Chapter – V

CONCLUSION
The thesis focuses on man-woman relationship as handled by feminist activists and the Indian women novelists. All the six novels taken for study discuss the relationship between six marital couples, the transformation in their relationships and the social, educational, conventional, and psychological factors which affected the relationships. Marital discord is the major issue of these two writers. This occurs due to cultural alienation and gender inequality.

Men enjoy every kind of freedom in an orthodox society. They can express their views and feelings about almost everything. On the other hand, women are supposed to be always mute and submissive. They have to mould themselves according to the needs and instructions of the family. They are treated as the private property of a male. Deshpande and Mukherjee depict the subjugation of women in their novels.

Sarita, the heroine of Deshpande is upbraided in totally traditional atmosphere where she is always considered as a second sex. She is advised not to go out in the sun as it will darken her skin which will create difficulty in her marriage. Her husband turns a sadist which ruins the marriage. His traditional male psyche cannot bear his wife’s economical independence. He cannot tolerate her being a bread winner of the family and getting more honour by the society than him. Saru’s parents and
husband look at woman with the prejudices and can't think of her being prominent in family. They don’t take her as a human being. Manohar uses Saru’s body as a means of expressing his male ego and giving vent to his frustration.

Indu, too, is depicted as a physical entity; her upbringing in traditional joint family teaches her to submit herself. Her husband Jayant doesn’t look at her as a human being. He makes her hide her responses as a woman.

Jaya learns from Vanita mami that ‘husband is a sheltering tree.’ Her husband, a typical patriarchal male treats her more like a woman and less as a human being. Mohan has no problem with Jaya until she plays the role of a submissive wife for seventeen years; but when she starts thinking about herself, the relationship began to crack.

Mukherjee’s heroine, Jasmine faces the same problem when she is in Hasnapur (India). But Tara and Dimple are brought up in comparatively different atmosphere. Their husbands think them as human beings to some extent. No doubt, they dominate them but their domination is positive.

The words like Samskara and the sanctity of the relations play a vital role in making a woman dependent. Inspite of being qualified and
well-bred, they knowingly or unknowingly fall prey to the dependence and lose their identity. The social situation compels them to shed their own identity and self pride. The same thing happens with the heroines of Deshpande and Mukherjee who, finally, do not follow any radical step but the traditional one, except Dimple.

Sarita, a doctor, who practices well, is the bread-winner of family. She is much respected in the society. Though she possesses high qualification, she doesn’t dare to break the social taboos. In spite of being terribly oppressed by her husband, she hardly thinks of leaving him. After a withdrawal, finally she chooses to go to him and sustain her marriage.

Indu, like Saru, chooses the same inspite of her bright career as a journalist and writer. Indu, too, goes back to Jayant and does not try to cross the limits of marriage. Jaya an acclaimed writer and columnist, prefers marital security to her career. She too chooses to go to Mohan.

Thus, Deshpande’s heroines consider marriage as an important social institution and solutions are sought within the marriage. Marriage, marital bonds and marital relationship form important segment of their lives. Marital discord has been a problem to them but it never becomes insurmountable. They are compelled by a desire to find a solution to the problems and not an escape from it. In striving to uphold social norms of
behaviour, these protagonists are traditional in their approach. They wish to live with the social framework. At the same time, they are women who are individuals with an awareness of their rights and duties, have legitimate sexual passion and expect an independent autonomous existence. In this sense, they are torn between tradition and modernity.

In comparison with Deshpande, Mukherjee’s heroines are depicted as not much career conscious. Tara is educated in America but does not pursue career. Jasmine is not much educated and serves as a caregiver out of necessity. Dimple is less interested in making her career and when she takes interest in America, her husband opposes her. All these heroines migrated to America. Having an Indian Samskara, they choose to stick up with marriage. Though marriage is not the ultimate goal for Tara, she goes back to David. Jasmine was in search of true love and tried to become more American by choosing Taylor. Dimple, being an abnormal, did not care about her marriage and killed her husband and ruined her marriage, though, it was once her ultimate goal.

Social and personal prejudices affect the man woman relationship a lot. As woman is always considered to be inferior to a man, a husband cannot tolerate his wife being more respected than him. He feels as if his ego is hurt. Even the society cannot bear a wife stronger than her husband
in any sense. Because of such prejudices prevailing in the society, the relationship between a man and a woman cannot flourish inspite of being equally important in each other’s progress. Deshpande and Mukherjee’s novels examined the man-woman relationship in a subtle way.

