Chapter Two

Marriage or Patriarchal Bondage

The art of Deshpande and Indumathi reveals intensely shared concerns in respect of the plight of women in marriage, lack of gender justice, increasing female self-assertion and consequences of triangular relationships, throwing light on several unarticulated areas of 'female' and 'feminine' experiences. Their preoccupation in art is not something totally new, as several sociological critics and writers have already been highlighting such issues for several decades. The following is the kind of assertion of so many female critics in the West:

It has become one of woman's duties ... to call public attention to its [society's] false doctrines and false teachings in regard to the original condition and subjection of the woman. She has engaged in too many battles, weathered too many storms ... let those who fear, hide themselves if they will, until the storm is past. Let those who dare defiantly rejoice that they are called upon to bear still more in order that woman may be free. A brighter day is to come for the world, a day
when the institutions of the woman's soul shall be accepted as a part of humanity's spiritual wealth. (Gage 542)

Deshpande and Indumathi consider family often as a veritable prison house for women, putting the blame squarely on the society and the values it upholds. To the contemporary women craving for love in marriage, it often turns out to be an illusion. What Chaman Nahal speaks of Nayantara Sahgal's women is true of most of the women characters in Deshpande and Indumathi, as they too are not outright rebels against the institution of marriage:

In each case the attack is not against the institution of marriage but against the inequality and injustice that is forced upon women by men using the institution of marriage. (102)

In Deshpande's fictional world, marriage is often presented as an experience of conflict, frustration and stress, in which the victims crave for the much-denied self-expression. Often they emerge as figures of unfulfilled passions and advocates of greater freedom in the spheres of politics and sexuality, registering their resistance to patriarchal power.
Most of Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists are elite, upper middle class married Brahmin women, pursuing careers of their own. Urmila in *The Binding Vine* is a lecturer in a college, Indu in *Roots and Shadows* is a journalist, Sarita in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* is a doctor and Kshama in *Come Up and Be Dead* is the headmistress of a school. In each of her novels the consciousness of one such woman is at the ‘centre’, expounding the various dimensions of her personality in terms of the nuances of her relationships with her mother, father, husband, children, brother or in-law. Deshpande may be said to posit ‘redefined relationships’ in the context of the roles assigned to women in the contemporary society, taking cognizance of a certain degree of emancipation in each of them.

Being essentially representative of the disappointments that women face in a tradition-bound male-dominated society, Deshpande’s fictional creations were initially regarded as ‘feminist texts’, while the truth remains that Deshpande’s art is, in its essence, the rediscovery of the woman by herself in a contemporary idiom, as some discerning critics have already found out:

Woman’s struggle in the context of the contemporary Indian society, to find and
preserve her identity as wife, mother and most important of all, as human being is Shashi Deshpande's major concern as a creative writer. (Amur 10)

Commenting on the issue of the feminist import of Deshpande's art, some critics argue how, viewed from certain ideological perspectives, there is still sufficient room for such a discussion:

Her protagonists are modern, educated young women, crushed under the weight of a male-dominated and tradition-bound society. Her attempt to give an honest portrayal of their sufferings, disappointments and frustrations makes her novels susceptible to treatment from the feminist angle. (Reddy 19)

However, Deshpande herself has shown considerable impatience whenever the label of 'feminism' was attached to her art, as such a criticism is grossly reductive and does little justice to the finer aspects of her art as a realistic study of contemporary women:

A woman who writes of women's experiences often brings in some aspects of those experiences that have angered her, roused [sic] her strong feelings. I don't see why
this has to be labelled [sic] feminist fiction. (Pathak 230)

Though it may not be necessarily Deshpande’s intention to lend credence to any partisan sociological theory, her novels, by and large, seem to be profoundly sympathetic analyses of women’s experiences as the writer relentlessly probes into the psyche of contemporary women in novel after novel, who refuse to conform to any rigid social or moral code. Her women may be said to be at crossroads between tradition and modernity. Nevertheless, most of them tend to opt for a course of direct confrontation with the powers that be both at home and outside, being victims of an inexorable and inviolable social structure called family.

Several narratives are woven into the tapestry of That Long Silence, a work which throws much light on the patriarchal power structure. A typical episode in this regard can be seen in the sadistic treatment meted out to Jaya’s mother-in-law by her husband:

... he picked up his heavy brass plate and threw it, not at her, but deliberately on the wall, which it hit with a dull clang. He stood up, and jerking his shirt off the peg-walked out of the house ... Silently watched
by the children, she picked up the plate, cleaned the floor and the wall of all the splattered food and wiped it. (LS 35-36)

The Dictionary of Sociology defines marriage as a "cultural phenomenon which sanctions a more or less permanent union between the partners conferring legitimacy of their offspring" (127). Religions too consider marriage as a holy union of two souls and bodies. In the Hindu tradition, the wife is known as 'Ardhangini' or 'Sahadharmini' which stresses the principle of equality and oneness of the wife with her spouse. According to the Christian belief, Adam and Eve were made, "bone of one bone and flesh of one flesh" (Genesis 2:23). But such an ideal harmony in relationship is rarely found in real life.

Problems arise in the marital lives of women in Deshpande when trust is lost, giving way to doubt and suspicion in the minds of the male partners. In Small Remedies, Madhu who is in her teens, in a moment of depression, consequent to the death of her father indulges herself in an affair with a stranger who drops in to comfort her. When her husband comes to know it he cannot digest the incident although he himself is guilty of a sexual escapade prior to his marriage:
'If you could keep such a thing from me, how can I believe anything you say, how can I ever believe you again?' Som asks me appealingly almost humbly in one of his better moments ... I know what the truth is that Som wants from me, that it has not happened, that I was a virgin when he married me ... that I was a victim, not a participant. (SR 259-60)

What has been unique about women placed under similar situations in Deshpande is the fact they are all strikingly brave and candid in accepting their inner drives and instinctual urges. There is no trace of any facile cunning or duplicitous effort on their part to make a pretence of conformity to societal norms.

