Chapter – V

EMERGING OF NEW WOMAN
Now women is fast becoming the centre of contemporary discourse of many national and international platforms because of her initiation and presence in those professional areas of work where she has never been noticed, found, or even imagined earlier. The social reformers, artists and critics have focused on woman’s issues such as her relation with man, her awakening and awareness towards her individuality, challenging the traditional image and her aims and objectives in the contemporary society. The Novels of Shashi Deshpande like Small Remedies, Moving On, In the Country of Deceit expose the emerging of Indian Women.

Women are well aware of all the consequences of changing times. She is more secured and free from all kind of psychological problems. She is not questioning her husband or children for not supporting or sharing her work. She is questioning herself and changing her attitude and supporting the family. Woman can only mould the family and take the responsibility. The new woman is more courageous and is able to construct happy families follow on happy societies.

In fact Shashi Deshpande’s novels can be broadly divided into two categories. In the first category, it is included The Dark Holds No Terrors, That Long Silence and Roots and Shadows. In these three novels one can locate a particular pattern. The protagonists follow a route of self-realization-a process, which is set in motion by some crisis. During their journey, the protagonists move back and forth in time. When the process of self-realization is complete, the protagonist decides to change her way of life. For instance, Jaya in That Long Silence decides to be more assertive, questioning and communicative.

Indu in Roots and Shadows becomes more courageous, conscientious and brings her family out of the cocoon. Saru in The Dark Holds No Terrors probably decides to give Manohar another chance and take greater interest in her profession; she does not postpone her visit to a patient, although Manohar is expected any moment. In short, in all these novels the stress is on the decision to change, rather than on actual change. It is a world of thoughts, not of action. It is also an inner world of the psyche.
On the other hand, in the second category of novels one can include *The Binding Vine, A Matter of Time, Small Remedies, Moving On* and *In The Country of Deceit*. In these novels, Shashi Deshpande emphasizes on action rather than on thought, because however much one may reflect, there is no guarantee that one will change.

The protagonists of the novels in the first group decide to change, but there is no way of knowing whether they have really changed. But in the second category, the change is perceivable in their action. It must also be noted that the process of change cannot be separated into thought and action. In reality, these go together. Unless one thinks, one cannot act. Thus one changes through thoughtful action. The protagonists in these three novels are different from those in the first category. Urmi in *The Binding Vine* coming to terms with the death of her daughter comes about through her action of giving voice to Mira and Shakutai. Shakutai herself changes through action. Sumi, Aru, Charu in *A Matter of Time* are all women of action; they do not brood.

There is also a difference in the mode of narration. In all the three novels of the first category, the first person narration, which gives primacy to the protagonist’s world-view, is used. In all the other novels, a fine balance has been drawn between protagonist's view and that of others. One wonders who the real protagonists in these novels are. For instance, who is the real protagonist of *The Binding Vine*? Is it Mira, or Akka or Shakutai or Sulu or Kalpana? It is possible to argue in favour of every one of these characters and claim that they are protagonists. In *A Matter of Time*, Aru, who decides to fight for Sumi, can also be called the protagonist. Kalyani’s silent suffering can make her to a heroine.

Shashi Deshpande’s intention is to communicate the mystery of self-realization through her characters. Women writing in India have found a new aspect advanced by Shashi Deshpande in her own simple way. The uncommon strength that this novelist possesses could not be assessed even by the reviewers or respectable critics. The novel *Small Remedies* confirms Shahsi Deshpande’s relationship to market-savy feminism. The novel touches upon deeper feelings and emotions which have no tangible shapes, which cannot be described in terms of known experiences and events.
The totality of human condition can never be adequately expressed in words. Man recitals, prayers and rites create meanings of the complexities of life but these dark thoughts cannot be swept out. One should not allow these thoughts to be so heavy that they disturb our life. Our life is a journey and we have to find out remedies, bit or small, in our journey through life, otherwise this journey would become excruciating. This is the truth of the epigraph to the novel taken from the Rig Veda:

Father of the earth,  
Protect us:  
Father of the sky.  
Protect us;  
Father of the great and shining waters,  
Protect us;  
To which God shall we offer our worship?

*Small Remedies* was published in the year 2000 has the structure of a biography in which Madhu Saptarishi, the protagonist, efforts to write the life-story of a famous classical singer Savitribai Indorekar, doyenne of the Gwalior Gharana who left without marriage and home as she wanted to follow her intelligence. Apart from Savitribai, Madhu’s story includes the saga of her aunt Leela a fiercely independent woman.

