed into an extra-marital affairs. Instead of it, in the end, they realize that they have done wrong. It is true that while men have enjoyed sexual freedom from time immemorial, women have been hedged around by unbreakable taboos. But Deshpande’s heroines have broken them and they shift from conventional to unconventional attitude to achieve their individuality. It is this working of an individual dialectic of the sexual dilemma in her novels that makes Shashi Deshpande a modern feminist.

The concluding chapter offers a ‘summing up’ of the thesis highlighting the feminism in the novels of Deshpande. Operating within the framework of a male-dominated and tradition bound society, Deshpande’s heroines are conscious of their predicament as victims of inequality. It is shown that Deshpande’s depiction of her protagonists is realistic to the core in as much as she does not succumb to the temptation of creating exceptionally strong women characters who revolt against conventional morality. Deshpande’s protagonists are the product of a painful period of transition in society where they have a greater sense of responsibilities than their predecessors. Shashi Deshpande has different feminist views because her protagonists belong to Indian Society and
somehow they are bound by traditions. Though, they are middle-class and educated yet they are firmly rooted in India with the weight of centuries of tradition and culture behind them. So, Deshpande has tried to convey to the society that the need of the time, in this transitional world, is not a total revolt but a gradual change in the Society for which everyone has to put some effort to bridge the gap between the old and the new generation. Her protagonists develop into independent individuals during course of the novel. In choosing a path of their own making within their accepted social milieu, they show both strength and conviction. In willing to accept their share of responsibility for their present condition, they display maturity. In this way, they become their own role models after having rejecting tradition role-models.

A close study of her novels reveal that Shashi Deshpande does not take the radial view of the early western feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer and Kate Millett. The opinion of most of these feminists with regard to marriage remains more or less the same. in her famous books, The Second Sex, de Beauvoir writes: “It has been said that marriage diminishes man, which is often true but almost always it annihilates woman” (496). Germain Greer suggests, “If independence is a necessary concomitant of freedom woman must not marry” (Greer, Female Enunch,p.320) Kate Millett feels that marriage reduce the status of woman to a mere object for decoration and a tool to be used for man’s sexual gratification. Deshpande’s protagonists are, no doubt, victims of this unequal power structure in marriage, but in all her novels, she shows how one can rise above such injustice and lead a meaningful existence. In the end, her protagonists find their individuality while they always strive to make their marriage work. As J. Bhavani observes:

This is not a negative but a realistic end to the Novels. Deshpande upholds marriage as the backbone of society what is stifling in the persona of the wife and not the institution of marriage.
We may say that Deshpande's views coincide with modern feminist thought which has changed much since the radical feminism of the 1960s. In her book, The Feminist Mystique, which took American society by storm, Betty Friedan challenged the universal belief that a woman should find contentment in motherhood and domesticity. Two decades later Betty Friedan in her book, The Second Stage, says that humanity can service only if women make certain compromises. She suggests that woman should pursue some meaningful activity within marriage in order to find happiness and contentment in their lives.

Shahi Deshpande has definitely carved a niche for herself in voicing the thoughts and feelings of the educated, urban middle-class woman. Though Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal have all ventured into this area of writing, none has pursued it with the single-mindedness and relentlessness of Deshpande. She is interested in the issues, not just pertaining to women but extended to all humanity. Perhaps, Deshpande has tried to convey to the society that the need of the time, in this transitional world, is not a total revolt but a gradual change in the society for which everyone has to put some effort to bridge the gap between the old and the new generation. Her protagonists develop into independent individuals during the course of the novel. In choosing a path of their own making within their accepted social milieu, they show both strength and conviction.