Urmila's father in The Binding Vine does not trust his wife (Urmila's mother) Inni with his child Urmi and leaves the child under the care of his mother. Inni relates the episode, from her own point of view:

It was because I ... because your Papa — he didn't trust me, he thought I couldn't ... wouldn't look after you properly. ... Papa said, 'How could you leave her alone with a man!' Diwakar! [the servant] ... Then he decided he would take you to his mother. (199)
Baba, the father of Jiji in *Moving On* relates in his diary how he has grown suspicious of his wife Vasu, when she deferred having a sexual relationship with him after marriage:

As the stalemate continued, my thoughts turned in a different direction. I became suspicious, I thought she loved someone else ... I spoke out of frustration ... Vasu was hurt, no, she was furious .... (109)

Sexual pleasures whether marital or extra-marital are considered to be solely a male privilege and a woman's claim to it is utterly disowned by the society at large. As Simone de Beauvoir, a notable feminist puts it:

It is the duplicity of the husband that dooms the wife to a misfortune of which he complains later that he is himself the victim. Just as he wants her to be at once warm and cool in bed, he requires her to be wholly his and yet no burden; ... he wants to have her all to himself and not to belong to her; to live as one of the couple and to remain alone. Thus she is betrayed from the day he marries her. (497)
The assumption of a wife as a symbol of purity, chastity and fidelity is so deeply ingrained in Indian culture that writers, consciously or unconsciously, tend to present an ideal picture of a normal wife in the following terms:

The man-woman relationship in which the man’s role is dynamic and the woman’s passive is a pattern that goes very deep into the Indian ethos. The ideal is so much a part of the Indian mind that an Indian reader never pauses to wonder, whether the numerous novels that portray this relationship and present the woman as a symbol of purity and goodness draw their material from real life, or merely follow a literary convention. (Mukherjee 26)

Deshpande’s educated women, on the other hand, are confused women who are extremely hesitant keeping their latent courage, maintaining a studied silence on several vital issues. On the other hand, Indumathi’s women characters who are equipped simply with a moderate education, living within the ambit of the same tradition and culture, voice their inmost feelings much more vociferously against evil tendencies and social practices sanctioned and perpetuated in the name of culture and tradition. Although they are passive
sufferers like Deshpande’s women, they find it difficult to supinely compromise ending up often in inarticulate and impotent loneliness.

As in Deshpande, there are instances in Indumathi, where suspicion in family life ruins the happiness of women, utterly destroying the familial fabric.

Uma the divorced mother of Sai Ram, the child protagonist of Enru Putitai Pirappom relates to their neighbour Krishnasamy how the condition of women grows much worse, when they get divorced on the grounds of mere suspicion:

Uncle, This is a world where a good-looking girl cannot live all by herself ... That too, when it comes to be known to the world outside that she has been divorced by her husband on suspicion of her conduct, her condition gets much worse. For they presume that she will be daring and amenable to any extent ... (79)

In Totuvana Manitarkal Radhika’s father sows seeds of suspicion in the minds of the relatives against his wife Janakalakshmi for his own reasons. Having deliberately accused his wife of infidelity, he writes letters to all her relatives in order to fraudulently cover up his own infatuation for his mistress Kamali.
Ultimately, he deserts his family for Kamali. His letter reads as follows:

Your Janakalakshmi's conduct is not good. I don't even think that those three children delivered by her are mine. I counselled her so often and so repeatedly. She wouldn't listen. I'm leaving now. Never again, shall I return to her. (TM 15)

Like Som, husband of Madhu in Small Remedies, Jaganathan, husband of Ranjani, figuring in Kuntukkuyil suspects his wife, a reputed musician, of infidelity, since she hails from a family of prostitutes, telling her, "I have a genuine doubt whether those affluent men left you alone unharmed. Can such a ravishing beauty go utterly unexploited?" (104).

Madhu in Deshpande's Small Remedies cannot find a fitting reply to her suspicious husband as she has willingly opted for premarital sex with a stranger. She expects her husband to ignore the episode, particularly because Som himself had admitted earlier that he had had several premarital affairs in his own life. In contrast, Ranjani in Kuntukkuyil becomes the target of her husband's suspicion, although she is totally innocent, but she decides to defend herself forcefully:
I never dreamt of acquiring name, fame or wealth, at the expense of my honour. All I know is only the bond of your love. That is all I need. ... Please do not start suspecting me in vain and ruin this occasion, this moment of happiness. (108)

However, prolonged suspicion on the part of her husband leads not only to painful rupture in the marriage of the innocent Ranjani, but eventually to her death.

Discussing the issue of chastity, Ganesalingan makes the following comment in *Pennatimai Tira*:

There is a basic excuse for the husband’s demand of chastity on the part of the woman. For he needs a confirmation of the fact that the child born to him is genuinely his own. An anxiety is deeply ingrained in his mind that he should part his property only with his own child. Ownership of property and family structure, thus, pave the way for the dominance of the male and the slavery of the female. (26)

Periyar, a reputed radical social thinker of Tamil Nadu, observes that chastity should be insisted upon as a desirable virtue for both the husband and the wife:
The people of a land must be disciplined for its ultimate prosperity. And discipline and chastity are equally applicable to both men and women. It is not relevant to women alone ... We do not care so long as any condition, discipline or dispensation is insisted in equal terms upon both men and women. (qtd. in Ramathal 55)

The upper middle class women in Deshpande feel frustrated not only in their marriage but in their chosen careers as well. Indu in Roots and Shadows does not express what she feels impelled to, but what the editor of the magazine, where she is employed expects her to write, in total conformity with the demands and tastes of the reading public. When she wants to resign her job, Jayant, her husband rejects the idea saying, "We need the money, don't we? Don't forget, we have a long way to go" (19). Indu, thus, feels doubly trapped in her personal and public life.

Deshpande infuses her protagonists also with her 'writer credo' in some of her works. Jaya in That Long Silence is on the threshold of the hall of fame as a creative writer. Initially, her husband Mohan prides over the fact that his wife is a writer of great promise and is even pleased to be called 'Mr.Seeta', the
pseudonym of Jaya. However, when Jaya writes the story of a couple, where the man shows no deep affinity for his wife except in bed, Mohan objects to her writing, as he suspects the work to be intensely autobiographical. Jaya says, "And, looking at his stricken face, I had been convinced, I had done him wrong. And I had stopped writing after that" (LS 144). Thus, her partner's doubts put out the creative spark in Jaya.

Deshpande's works show that even women of independent means are bound and shackled by their diffidence and self-doubts, lest they hurt their egoistic husbands. The growing rift between Sarita and her husband Manohar in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* depicts a case in point.