Shashi Deshpande presents her protagonists as strong and rebellious individuals so that they struggle against all odds to realize their inner self. Almost all characters are caged in their memories and make the story leading their memories. One finds an outward incident as a moment of recognition. Buddhism in India has influenced the fiction of Shashi Deshpande as many Buddhist concepts are present in their themes and characters portrayal. The outright reaction to Shashi Deshpande’s fiction is branded it as a feminist, for her work, works around the predicament of woman and male characters are pushed at the edges. Her women characters refuse to surrender before anxieties, indoctrination social conditioning and resultant oppression. They never stop to the level of neurotic protest. Her woman characters show determination to face the riddles of life boldly.
Small Remedies exposes the lives of two women are explored by the protagonist, Madhu, one obsessed with music and the other a passionate believer in Communism, who breaks away from their families to seek fulfilment in public life. Savitribai Indorekar, born into a conventional Hindu family, elopes with her Muslim lover and accompanist, Ghulaam Saab, to pursue a career in music. Moderate, iron-willed Leela, on the other hand, dedicates her life to the party, and to working with the factory workers of Bombay. Fifty years after these events have been set in motion, Madhu, Leelas’s niece, travels to Bhavanipur, Savitribai’s home in her last years, to write a biography of Bai. Madhu, who caught in her own despair over the loss of her only son Adit, tries to make sense of the lives of Bai and those around her, and in doing so, finds a way out of her own grief.

The portrayal of Madhu, her lonely childhood and her stay with her aunt’s family, which was rather intolerant, made her very sensitive. The initial confusion collapses when she marries Som and had a son. Madhu had no mother, but only her father and Babu a manservant. She never ever worried of not having a mother. She thinks mothers as drab creatures, forever working, scolding their children and it does not arouse any sense of deprivation in her. But life changes for her when she has a son. She gets everything after having a son. In other words her world gets completed with her son. She felt proud of being mother of a son and thanks God for the gift He had given to her. “What can you give me my lord, I who have everything? Aditya’s mother becomes her identity and she enjoys it”. (Small Remedies, p.89)

Madhu knew, from the very beginning, the discrimination women had to undergo in a society. She remembers the separate law for both the sexes and observed how men could lead a life of their choice with impunity; while women were mocked at and looked down upon by society for them. Madhu, after her graduation, wants to be financially independent; she decides to take up a job. Joe’s friend, Hamid Bai, gives her a job for his magazine “City Views” This was really a welcoming opportunity for her. To her, job in which she edited, or rewrote most of the article and the small room that Hamid Bai rented her-all become symbols of her independent identity. The work sense of fulfilment that she receives from her job and her home makes her, overlook her colleague Dalvi’s hatredness and his harassments. The appreciation and self-fulfilment that she receives, after long years of alienation, not
only gives her pride and a sense of self-satisfaction, but also makes her aware of her needs and aspires to fulfil them.

Tony’s visits along with his two friend’s Chandru and Som, gradually the three make her room their weekend spot. Her friendship blooms in love with Som and leads to their marriage. Madhu becomes a part of a real family for the first time. The birth of her son Aditya makes Madhu to identify herself to find the roots in this world. According to her, “A child’s birth is a rebirth for a woman; it’s like becoming part of the world once again”. (p.88)

Tony, Rekha, Ketaki, Chandru, Som all try to bring her out of her world, but by then Madhu had really lost all interest in life. Chandru forces Madhu to write the biography of Savitra Bai to divert her attention from her grief, she agrees and goes to Bhavanpur, stays with a young and loving couple Lata and Hari. She tries to remain aloof but Lata and Hari try all their efforts to make Madhu a part of their life. Madhu is engaged in her work and remains as indifferent observer in the life of people around her. Madhu’s grief makes her nights most difficult to tolerate. Her grief could not be mitigated even by the regular visits of Tony and others. In turn, Madhu becomes an intense silent observer of Lata and Hari. Lata’s affection and sincere efforts pay off. And it is Hari, who tells Madhu his connection with her mother and addresses her as “Kaku”. Hari’s efforts prove fruitful to bring Madhu back in the real world by initiating her to new relationships and Madhu slowly gets mixed up in the lives of the people around her.