In The Dark Holds No Terrors Saru, being a doctor earned more than her husband. Her social status undermined Manu’s confidence. His meager income and confinement to home or the care of children seems shameful act to him. This prejudiced thinking affects the relationship.

Indu in Roots and Shadows, being an active partner in love making undermines Jayant’s male pride. It creates inferiority complex in him which affects the relationship.

In That Long Silence, Mohan being status-conscious wanted to elevate himself. So he uses his wife as a status symbol. To be known as a writer’s husband, he compels her to compromise with her writing without caring for her feelings. All these things lowered him in the eyes of Jaya.

Mukherjee’s heroine Tara has her roots in the Indian patriarchal tradition, while David is the product of the ultra modern Western world. David failed to see any logic behind Indian customs and tradition. His undermining Indian traditions creates inferiority complex in Tara, which affects the relationship. Jasmine’s relation with Prakash creates no
complex in her. Amit’s higher qualification and confidence pleased Dimple and created no inferiority complex in her. She experienced Amit losing confidence and subsequent delay in getting job in America. This affects their relationship. Finally, Dimple got attracted to Milt, a more confident man.

The norms of behaviour in the Western countries are totally different from that of the Indian society. Whenever any Indian, especially a woman comes in contact with the Western culture, she feels totally alienated and awkward. The definition of marriage and family varies according to the social and cultural milieu. Marriage, for an Indian, is a ritual that is divine and holy. On the contrary, the marriage is just consummated for sexual pleasure in Western countries. The difference in the norms of behaviour does not allow any Indian to settle in Western countries. The female protagonists in Mukherjee’s novels fail to settle down in Western countries.

If Deshpande’s protagonists move out of their house, Mukherjee’s protagonists move into an even wider world by leaving Indian shores for abroad. They try to build a home away from home but fail to break themselves free from the traditional Indian ideals and attitude. David expects a total Western outlook from Tara, though Tara shows the impact
of Western culture by marrying a Western David. However this does not immediately broaden her horizon and fails to westernize herself.

Jasmine’s live-in relationship with Bud blooms at the end. Being an Indian, Jasmine understands the sanctity of Hindu marriage. However, as an American, she compromises with it. Western marriage is nothing but gratification of sexual desires but Indian marriage is spirituality, sanctity, and family. Western marriage brings together two individuals but an Indian marriage not only brings together the bride and her groom but also the two entire families.

Bud’s wife Karin blames Jasmine and calls her “gold digger” and “tornado” but the same Karin gets astonished when she observes her devotion towards her husband. Western Karin is surprised with Jasmine, being a dutiful typical Indian wife. She cannot digest Jasmine’s behaviour. Jasmine cannot imagine child’s sleeping alone. So also Wylie’s easily leaving her husband for her love, Tailor’s and Wylie’s adopting a child, her noticing naked bodies combing hair in front of mirrors in the opposite apartments prove to be a cultural shock to Jasmine. At last Jasmine leaves Bud, the father of her unborn baby and seeks her future with Taylor and Duff. Taylor too accepts her. Both Taylor and Bud
accept Jasmine inspite of cultural differences. Jasmine tends towards westernization and accepts Taylor.

Tara has a long heritage of traditional Indian family but Western David has no one else but his widow mother who lives away from him. Tara always remembers and feels proud of her rich heritage but David hates genealogies.

Most of the female writers are accused to be the anti-male writers. However, not all the female writers follow such biased path. There may be certain reasons out of which, while depicting women, male may have been given less importance. Sometimes, the necessity or the demand of the plot does not allow the male characters to flourish. This does not mean that the writer has biased attitude towards any of the sexes. Deshpande and Mukherjee seem to be against such categorization.

While depicting man-woman relationship, neither Deshpande nor Mukherjee showed any anti-male stance in their novels. It is true that their male characters are flat and not well developed, but it also cannot be denied that these writers are not prejudiced with the male sex. These males are seen only in relation to the woman. As women writers, they tried to probe deeper into the female psyche. The male appear colourless in their works.
Compared to Deshpande, Mukherjee’s male characters play a less important role in her writings. Mukherjee like Deshpande doesn’t display any anti-male stance. David, Prakash and Amit though appeared sporadically, they directly or indirectly affect the lives of the female protagonists of the novels. Mukherjee depicts the male characters naturally. All her male characters show positive dominance to their woman but Deshpande’s male characters are gender biased and product of patriarchal system.