Manu or Manohar, a lecturer in a local college is not very successful as he earns much less than his wife Sarita, a doctor. One day, a girl who comes to interview Sarita, a popular doctor in the locality innocently poses a question to Manu, "How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?" (DH 200). Though Manu, Saru and the interviewer laugh over it at the moment as if the question raised is of no consequence, Manu starts brooding over the incident and later in the night makes a brutal assault on Sarita in the bed. The obsession with the scene
recurs whenever his ego feels hurt. In course of time, with Saru's steady rise in status, the chasm between them deepens and their marriage gets reduced to a mere farce. Sarita says, "... perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller made him inches shorter" (DH 42).

Upon her friend Nalu's earnest request, Saru gives a talk on "Medicine as a profession for woman", to a set of college students. However, Saru takes a sudden digression in the course of her lecture:

A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he's an M.A., you should be a B.A. If he's 5'4" tall you shouldn't be more than 5'3" tall. If he's earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety-nine rupees. That's the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage. ... No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care that it's [sic] unequal in favour of your husband. If the scales tilt in your favour, god help you, both of you. (DH 137)

In her interview to Sue Dickman, Deshpande observes: "Somebody once asked me if I have a social purpose in my writing and I very loudly said no, I have
no social purpose. I write because it comes to me" (qtd. in Reddy 69). Denying any deliberate sociological objective in her art in another interview, Deshpande states:

I hate propagandist literature. I think good literature and propaganda do not go together ... Literature comes very spontaneously and when I write I am concerned with people. (qtd. in Reddy 70)

Perhaps Deshpande takes her fictional art to be nothing more than a faithful reflection of the reality around her. The canvass of her fiction, however, is predominantly confined to the range of interests of a contemporary Indian middle class woman of the elite class. As she explores the sensibilities of such a woman in novel after novel, several sociological issues assume priority and demand immediate attention in the eyes of several of her readers. If Deshpande’s statements are anything to go by, she is satisfied with merely holding a true mirror to the concerns, interests, dreams, sensibilities and even nightmares of a typical woman of contemporary India. In her own words, "Perhaps, being a woman, I find myself sympathising with women. If others see something feminist in my writings, I must say that it is not consciously done" (qtd. in
Whether consciously or unconsciously done, the readers of Deshpande have no doubt as regards the intentions of the artist. As R. Mala puts it, "... Deshpande certainly takes her heroines to the pole of feminism though she may not have aimed at propounding such an ism" (57).

Like Mohan, Jaya's husband in That Long Silence, Jagatheesan in Kūntukkuyil too intrudes into the career of his wife, Ranjani, a professional musician. She is prevented by Jagatheesan from giving performances as she likes. When a daughter is born to them, Ranjani, disgusted with her husband's recurrent interference in her career, observes that her daughter should not end up as a career woman, as she feels only ordinary housewives lead happy lives in India, "Let her be the kind of beings finding satisfaction in family, saris and jewels. Only those are happy, living without problems" (KUK 120).

Indumathi describes the activities of Ramani, the jealous husband of Vidhya in Malarkalile Aval Mallikai. He also pokes his nose in the professional life of his wife. Vidhya works as an assistant in a private concern. Being sociable by nature, soon she becomes friends with Sankar, a journalist because both of them have similar literary tastes. Ramani who cannot digest
his wife's friendship with Sankar stops her from work. Indumathi says, "She [Vidhya] was going to the office only after carrying out without fail, whatever she considered as her household duties. Still Ramani was insistent that she [Vidhya] resigned her job" (221). Ramani's feeling of inferiority over the lack of literary tastes in comparison with Vidhya or Sankar, makes him unnecessarily jealous and impatient.

Indumathi presents the views of Dhaya, a young intellectual and a creative writer who admires the writings of Yamuna, in Vinaiyil Urankum Râkankal. However, when it comes to marriage Dhaya deliberately chooses to marry an ordinary woman without any refined literary tastes, citing the following reason:

I don't need a girl who keeps on asking me and embarrassing me with questions. Don't need such cleverness ... Only a little naivety will be more conducive for raising a happy family than sheer brilliance. (163)

The Origin and Growth of Woman, a recent publication on the important phases of development of Feminism, calls for a radical change in the attitude of men towards women:
Still it is highly imperative that the attitude of men, shaped by patriarchal values which looked down on women, undergo a sea change. Women should be respected and accepted as human individuals. Both men and women must cooperate in the removal of adverse sociological values which tend to suppress women. It is only a give-and-take process that is suitable for life in the Indian society. Such a life, based on the ideal of love must be stabilised at the familial and social levels. (Chidambaram 244)

'The sexual impasse' that affects the lives of several women characters in Deshpande, enables them to see love, marriage and life from different perspectives. Women continue to complain of several problems though their problems remain latent, and 'rooted in sex'. In the Indian cultural scenario, sex is branded as a taboo and any public discussion of it is not even attempted. Indian women are assigned to 'a sub-servient, secondary and marginal' role even in the act of sex. Several women in Deshpande suffer from unrequitted passion as women are expected to play a passive role in bed, despite their inner resistance to such a treatment. Perhaps these intelligent women articulate their
personal problems analyzing them from an objective perspective:

Millet and others trace the historical development of feminist thought in the following terms:

Sexual love was revealed as a crucial part of the ideological structure that perpetrated male power over women, with their full participation. For women to fall in love with men was no metaphor, but an action that each time it was repeated reinforced their subordination, both individually and collectively. (qtd. in Eisenstein 14)

Deshpande's *Roots and Shadows*, *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine* speak of unrequitted passion in women. Indu in *Roots and Shadows* says how her husband Jayant resents any display of passion on her part, as he cannot brook it in any woman. He expects his wife to be demure and coy and contain her passion even in the privacy of their bedroom. To cite the words of Indu: "Jayant, so passionate, so ready, sitting up suddenly and saying, 'No, not now', when I had taken the initiative. A crack then" (RS 91).

In *That Long Silence* Jaya makes the following comment on the quality of her conjugal moments, "The
contact, the coming together, had been not only momentary, but wholly illusory as well. We had never come together, only our bodies had done that" (98).