The continuity of changing stream of consciousness brings about a change in perception too. This approach later on becomes the basis of the Zen philosophy advocating an alert occupation with living in the present and participating in it indirectly, neither looking towards the future nor backwards to the memories. The spontaneity of life arrives only with a termination of planning and openness to changes; Madhu realizes it during her stay with Hari and Lata. She understands that the more one desires to manage life according to some preconceived pattern, the more irritated, frustrated and fearful one becomes. Madhu’s constant anxiety is replaced by appreciative confidence and a desire to reconsider her life in the context of its different relationships. Loss, loneliness and grief are quite common in the life of all these characters. Soumya Bhattacharya says: “Grief and the vacuum that grief leaves
in its slip-stream, but offers us glimpses of the core of strength and reserves of stoicism all of us need to deal with pain and sorrow and isolation”. (The Hindustan Times, 14th May, 2000)

Madhu surrenders before the force of truth in her inner journey, when she attempts to write the biography, Savitribai’s sudden stroke and Hari’s accident create a crisis, which brings her in the centre of all action. Madhu finally breaks down while talking about Aditya’s death, which proves to be healing for her; she open up and tells Hari of her mindless waiting for her son and careful avoids talking about her fights with Som. As she goes on talking about Adit, she finally breaks down, when she narrates how frustrated she was in her attempts to find Adit. She feels too sorrowful, of not being there at this final moment.

She finally, speaks of her loss of identity all alienation from her life when she says, “How long will I live this way? And What for, oh! God, what for (Small Remedies, p.306)”? For the long seventeen years Madhu deals that she had no identity, no desire for self. But when she talks about the loss, it lifts the burden and brings the realization of the despondency of her own life. A simple incident starts healing the wounds of Madhu. She meets a young family celebrating the ‘Upanayan ceremony’ of a boy in Bhavani temple when she is asked to bless the boy she wonders:

“What blessings can contend against our mortality? Mustard seeds to protect us from evil, blessing to confer long life-nothing works. And yet we go on. Simple remedies? No, they’re desperate remedies and we go on with them because, in truth, there is nothing else”. (Small Remedies, p.315)

This realization makes her accept Adit’s death. Hasina’s prayer on the stage of Bhavani temple”, I saw a dream, I saw a dream” reminds her of her and Som’s dream dreamt around Adit; and gives her enough strength to accept the fate with dignity and once again recovers her own sense of self and of her needs. She wants to share, the sense of despair and her joy and pleasure of having Adit for seventeen years with Som, she feels:
“We need to be together, we need to mourn him together, and we need to face the fact of his death and our continuing life together. Only in this, is healing possible…Som and I will have to do this for Adit, only Som and I can do it for him, between the two of us, we can recreate him,…Som and I, we can wash away the darkness and ugliness, not only of Adit’s death, but of what happened before, with our own oblations of sesame seeds and waters”. (Small Remedies, p.323)

A woman has to be brave enough to give up what does not matter anymore and she needs to cross over barriers that belittle her worth and maim her potential in the name of social “respectability”. Savitribai, the gifted vocalist in Small Remedies, is independent enough to cut through this familial web only to discover that the music guru she so ardently admires is no less patriarchal than the community she rejects. Savitribai is a woman who strongly believes in herself and focuses on her goal and has the courage to set out on her own, to seek the fulfilment of her own genius. The writing of a biography of Doyen of Hindustani music, belonging to the Gwalior Gharana, Smt. Savitribai Indorekar is brought out in selected pieces. Bai, in her interview very carefully gives a self satisfying version of her successful life stories.

Madhu, as a young girl had seen the beautiful Bai, and was even a good friend of Bai’s daughter-Munni. Bai’s mother had a melodious voice but was limited to sing only devotional songs. Savitribai comes from an affluent Brahmin family, but her mother overjoyed by Bai’s talent, gave her the basic lessons in music. The art of music and dancing talent was below the dignity for a daughter of high class of Brahmin family. She after her marriage got the support of her father-in-law’s and requests him to let her learn music. Breaking away many shackles of tradition, a female trainer was arranged for Bai; very soon a Muslim tabla accompanion joined the group.

The family was furious but Bai’s determination to achieve her goal, gave her enough encourage to face the wrath of her family members and the society. Once again, she revolts against the tradition, in search of her identity and walks out of the house with her table player-Ghulam Saab in order to realize her dreams she faces a numbers of hardships and humiliation and even gives birth to a daughter out of
wedlock. And again in order to be the disciple of Pundit Kashinath Buwa, she undergoes a number of hardships, gradually all her efforts starts to bear the fruits, ultimately making her into a professional singer and then became the great artist in classical vocal world of music. In Jain’s telling comment: “Gender roles are defined and adopted for reasons of utility and security. That is why women sew buttons and clean floors, cook food and bear children so that they can be “useful.” (Gendered Realities, Human Spaces, p.318)

In Small Remedies Savitribai proved that the woman with a strong sense of the self-will can find herself up against the granite wall of a community that forces her to first qualify as someone useful. She is almost like a male in razing down conventional emotions, in cutting through domestic fetters and in using people who come her way for her own ends. Savitribai is a milestone in the portrayal of women. She also trains her devoted transcend over religious factions by singing the Devi Stotra in a temple. Bai’s success does not make her a self-realized person, for she has to attain her lost respectability. She is a woman who’d left her husband’s home.