Manohar, Jayant and Mohan are depicted in a realistic manner; they adapt patriarchal approach towards their wives. Deshpande’s male friends are shown ‘feminist’ in their disposition in the sense that they are egalitarian towards the protagonist and understand the oppression in their lives. Deshpande consciously depicts the woman as suppressed being but neither her female characters nor her mouth pieces try to offend the male sex. Deshpande calls herself feminist but refuse to be called a feminist writer. She expresses her thought in her interview with Geetha Gangadharan, “Yes, I am very much against such categorization. It is just good writing and bad writing and not male’s and women’s writing” (quoted in Pathak [ed.] 1998:254). Deshpande, in this interview, clearly admits that she believes men and women are not different but are human
beings, and she is against categorization. She adopts the same views for her male characters.

It is interesting that the male characters in the works of both the writers try to establish dominance by oppressing their opposite sex. Even then, neither the female characters nor the women writers express their gender prejudices against their opposite sex. In this sense, they display their true Indian womanhood, who gives priority to family values and try to bridge the gap among family members. In this sense they show their traditionally attributed character traits of motherhood, sympathy, forgiveness and tenderness while they find alternative routes to recompense their sacrifices.

Though Deshpande and Mukherjee reject being labeled feminist, they lend more authenticity to their portrayal of women characters. As the protagonists are women, the narrative proceeds with an emphasis on the female perspective. While Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukherjee deny being feminist, they obviously sympathise with the women characters. They create situations that highlight the righteousness of the female protagonists.

Deshpande successfully presents a sensitive portrayal of women’s quest for identity in a patriarchal world. About her rejecting herself as
feminist P. Ramamorthi points out, "Her heroines speak of Virginia Woolf’s *A Room Of One's Own* and Betty Friedan and it becomes quite obvious that the women she has created are feminist, if she is not one" (quoted in Singh 1991:115).

Deshpande’s heroines Sarita, Indu and Jaya are well educated and can be categorized as emancipated modern Indian women. They have certainly sacrificed bits of their personalities like any other traditional Indian women. However, these protagonists are confused about their own identity in the beginning but gradually are able to work out the solutions for themselves. They realize that fragmentation of self does not work. In fact, they are able to discover their real self at the end. Her protagonists are victims of the Indian patriarchy and after initial submission resist the oppressive situation, thereby reflecting the author’s view that a woman must assert herself within marriage to preserve her individuality. They are not shown blaming their male counterpart for their plight but it is suggested that actually women fail to identify their own real self.

Deshpande’s ideology may not be of the type radical feminists hold but she has her own brand of feminism which keeps her narratives female-centered and gives intimate insight into the psyche of the middle-class Indian women who feel oppressed by their patriarchal socialization. Thus
her primary concern for woman makes her a feminist writer though she is not an avowed feminist. Her feminism asserts a broad humanistic outlook that woman is a human being.

While rejecting the label of feminist, Mukherjee expresses herself in her interview with Runar Vignission.

I don’t call myself any ‘ist’ and I don’t follow any ‘isms’. I think that my women characters are strong, they are durable things don’t always workout for them but the ones that I like that ones that do alright like Jasmine, are doers and they sly away from too much self-analysis, too much verbalizing about the state of being (www.Span-34-5 ‘Diasporas’).

In the same interview, she expresses her wish, “I want to think that Jasmine is very real feminist” (Ibid). It shows that she doesn’t want to deal with feminism but creates feminist characters. Though she gives importance to the theme of expatriation, her feminine sensibility cannot be ignored.

Mukherjee is at her best in the depiction of cross-cultural conflicts and how her heroines take control over their destinies. They endeavour for self-realization, as for in Wife, Dimple moves towards liberation by falling in love with white American but ends up in madness. In Jasmine, after the death of her husband, the protagonist for the sake of freedom establishes relationship with another white Americans. In Jasmine,
Mukherjee shows her women protagonist repudiating centuries old ugly Indian tradition of marrying after matching the boy’s horoscope.

Mukherjee does not impose readymade solutions to the problems facing immigrant Asian women. She prefers showing them acquiring the power in order to control their fates. Her protagonists confront multicultural societies and are well aware of their social reality. Their displacement, alienation and search for self constitute for them a kind of process which cannot be avoided.

Mukherjee has paid, indeed, a special attention to the condition of the Indian woman immigrant in North America. Like any other feminist writer, Mukherjee’s women characters offer a challenge to patriarchal thought, social organization and control mechanism. Each of Mukherjee’s protagonists comes to realize her problems and chooses different means to solve them but do not succeed. Rootless Tara chooses to go back to her husband, mental trauma ruins Dimple’s relationship with her husband, while Mukherjee’s Jasmine alone successfully establishes marital harmony. In portraying her protagonists, Mukherjee displays contemporary immigrant’s feminine sensibility.