Urmila, the protagonist of The Binding Vine remains faithful to her husband, a naval officer, despite his long absence from home and his withdrawn attitude, during his infrequent visits. Her own latent passion surprises Urmila suggesting at moments a recourse to masturbatory pleasure:

Often, after he had gone, I find in myself a frantic grappling for his image, as if he in going has taken that way as well ... There was a time when I was frightened by the intensity of my bodily hungers for Kishore. (BV 164)

In Moving On, Jiji, the widowed protagonist's longing for sex can be seen when Raman, her security man snatches unexpectedly her hands and takes them to his face, in a manner expressing his suppressed desire for her body. Jiji too is startled to realize a corresponding, instant arousal of passion deep within her:

It's not his action that has disturbed me as much as my own response, the way my body gave a startled leap in response to his touch. It's
my body that frightens me, it's my body that is suddenly my enemy. (227)

On Sumi's visit to Shankar's household, which Gopal, Sumi's husband occupies after his separation from her in A Matter of Time, Shankar's mother asks Sumi, "What is a woman without her husband?" (167). Confronted with this delicate question, Sumi recalls the plight of separation of her mother Kalyani from her father Shripati for more than thirty five years, (though they were living under the same roof) as a punishment for losing their only son in a railway station years back. Sumi asks:

Does this wifehood make up for everything, for the deprivation of a man's love, for the feel of his body against yours, the warmth of his breath on your face, the touch of his lips on yours, his hands on your breasts? Kalyani lost all this (had she ever had them?), but her kumkum is intact and she can move in company of women with the pride of a wife. (MT 167)

When Sumi's friend Vani confides in Sumi how she misses her husband's physical presence at nights, when he is gone abroad, Kalyani calls Vani a 'Surpanakha' for articulating her sexual desire. But Sumi, who has been
separated from her own husband reflects along the following lines:

Female sexuality. We're ashamed of owning it, we can't speak of it, not even to our own selves. But Surpanakha was not, she spoke of her desires, she flaunted them. And therefore, were the men, unused to such women, frightened? Did they feel threatened by her? I think so. Surpanakha, neither ugly nor hideous, but a woman charged with sexuality, not frightened of displaying it. (MT 191)

Deshpande's art presents in broad daylight women's biological, emotional and sexual urges, so very rarely acknowledged and portrayed in Indian fiction. According to a critic:

This shift from the "pativrata" image to that of the sexually-emancipated woman certainly marks the emergence of a new class of Indian women who are coming out of their conservative shells and are ready to accept the sexual / psychological realities of human life. It is really a sign of radical change occurring in the Indian sexual landscape. (Mala 56)
The same critic goes on to argue, "It is this working of an individual dialectic of the sexual dilemma in her novels that makes Shashi Deshpande a modernist feminist" (Mala 57). Deshpande strikes hard on the taboo of sex as a "male feeling", by carrying the Indian novel to its most controversial phase, through a reversal of the order of the traditional triad, namely "love", "marriage" and "sex". However, some protagonists in Deshpande's fiction do remain passive and silent without articulating their physical needs.

Judith Kegan Gardiner finds a common cause for women in literary art, "What unifies women's writing is the psychology of oppression, the psychology of women living under patriarchy" (121). The art of Indumathi, the Tamil novelist, presents women as mere victims of unfulfilled passions. However, Indumathi's women who are partially silent and passive, are also vociferous at times in expressing their feelings.

Athma's wife Deepa in Iravu Nēra Pūpālam is a disappointed and dejected woman who has been resisting her passion for four long years, waiting patiently on Athma, her husband, who is infatuated with Nithya his classmate. Athma himself refers to Deepa as "My beloved wife, who is living purely for my sake" (38). At last, unable to put up with her plight, Deepa bursts out:
Since how many years, have we been married? Have you ever satisfied me, with kind words of moral support? I mean, not intellectually ... but physically. ... Mr. Athma, ... even I suffer from hunger ... the hunger of physical lusts ... hunger of love ... hunger of carnal passion ... of carnal knowledge ... hunger of the body .... Even if you had not totally devoted yourself to me, at least you could have shown some understanding of my need. (51-52)

Anitha, a widow in 'Anita' yearning for the companionship of a man, falls for the charms of Manohar, the doctor who treats her. She confesses her situation in candid terms to Manohar, "I do not possess any longer the patience or power to put up with such a solitude as this one, Manohar" (28).

Krithika, the protagonist of 'Enrum Pen' marries Ramakrishnan, an educated intellectual and an ardent lover of philosophy. After marriage she is shocked to find that Ramakrishnan is not interested in sex but only in a platonic kind of relationship with her. In one of the disarming moments, Krithika lays her mind bare before her husband, in all her passion and utmost candour:
I need you. Need you so totally and completely. I want to enjoy a complete life. For this, mere psyche is not enough, body too is quite essential. Even as romance, I need the passionate union on the bed ... It's not wrong, Ramakrishnan, but so natural, instinctual, and sweet, gifted by God, common to all life forms, the sole drain of all desires of the flesh surging from heart. I need it ... need it very very badly. (125-26)

At last, when she expresses her yearning, "The desire of the mind, including the vital need of the body too ..., (her husband Ramakrishnan replies). There is absolutely no relationship possible between us other than two hearts residing under the same roof" (EP 127).

In comparative terms, Deshpande's women prefer to be more passive and reticent on several vital issues, while Indumathi's so-called passive women are more articulate. They burst out at certain moments when their emotions grow uncontrollable and on such occasions, they are much more capable of expressing their emotions, feelings, and ideas than the women of Deshpande who are introverted most of the time and turn more neurotic under the stress and strain of domestic or nuptial bonds. In recent times, there is an increasing
realization in the world that a woman can play an equal part with man only if she gains a distinct voice of her own and learns to transcend the traditional limits of her silence. "Though their culture may prefer them to be silent, they must have the faculty of speech in order that they may be recognized as human" (Walder 314). Speaking of sexual instinct in women, another critic has observed that women should not aspire to measure their own degrees of lust, simply against masculine passion. Women should rather have their own independent individualistic yardsticks for lust, regardless of levels of male desire, "A woman may be less or more desirous of sex than a man. Either frigidity or lust in a woman is a negative characteristic because the male appetite is the norm" (Ferguson 7). According to Ferguson, the moral behind all myths and legends is that:

... docility in a wife leads to happiness for all-husband-wife, father; and that upsetting the domestic order may lead to disrupting social and cosmic order. Woman in her place is the cornerstone of the society" (19).

Deshpande's fictional art dwells on the subject of 'marital rape' in detail, something usually neglected by other Indian writers in English. It is not an uncommon
fact that the husband in the Indian context imposes himself on an unprepared wife and during such moments the woman's body feels violated and humiliated. To Deshpande, marital sex often amounts to marital rape as exemplified in the case of Mira in The Binding Vine, Sarita in The Dark Holds No Terrors, Akka in Roots and Shadows, the muslim woman in Moving On and several other women characters. These women represent their counterparts in society who had been kept hitherto under similar predicaments in real life, while they remained voiceless and inarticulate.