Even towards the end of her life, Bai struggles to find her identity by ignoring a great part of her life. But to a biographer, the real Bai remains elusive even to her own self.

Munni being illegitimate child to Savitribai and Ghulam Saab remains alienated right from her childhood because of her parent’s unusual relationship. The fact was that her mother was a Brahmin and was living with a Muslim man made a misfit in the society, Somehow, Munni denies Ghulam Saab as her father and says that her real father, Savitribai’s husband, is in Pune, Munni grows up denying to herself and to others that Ghulam Saab was her father. Her assertion was “My name is Meenakshi” or “He’s not my father” My father is in Pune, He’s not here”. (pp.31-32)

Munni strongly tries to detach herself from the illegitimacy of her parent’s relationship and attempt to disown her own father, in vain. She dislikes Ghulam Saab openly and tells Madhu that her father is in Pune, in Shukurwar Path, that he is a lawyer, a very famous one and earns a lot of money; thousands of rupees Ghulam Saab, she tells her, was only a tabla player for her mother. Creating her own imaginary relations, Munni strives to attain the life and identity of a respectable
family, which Bai had rejected. Munni starts living in a life of illusion and creates stories to convince others of her life separate from Bai and her lover.

To her, Bai and her life style meant disgrace. Therefore she openly rejects it and tries, to cut herself from it. All her life, Munni strugglers and tries a lot not to look like her father and not to sing like her mother Munni’s childhood is spent in her total efforts to attain a respectable status and somehow, she even succeeds in doing so. With all struggles Munni succeeds in getting accepted by Bai’s in-laws, gets married and becomes a common middle-class woman named Shailaja Joshi. At last she achieves the identity she had striven to attain. As Madhu feels: “Fighting with her back to the wall for the identity she wanted to have, the one she claimed finally, successfully denying her old one Shailaja Joshi a long way from Munni, daughter of Savitribai and Ghulam Saab”. (p.77)

Munni had rejected everything associated with her mother-music, genius, ambition and freedom, but her identity laid only in being an ordinary woman belonging to respectable family. Madhav learns from Munni’s search for identity. The illegitimacy of her birth catches up with her. Munni in spite of her determination fails to attain self realization in spite of accepting her true self, she denies the truth of her birth, her identity given by her parents, therefore, she leads towards a life of illusion and deception where she fails, and as in death her identity claims her.

The novelist gives a new dimension or ambition, which leads to revolt against tradition. She stresses that affirmation means not shrinking ones duties and responsibilities: rather, it is fulfilling these with courage. Leela, Madhu’s aunt, was a confident woman, well aware of her needs. Right from her childhood days, she had a great inclination towards studies; because she did not show any interest in the domestic chores. She was considered to e a rebel, and as a punishment, was married to a man of low income group. Her grandmother’s punishments turned out to be a blessing, for her husband encouraged her to study and she got through her metric examination.

But, her husband suffered from T.B. he suffered a lot and died at an early age. Her husband’s death strengthened her resolve to be independent and answer her callings. It gave her a definite direction and purpose, as she has to support her young
brother-in-law and her suffering mother-in-law. She feels them as her responsibility, and hence refuses to return to her parent’s house. Her decision of staying in her husband’s house cuts her relations with her own family, it is only her determination and strength wakes her successfully, she takes up a teaching career and supports her-in-laws. Leela’s awareness of her responsibility towards her in-laws and her desire to fulfil it and not run away from it, but, turns her revolt into affirmation.

All her life Leela fulfills the desires of her true self irrespective of the limitations of traditions. Leela, was a strong personality, she was aware of her needs and the goals, she had been aspiring for. She fought against all odds and restrictions to achieve them. She was a social worker and nursed T.B. Patients She even plunged into the Quit India movement during the freedom struggle and went to jail several times. After independence she protested against the price hikes. In her personal life too she was a rebel. Though, she being a Brahmin widow revolted against tradition and to love a Christian and married him after fifteen years. Leela had to wait for so many years to marry Joe because she wanted Joe’s daughters Pavla’s permission, but Pavla did not agree for it. Joe and Leela’s belief in each other and the love they shared made them marry in spite of Pavla’s objection.