In short, both these writers are against being dubbed as feminist writers. But they do present their own brand of feminism in subtle ways.
These novelists have presented woman’s world from a woman’s point of view, which shows their serious concern over women’s issues.

Indian novelists have dealt with various facets of human relationship most intensely because the traditional heritage of India gives great importance to the family unit. Fiction today is seriously concerned with changing perception of man-woman relationship. The theme of man-woman relationship has been a focus of many literary works in contemporary Indian fiction. Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukherjee are no exception to this and they dealt with this theme in their works.

Apart from the similarity of delineating feminist sensibility, there is a basic difference between the two novelists while depicting the man-woman relationship. Deshpande’s women protagonists are affected by the traditional patriarchal gender discrimination while Mukherjee’s women protagonists have to suffer because of cultural differences as well as chauvinism.

Saru-Manu relationship in Deshpande’s The Dark Holds No Terrors is an estranged relationship due to the male dominated society. In male-dominated society women are not only looked down, but also widely discriminated against. Women are denied basic and domestic rights due to gender bias.
Indu-Jayant’s relationship in *Roots and Shadows* is not successful due to gender discrimination in Indian society. Indu is basically modern woman who gradually succumbs to her husband Jayant’s domination. Jayant demands her to be a totally submissive wife. He never tries to understand what she really wants or feels; there is no proper communication between the two. She bears all this due to her passionate love for him but soon gets disappointed and goes back to her ancestral home and returns with hopeful realization to achieve freedom with Jayant. It is evident that chauvinism is responsible for the marital discord.

In Deshpande’s *That Long Silence*, Jaya is essentially a modern woman rooted in tradition whereas her husband Mohan is a traditionalist rooted in age-old customs. Their marital life is greatly affected by the difference in their outlook which resulted in the estrangement. Lastly, after some incidents Jaya makes compromise and asserts her identity. The novel thus seeks to portray a woman who becomes aware of the biased attitude of her husband.

Mukherjee’s heroines are doubly oppressed; first on the basis of their immigrant identity and secondly because they are women. Fissures appeared in the husband-wife relationship in Mukherjee’s *The Tiger’s Daughter*. David fails to understand his wife’s needs and often laughs at
her, mocks at her Indian attitude, feelings, and genealogies. On the other hand, Tara cannot mix up with American culture during her seven years sojourn. She cannot be free from the clutches of India and still tries to live in Indian ghetto. She gradually withdraws herself from thoroughly different David who mocks at her culture and thus the relationship fails to succeed. Apart from being an American, David controls his Indian wife Tara through his aerogrammes when she comes to India. He forces her to lead her life according to his wish. He scolds her on wasting her time in parties and hotels with her upper-class friends who lacked social awareness. Tara accepts his domination like an Indian wife and tries to live according to him. This shows that David dominates Tara.

In Jasmine, the man-woman relationship comes to an end very early within a year of protagonist’s marriage with the death of her husband. Prakash never tries to dominate Jasmine and she is lucky to get such a husband. Her relationship with the other two Americans too proves successful because of her being realistic and ambitious. She is ready to compromise and faces boldly any adverse situation. She proves to be a survivor in every situation and enjoys her immigration which the other two protagonists never enjoyed. Jasmine is the only protagonist who takes charge of her life and succeeds in establishing harmony in her life.
In relationship with these men, cultural differences play less important role.

The man-woman relationship in *Wife* is unsuccessful, though Dimple’s being abnormal is the reason but one cannot deny that her abnormality reaches the highest level because of their migration to America. Cultural differences add to her psychic problems which led her to murder her own husband. This ‘cultural transplant’ leads not only to a crisis of identity but greatly affects the man-woman relationship.

Amit always expects Dimple to be a dutiful wife confined to his family. He scolds her when she forgets to keep ready the lime water for him. He opposes Vinod Khanna who offers a job to Dimple. He warns her to be away from modern American Ina Mullick. He neglects her and remains busy in his world. All these things display his male dominance. Thus, the man-woman relationship of Mukherjee is based on cultural discrimination as well as male chauvinism.

Deshpande reveals different facets of man-woman relationship within the Indian culture and Mukherjee chooses vast canvas to find out the aspects of man-woman relationship among the migrants of India to America. These two novelists deal with man-woman relationship. In an attempt at finding solutions, they choose different means which do not
succeed to the some extent. Apart from sociological, historical, cultural and feminist involvements, the subject is interesting in itself. It is indeed fascination to watch the unveiling of images of man-woman relationship in the novels of Shashi Deshpande and Bharati Mukherjee.