It is interesting to note that in Shashi Deshpande, any violation of a woman's body by aggressive will and action on the part of the male is viewed as a crime even when it happens in the context of marriage; sanctified and approved for ages by social conventions. In moments such as these, woman, even if she happens to be the man's wife, undergoes a trauma. In the words of a modern critic:

A woman may say that she diets, exercises, and dresses for herself but in reality she is probably shaping and adorning her flesh for men. A woman has little or no say about when, where and how or by whom her body will be used. (Tong 187)
Potentially, a woman's body is likely to come under male perusal, judgement and hence threat of assault, at any time, on account of the male's superior physical strength.

In recent times, more and more critics have exposed the fallacy of equating 'manhood' with aggressive or forced entry of the male into the female body, even under the licence of marriage. Such an act, committed in violation of the female will is tantamount to rape:

... rape is a primary means by which some establish their 'manhood'. Rape is the secret of patriarchy. Both the possibility and the actuality of rape, Brownmiller argues, serve as the main agent of the perpetuation of the male domination over women by force. (DFT 21)

Feminist theory considers rape as a social institution based on violence and a logical conclusion of sexism. Rape is a constant reminder to all women of their vulnerable condition. Kate Millet also points out that from a radical feminist perspective "most heterosexual relations are analogous to rape but concealed by a mystique of romance" (DFT 185).
The husband invading on his wife’s body is never brought to book in the male-dominated Indian society. It is the wife’s duty to please the husband in all ways unquestioningly. According to tradition, an ideal wife is supposed to be:

Karyesi Dasi
Karyesi Mantri
Roopeche Laxmi
Kshmaya Daridri
Bhuktesu Mata
Shatkarna Yukta
Kuladharma Patni. (qtd. in Reddy 98)

These lines mean that a wife should serve her husband like a slave, render sensible counsel to him like a minister to a king, appear beautiful like Goddess Laxmi, forgive all his sins, feed him like a mother would and cater to all his needs of lust like a prostitute in bed. In short, a husband has to be pleased by the woman by all means possible.

Mira, the mother-in-law of Urmila in The Binding Vine has recorded in her diary that she had been the victim of a disgusting sexual act imposed on her by her elderly husband. In the words of Urmila, the narrator, "It runs through all her (Mira’s) writing a strong,
clear thread of an intense dislike of the sexual act with her husband, a physical repulsion for the man she married" (63).

Humiliated and insulted by his doctor wife's rise to fame, Sarita's husband, Manohar in The Dark Holds No Terrors invades on his wife like a beast in the nights. In the words of Sarita:

'I never knew till then he had so much strength in him' ... 'I couldn't fight back. I couldn't shout or cry, I was so afraid the children in the next room would hear. I could do nothing. I can never do anything. I just endure. (201)

It has to be also recalled in this context, that it is the same Sarita who used to relish the act of sex with her husband in the earlier benevolent phase of her marriage, when her husband was genuinely tender and loving, "It was as if little nerve ends of pleasure had sprung up all over my body" (DH 10). The present transformation in Sarita's attitude is purely due to the change in her husband, who proves to be a veritable sadist in bed.

Marital sex to Akka, the matriarch of Roots and Shadows is a source of horror. Akka, a victim of child
marriage was often whipped for not obeying the orders of her elderly husband and in-law. Indu, the protagonist of *Roots and Shadows* and niece of Akka, gives an account of the episode she had received at second hand:

... I heard that twice she tried to run away .... a girl of 13. Her mother-in-law, I heard, whipped her for that and locked her up for three days. Starved her as well. And then, sent her back to her husband's room. The child, they said, cried and clung to her mother-in-law saying "Lock me up again, lock me up". But there was no escape from a husband then. (RS 77)

Deshpande's *Moving On* also dwells on the issue of marital rape. In his diary Badrinarayan, Baba as he is called by Jiji, his daughter, admits of his aggressive sexual entry into his wife Vasu which made her cry every time:

Beast? Yes, that's how I began to think of it, a beast I wanted to control, but never could. Today when I remember these things, I am full of sorrow, ... I am grieved that I failed to convey to her the enormous tenderness I felt for her. (MO 111)
Recalling her husband’s behaviour, Vasu, his wife writes a story where a Muslim woman wreaks vengeance on her sadist husband who tortures her in bed everyday. Mai (mother, Vasu) in her story *Black Out* describes a Muslim woman at a Muslim mohalla during a black-out in Bombay, during the Bangladesh war. Anyone who did not observe the blackout strictly was considered a traitor in the Muslim locality. The Muslim woman in the story keeps the light on purpose, only to earn the wrath of the self-appointed local guardians. When interrogated by them, she simply points her finger at her husband whom they beat mercilessly. Then bolting the door from inside, the woman goes into her bedroom where she has a good look at her own bruised body in the mirror:

There, in the dark, she begins to undress, slowly, painfully pulling the clothes off her body, which is revealed to be battered and bruised. ... And then with a sigh, she gets into bed, thinking, 'I can sleep tonight'. (MO 173-74)

Deshpande presents the ritual of the first night ceremony in Ranidurg in *The Binding Vine*, when one of Akka’s nieces gets married. The tone of Urmila’s narration is highly ironical:
In fact a funeral solemnity hung over all of us during the ceremony. I could not see the girl's face, for she looked steadily down throughout, but I could see that her hands were trembling uncontrollably. And the back of her neck, I can remember that, looked like a lamb's, waiting for the butcher's knife to come down upon it. (63)

Deshpande also dwells at length on the subject of marital rape in her fictional works:

... such things happened, I knew that, even if no one had told me so. Whispers, incomplete sentences, fleeting expressions on faces, spoken and unspoken hints — all these had taken me to this submerged fact. (WM 8)

When Lakshmi Holmstrom inquired Deshpande whether the theme of marital rape signified an expression of power in her fictional works, she replied:

I believe this is one area where women really are exploited, when men do use their power, their sexual power, in order to subjugate women. The horror of it is certainly part of my thinking, of the motivation of some of the
Marriage becomes meaningless as sex alone seems to sustain the man-woman relationship in the Indian context. When asked why so many of the women characters in her novels are frustrated either in their private or public life, Deshpande has gone on record that, "I do feel that women in this country are frustrated in many ways, and that's why my characters turn out that way too. It is not intentional" (Pathak 240-41). According to Indirani Jaisingh, an eminent lawyer for women, it is high time that women got a permanent legal safeguard to protect themselves from their present vulnerable state, which exposes them to the possibility of 'rape' in marriage:

It is assumed that by marrying a man, a woman has given her consent to sexual intercourse with her husband at any time. Thus, even if he forces himself on her, he is not committing an offence, (of rape) as her consent is assumed. In this respect, the woman’s movement has consistently demanded that the law of rape be changed. A recent judgement of court in England indicated that rape within marriage can be an offence. Several States in the U.S.
have specially amended their original law to make it an offence. (65)

A notable feminist, Maria Mies stresses the importance of personal self-respect of women within the bounds of marriage in the following manner:

... the non-conforming conduct of the women is not the consequence of an external necessity, but of changed consciousness. They are not satisfied with the rhetoric of equality between man and woman but want to see that the right to an individual life and the right to development of their individual capabilities are realized in their own lives. (qtd. in Sathupati 16)

Women who are sufficiently aware of their own emotional needs are striving for greater self-fulfillment, rejecting long-held traditional and social notions and values. The 'New Woman' has become extremely conscious of her own place as a human individual in the family and society. Fiction by women writers constitutes a major portion in contemporary Indian writing in English. Comparative Literature includes also an investigation into the transmigration of sociological and anthropological values and beliefs
between writers hailing from different geographical, historical or sociological backgrounds. Some critics accord a high priority for comparative studies executed against cultural backdrops:

Comparative literature can have many facets: aspectual, linguistic, contental, formal, aesthetic, technical, theoretical, attitudinal, rhetorical. However, its approach road will have to be through culture, because culture alone bestows significance on a signifier. The principle of contrastiveness itself operates on dimensions opened through the cultural perspective. (Chandra, Preface 2)

The conflict between tradition and modernity finds an important place in the portrayal of women by the Indian women novelists.

Deshpande's angle of vision towards women sexually assaulted in day-to-day life bears a remarkable similarity to H.C.Upadhyay's view of women's predicament:

There is no woman who has not suffered at one time or another, the harassment, humiliation, exploitation and violence that shadows her sex. A woman's life lies between pleasure at
one end and danger at the other end. In daily life women are routinely defined by sex, and even if not all men are potential kidnappers, rapists, batterers and murderers of women, all women are potential victims. (182)

Though Deshpande is not a self-proclaimed feminist, her texts do provide ample contexts for an interrogation from a feminist perspective, especially in the light of western feministic theories like those of Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Kate Millet and Germaine Greer, as she daringly explores regions of experience which were considered taboo in earlier ages.

Indumathi, the Tamil novelist is also a feminist in the sense she exposes the tyranny of man and the domestic injustice meted out to women. Hers is a culturally imposed feminism which prevents her from a discussion of taboo subjects like marital rape in her novels. Even in the very few novels where there are sly references to aggressive sexual behaviour on the part of the husband, women consider it as the male prerogative to use the wife sexually.

Suguna in Malai Mayakkam, referring to her mother's subjugated self, says that the only pleasure she has even received in life was the sexual pleasure
from her husband, and even such an experience was perceived purely in terms of his needs, "... That momentary need must have been something to do with Dad alone" (21). *Malarkalile Aval Mallikai* presents Vidhya, the protagonist who submits herself to Ramani, her aggressive husband in the first night, "Vidhya tried her best to keep herself aloof, but he was in no mood to spare her ... Anyhow, this is his due by right ... It is not fair now, to deny that right to him" (189-90).

Deshpande's art dwells on the issue of rape inside and outside marriage, though only *The Binding Vine* speaks of rape outside marriage. Viewed from any perspective, according to Adrienne Rich, "... rape is one of the main means of reinforcing compulsory heterosexuality" (DFT 186). In *The Binding Vine*, Shakutai, a woman belonging to a lower social stratum, whose daughter Kalpana has been raped, requests Urmila, the protagonist, to request the doctor of the hospital, where her daughter is admitted, "not to make the report" (62) and not to inform the police, "No, no, no. Tell him, tai, it's not true, don't tell anyone, I'll never be able to hold up [sic] my head again, who'll marry the girl, we're decent people" (58).

It is Prabhakar, husband of Shakutai's sister Sulu who has committed the crime as he wants to marry the
girl against her wishes. But Shakutai believes that it is because of Kalpana’s own exhibitionist behaviour that she was raped, as if the victim were as guilty as the rapist, "... she talks as if the girl is to blame for what has happened to her" (BV 148). It is invariably the woman who is held ultimately responsible for the crime in all such situations.

Indumathi’s Kalaiyāṭa Mayakkaṅkal presents the rape of Kanthamani, an innocent girl. Kanthamani falls in love with Jagathish, a doctor already married, who is infatuated with her. However, after having an affair with her, Jagathish feels guilty and ditches her. Unable to forget her lover, Kanthamani seeks the help of some good-for-nothing miscreants, who rape her. Deserted by her parents and facing rejection from a journal, which refuses to publish her true story as a warning to others, Kanthamani says, "Presuming I am dead and gone, my father and mother had already decided that I was good riddance. Only now I feel at last I’m left out, all alone" (51). She has, however, a question to pose to Manoharan, the reporter of the journal:

Shouldn’t people like him expose the fraud of this Panduranga Dixit, tearing his mask in their writings thereby saving orphaned and helpless female victims like us? Is it not their social duty? (KM 51)
However, Manohar has a ready reply to Kanthamani's question that goes along the following lines:

We won't write anything baseless. We will not write about anything that has no legal basis. Tell me what is the legal evidence you have, for all the particulars you have confided to us? (KM 52)

The crime of rape inside and outside marriage is committed in the dark, under the most difficult grounds to establish before the legal system, and hence, according to Indumathi, there is almost no light at the end of the tunnel for the victims of rape and their trauma is likely to continue unabated in the future too. Indumathi in her novel depicts the sad plight of victims of rape, rejected by both the family and the society.

Most of Deshpande's women protagonists are pragmatic materialists in the sense, they all aspire for an independent career of their own which would in turn offer them considerable self-reliance in terms of finance and social recognition. They tend to aim high and become extremely successful in their lives like Sarita in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, considered even by her mother as dark and ungainly, in contrast to Dhruva, her younger brother. Sarita is often painfully reminded
by her mother that she is quite plain. In short, she comes to consider herself as an "unloved, resentful, neglected child" (DH 106). Nevertheless, Sarita is deeply resolved to rise above most women, joins the medical college and marries Manu belonging to a different caste much against her mother's wishes. She also makes use of Boozie, her boss to improve her own professional prospects. In short, she "defies her own mother to become a doctor, defies her caste to marry outside, defies social conventions by using Boozie to advance her career" (Iyengar 759).