Thus, a comprehensive analysis of all her work leaves one in no doubt about where Deshpande's sympathies lie. It would be unfair to label her 'feminist' and categories her with several other writers who differ from her in varying degree. She can at best be called an articulator of women who are caught at the cross roads of change in a society which is
undergoing the brithangs of transition from tradition to modernity. It is a
difficult job, indeed, to give voice to women who themselves are not sure
of their own suffering and who stand in an unenviable position today. They
are actually aware of the injustices heaped on them but are condemned to
live the life of suppression which was the lot of their predecessors. In many
ways, their condition is even more pitiable than that of woman of earlier
generations who unquestioningly accepted their secondary position in
society. Her novels contain so much that is the material of feminist
thought- myriad roles of woman as mother / wife / daughter, identity crisis
and women’s sexuality – that all those who have interviewed her so far
have, inevitably asked her as to what extent she considers herself a feminist
and she admits frankly:

I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a
feminist. In my own life. I mean. But not consciously,
as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has
come to me very slowly, very gradually, and mainly
out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings.
I started writing first and only then discovered my
feminism and it was much later than I actually read
book about it.

(Laxmi Holmstrom, Interview, “Shashi Deshpande
Talk to Laxmi Holmstrom”, Wasafiri, No. 17, Spring,
1983, 26.)

Shashi Deshpande’s frank discussion on a wide range to topics
concerning women has prompted several critics to categories her as a
feminist. A close study of her novels reveals that she is aware of
unbalancing relationship of man-woman in society. Her male characters
conform to the standard feminist description of a middle-class husband
who is insensitive, egoistic and sometime over-ambition. But at the
sametime, most of her women characters too suffer from some weakness or
other so much so that it becomes difficult to label her work. One wonders
whether Deshpande as a novelist fulfills these requirements as to be a feminist writer because feminism means movement to support the demand for equal social, political and economic rights with men. Feminism connotes not only an awareness of women’s plight but also determination to change the situation. The treatise ‘**Half the Sky**’ aptly defines feminism as,

The awareness of the women’s position in society as one of disadvantages or inequality compared with that of man and also a desire to remove those disadvantages.

*(The Briston women's Studies Group p.3.)*

We may not be sure of her strong desire to remove the disadvantages of women in society, but even a casual reading of her novels reveal that she bounds in her acute awareness of women’s degrading and unequal position in society. In an article, she writes:

Most of my writings come out of my intense and long suppressed feeling about what it is to be a woman in our society..... my writing comes out of my consciousness of the conflict between my ideas of myself as a human being and the idea that society has of me as a woman. All this makes my writing very clearly woman’s writing.

*(Shashi Despande, “Of Concern of Anxieties” Indian Lit. vol. XXXIX No. 5 Sep. 1906 p. 99.)*

So, Despande admits that she is a woman writer whatever she, does for the sake of welfare of female. Thus, in her portrayal of the predicament of middle – class educated Indian women, their inner conflict and quest for identity, issues pertaining to parent child relationship, marriage and sex, and their exploitation and disillusionment, Deshpande has been called a ‘feminist’. The publication of *That Long Silence* by the virago press made its own contribution to this belief. Deshpande’s apparently contradictory
remarks to her interviewers lent further support of it. Asked whether she would like to call herself a feminist, she replies to Geetha Gangadharan:

Yes, I would. I am a feminist in the sense that, I think, we need to have a world which we should recognize as a place for all of us human beings. There is no superior and inferior, we are two halves of one species. I fully agree with Simone de Beauvoir that 'the fact that our being men and women.' I think that's my idea of feminist.

(Indian Communicator, 20 Nov. 1994.)

Being a woman herself, she sympathizes with women, and 'if others see something feminist in my writings', she told an interviewer, "I must say that it is not consciously done. It is because the world for women is like that and I am mirroring the world"(The Sunday Observer, 11 Feb. - 1990). Deshpande does admit the influence of the western feminist writers, but only "to a small extent". She candidly told M.D. Riti:

One never knows what influences as a writer. I have read a lot of feminist, and understand what they are trying to say easily. However, I began reading feminist writing only recently, while my writing has reflected feminist ideas right from the start.

( Eve's Weekly 10-24 June 1988, p.27)

It is this light which reflects that Deshpande admits herself a feminist writer. In this way Deshpande has portrayed the new Indian women and their dilemmas, their effort to understand themselves in the tradition-bound male dominated Indian society and how they have achieved their individually by breaking their silence. Deshpande actually feels that a lot of women in India are feminists without realizing it when they express their revolt against male dominating society to achieve their selfhood and through this feminist movement they have gained personal as well as social liberty to voice their problems.