Urmila in The Binding Vine is irritated at the sight of Vana, her sister-in-law, who is utterly submissive before Harish, her husband:

URMILA. "You let him get away with you too much I tell her"

VANA. "What do you want me to do?".

URMILA. "Assert yourself. You don't have to crawl before him, do you?" (80).

Deshpande's fictional works underline the need for women to promote their self-interest in a materialistic world. To Indu, the protagonist of Roots and Shadows, "the sexual instinct ... that's true, the maternal instinct ... that's true too. Self-interest, self-love ... they're the basic truths" (RS 173).
Deshpande has gone on record saying that:

Cage in the self for too long and it becomes a dangerous, snarling animal. Go on sacrificing and you create monsters of selfishness. Sacrifice, except for a helpless, dependent infant, has no role in Nature's plan ... I believe that the family is not a divine, sacred institution, but one created by humans for the benefit of all society, and therefore, it should be built, not on the sacrifice of some, but on the co-operation and compromises of all its members. (WM 84)

Jiji in Moving On, is totally opposed to ancestor-worship. According to her, one should not even preserve any relic of one's own parents because, it will ultimately become a huge liability. She tells Raja, her cousin:

We should bury the dead with their belongings, so that we're free of that burden, free of agonising ... but I tell you it's [sic] real agony thinking of what to do with the things. It would be such a relief to get rid of them. (MO 35)
In contrast, Indumathi's fiction presents by and large, women protagonists who are sacrificial and even idealistic. They are essentially altruistic, deriving joy only in the happiness of others. They are ready to forego their own happiness for the unity and well-being of the family, retaining at the same time their own individuality and asserting their rights as women.

Suguna, the protagonist of Malai Mayakkam is the youngest and the only unmarried girl in the family. Her parents do not want to get her married because the money she brings home as a salaried worker means much for them, "The sole reason is the five hundred rupees I bring" (96). Though Suguna very much desires to marry Muthu, her office Manager, she gives up the idea as she does not want to let her parents down in their old age, putting her own self-interest above those of her elder sisters:

I can easily defy them and marry Muthu, running away from all of them ... And I have the confidence to carry it out too ... Yet I am not inclined to do that. If I do so, there will be no difference between my siblings and myself. I used to call the others so often selfish ... Yet if I marry for my own
happiness I will also become one like them. (MLM 98-99)

Abirami, the eighteen year old daughter of the poor freedom fighter Muthusamy in *Mukamillata Maniarkal*, hailing from a small village near Vedaranyam, kills her husband Narayan and mother-in-law Saradhabal at their residence at Delhi, when she finds out that her husband and in-law betray our national interests, having passed on military secrets to some foreign spies. She is imprisoned for the crime, but Indumathi justifies her act, "It is all because of her profound loyalty, the loyalty that springs from the devotion she has towards this land" (92).

Jayanthi, the protagonist of *Man Kutirai* kills herself in order to save Radhika her eighteen year old daughter from Kiruba, a rogue, who has seduced both herself and Radhika, for she knows her daughter will never break her relationship with Kiruba. In her suicide note, Jayanthi writes:

But you have the whole life before you. A tender bud of eighteen. I burn myself also because I do not want that tender bud to trust a wicked man and get charred prematurely by him. (MK 94)
In her preface to *Enrum Pen* Indumathi observes:

A woman remains female for ever in her soft feminity; in the tenderness of her breasts; anticipations; longings; ultimately even in her disappointments; a woman stays always feminine. (3)

Though Indumathi presents mostly sacrificial and idealistic women in her novels, she also presents a few women who are stark materialists. Surya, the male protagonist of *Ivale En Manaivi* belonging to a middle class family gets cheated by Kavitha, hailing from a sophisticated upper class, who deliberately kindles a desire in Surya, a writer of repute. Her intimate and informal style of behaviour fascinates Surya. However, when he proposes marriage to her, Kavitha flares up instantly, "You know the kind of family I belong to .... What can I tell of your folly that made you expect that I’d come with you to run a family under such exigent conditions?" (IEM 118).

Bhuvana, wife of Kirubakar in *Manal Vitukal* employs Sasi, the protagonist from a very poor family to work as a surrogate mother for her husband’s child. However, on the eve of her appointment Bhuvana lays down a stringent condition of contract before Kirubakar,
"She, the surrogate mother, should remain poor ... As soon as the baby is delivered, we can send her away paying her some money, saying her services are not needed for the child" (MV 43).

Ranjani, another character from a well-to-do, upper class family in Carayu Kattirukkiral, seduces the blind man Jegathish much against his wish with false assurances of love, "If you do not like it, remain quiet. I need it. So I’ll take it" (67). Such wilful women achieve whatever they want and do not hesitate to cheat their menfolk with impunity. Such women in Indumathi go to any length, with characteristic aggressiveness to advance their own materialistic and selfish goals.

Nevertheless, quite unlike in Deshpande, Indumathi’s fictional art also presents men who are loving and considerate towards women, who enlighten the latter on several issues relating to life and marriage. Narendran, the newly wed husband of Divya in Otum Mekankal comes to know that Divya has been in love with Prabhu Ram, her Professor at college and makes every effort to facilitate Divya’s marriage with him. He tells her father Sivaraman "We can all forget that an event like this marriage had ever happened and unite Divya with Prabhu Ram in matrimony. That is the only
humanistic gesture possible" (OM 132). Sudhakar, the prospective bridegroom in *Vinaiyil Urunkum Rakankal* says marriage is not simply sharing a common bed, and giving birth to children but also 'sharing life'. Karthikeyan, who wishes to marry Radhika in *Totuvana Manitarkal* tells Radhika that even as husband and wife they should remain essentially individuals, "We can share, but we should never become dependent" (121).

Indumathi in her collection of essays, *Pumikku Vanta Curiyankal* says that economic independence is a necessity for women, "When a woman becomes self-reliant and economically secure enough and capable of standing on her own strength, then only she acquires all the inner strength, self-confidence and courage" (31). Surya, the male protagonist of *Ivale En Manaivi* cautions Divya, the innocent village girl who has become pregnant even before marriage, observing that as a woman she ought to have been more careful.

Indumathi also discusses widow remarriage in *Parappatarku Mun Koncam*, remarriage of divorcees in *Enru Putitai Pirappom* and *Viralkalai Mittum Vinai*, love and union in old age in *Marata Rakankal*. Both Deshpande and Indumathi deal with arranged and love marriages and the struggle Indian women face in defying well-entrenched traditions in their ambition for progress.
There are several instances, where both Deshpande and Indumathi feel that marriage is a pain-inflicting prison, a crippling cage and even a treacherous trap. Manju in Deshpande’s *If I Die Today* says, "A marriage. You start off expecting so many things. And bit by bit, like dead leaves all expectations fall off" (24). Indu in *Roots and Shadows* observes that marriage is ‘a trap’, ‘a cage’, "And it’s not a joke, but a tragedy" (59). Jaya in *That Long Silence* asserts, "It was a relief to be alone" (68). But towards the end, all these women in Deshpande’s fiction reconcile with their husbands because marriage is inevitable for them and "life has always to be made possible" (LS 193).

In Indumathi too, the basic attitude of women to marriage remains more or less the same. Divya’s mother in *Otum Mēkaṅkal* says, "The moment that knot is tied, the wife becomes a sole property exclusively owned by him (husband), that’s all" (95). According to her, ninety percent of the women in this country are people who lead lives much against their heart’s desires " ... continuing to live with no other go, much against their inner will" (97).

In spite of all the adverse effects of marriage, the protagonists of Indumathi too desire marriage because of "the exalted honour accorded to the status of
a wife" (61) in society as Suguna in *Malai Mayakkam* puts it. Everyone wants marriage for security and stability. She also needs a man to call her a wife and grant her a social status. Aranga Mallika says:

> Even if well-educated, socially well-aware and totally self-reliant, a woman becomes a socially honoured being only with the harmonious merger of her life with that of a male. (146)

Critics like Sachithanandam are of the view that the true value of any work of art can be estimated better only through a comparative analysis of works separated by a certain period of history:

> ... as a work of art in spite of its individual traits belongs to literary tradition like other works of art of the past and present, its fullest significance can be brought out only through comparison. (5)

A comparative study of Deshpande and Indumathi has been done here in order to illuminate the virtues / idiosyncrasies of the art of one writer in the light of the works of the other, and to arrive at a more accurate evaluation of the works of both the authors.
Both Deshpande and Indumathi, in their own ways, do look upon the social institution called marriage, as a bondage. However, as individuals and writers, they both have different objectives in marriage. Deshpande brings under her microscope, mainly the plight of the elite upper middle class women, when they marry. The intense challenges posed by professional demands tend to colour often the views of Deshpande's protagonists, for most of them are uncompromising and pragmatic materialists first and foremost. Their ultimate loyalty is to themselves and their professions.

Most of Indumathi's women protagonists also view marriage as a disadvantageous source of confinement, denying them their freedom as individuals. But they hail from all classes. Some of them long for marriage, solely in order to win social recognition. Some cannot simply dream of marriage as they do not have the means for it. Both the authors describe scenes of wife-battering, but in Deshpande, women wreak their vengeance in one way or another. There are several helpless women victims in Indumathi. Deshpande's women may not be happy but by and large they are more aggressive and better empowered by virtue of their higher academic qualifications and professional skills.
Both the novelists treat pre-marital and extra-marital affairs of women not only without attaching to them any marked sense of guilt, but also consider them as symbolic at times, of the degree of emancipation they enjoy. There is no exaltation of the virginity ideal in pre-marital life of women or the chastity ideal in their post-marital life. Most often Deshpande’s women exploit their amoral outlook for materialistic self-advancement while in Indumathi several women allow their bodies to be exploited outright for the sake of the welfare of the members of their family or for those whom they love. There is a sharp self-conscious resistance to the label of feminism in Deshpande, while Indumathi does not worry about the labels her fictional works might attract. Deshpande may simply feel like holding a true mirror to the position of women in society. But any such presentation is liable to be interpreted in terms of political and sociological connotations in the world of criticism.

Deshpande’s ‘new’ women protagonists tend to win the admiration of the contemporary generation of young women on account of the glamour, confidence and independence bestowed on them by their professions. Indumathi’s protagonists often hailing from poorer circumstances, see certain practical advantages,
bestowed by the naivety, submissiveness and lack of very high knowledge or skill on the part of women in marriage, as the husbands of such women do not see in them any latent threat to their own 'ego'. While exceptional 'skill' or knowledge is exalted in Deshpande, naivety and simplicity on the part of women are implicitly hailed as virtues in Indumathi.

Female sexuality is articulated and assessed in the works of both Deshpande and Indumathi. Traditionally, a lively interest and preoccupation with sex in any healthy Indian woman used to be swept under the carpet in fictional works. Both the authors here deserve special kudos for finding a 'voice' in their art to one of the most instinctual needs of women, liberating it from a suppressed sphere of silence in art. Deshpande and Indumathi suggest also that any kind of initiative taken by women in the sexual realm is instantly perceived as an imminent 'threat' by the men in their lives.

Deshpande makes a frontal assault by challenging the linear order of progress of women's experience in love, marriage and sex. In the case of Indumathi her women are not bent on breaking this order 'perse'. Nevertheless, for a greater good or for a nobler or selfless cause, if any negotiation is made, the
character concerned emerges as totally acceptable and even admirable.

Marital rape is almost an obsession with Deshpande, while in most of her works Indumathi deals with 'rape' in the larger sphere, namely, outside marriage. Hence, the objectives of treatment of 'rape' by the two authors highly differ. If the former problematizes marriage through her treatment of 'rape', the latter highlights the rampant sociological causes that plague our caste-ridden, class-conscious materialistic society that worships power.

Above all, the striking difference between the women figuring in the works of Deshpande and Indumathi pertains to their temperament. Deshpande's women are mostly moody, brooding, less spontaneous and problem-bound despite their superior education and position in society. They are also strikingly individualistic lovers. Several of Indumathi's women, in contrast, are sunny, warm-blooded and much more flexible and selfless in their intimate relationships like Suguna, Jeyanthi, Vidhya and Ranjani.

Thus 'marriage' as a motif, serves a highly useful purpose of defining the artistic vision of one author, in the light of the works of the other author.
For Freud, the interconnection between art and artist is essentially unique:

Art represents an attempt to gratify certain wishes in the artist; it is a kind of love affair, with the world; a quest for approval and acceptance but the artist in turn gratifies certain universal desires in his audience. (124)