In spite of the barriers of caste, religion, tradition, language, lifestyle and a hostile child, they found fulfilment in each other. But after his death, she lost a little, disturbed a lot. She became a more understanding person and understood Madhu’s need live alone, in the hostel during holidays, or her desire to work and live independently. However, it is Leela, all her life she had striven to attain various demands of self and her persistent pursuit of their eventually earns her happiness and contentment. The novelist prefers knowledge, understanding and projection of the self Heideggers in *Being and Time* says: “There is projection of the self, of existence of understanding of possibilities, of meaning, of a world, of nature as well as projection upon possibilities, upon meaning, upon the world, to name only some of the more common, occurrences”. (qtd. In Macquarrie and Robinson, 1962)

Shahs Deshpande makes honesty an important tool in the quest for self and projects Bai and Munni as Failures due to their denial of a certain part of their lives. Madhu and Leela’s ability to accept the facts of their life, achieves them success in their quest. But what forms the crux of the novel is the fact that we experiences of
Bai, Munni and Leela, but she alone has to find her identity by understanding her life. The novel shows complexity and myriad feelings—love, courage, honesty, truth, trust and death, the pain associated with death, music and the power. It highlights the complexity of past and present, in which the word chronology has no meaning, Madhu, reflecting Shah’s Deshpande’s own thoughts, feels that writing Savitribai’s history would be easy if Time is the only connecting factor. But, see says.

“Can’t do this. No one can. We don’t live our lives this way; we don’t see our lives this way. We see our lives through memory and memories are fractured, almost always cutting across time.” (p.165)

Indu in *Roots and Shadows* becomes the liberal figure who initiates the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change and also becomes the bearer of hybrid identity. In the moment of the liberal struggle, she destroys the continuities and constancies of the ‘house’ and its traditions which provided a safeguard against secularism and egalitarianism. And, above all, through her own example, she asserts that the liberation is an unending but positive struggle.

In all her novels there is emphasis on self-assertion in various ways, such as by becoming more communicative’ studying the great women of the Past, devoting oneself to one’s profession, realizing one’s innermost self, taking one’s role in life seriously. The writer of the essay *Explanation and Cultural Marginalia* says : “I am beginning to think of the concept metaphor of margins more and more in terms of the history of margins: the place for the argument, the place for the critical moment, the place of interests for assertions rather than a shifting of the centre”. (Spivak p.68)

In the broader sense and focused discussion of considering the novels of Shashi Deshpande *A Matter of Time* is another best example and it is found how the protagonist in the novel decolonizes patriarchy and appropriates her marginality. Sumi is the protagonist of this novel. She is different from the protagonists of the novels in the first category in that, unlike them, she is not affected by crisis. The novel opens with Gopal’s walking out on Sumi, but she takes it with surprising equanimity. One can understand this if one compare Kalyani’s, Aru’s and Sumi’s visit to Gopal. The first urges him to resume his normal life. Aru at first solicits and then decides to take recourse to the law, but Sumi is with Gopal, not deliberately but
accidentally, and only for a brief while. And even in this short visit they do not talk about Gopal’s desertion.

Sumi’s life after Gopal’s walking out on her is not that of a traumatized person. In fact Kalyani, Premi, Charu and Aru are more traumatized than her. Sumi, on the other hand, not only takes quick decision but also executes them. She first vacates the house and then gradually learns to drive a scooter, looks for a house so that she need not be a burden on her parents, takes up a job, and then even writes a play for children! Like the protagonists of the novels in the first category, she is not reduced to a weeping child who has lost its way.

What is the significance of her resolve? It is through action that she decolonizes the patriarchy; her act of creative writing shows that she can also correct her marginality. Another reason for her equanimity is that she is not interested merely in the outward form, but in the inner spirit. Gopal’s decision to walk out on her is enough for her to understand that they cannot get along; she does not find it necessary to question him any further or impose her on him. Similarly, she does not want Gopal to stick to his job only for the sake of money.

Another divergence from the earlier novels is that in *A Matter of Time*, men are portrayed with sympathy and sensitivity. Although Gopal walks out on Sumi, he does not intend to punish her. He is a sharp contrast to Shripati other male character in the same novel who tortures Kalyani. Men in the earlier novels are callous and insensitive. Manohar in *The Dark Holds no Terrors* becomes a sadist when his wife outshines him. The husbands of Akka and Mira in *The Binding Vine* are perverts. Mohan in *That Long Silence* is extremely self-centred and insensitive to others; so is Jayant. But Gopal, with his sensitivity, knowledge, and maturity is far ahead of all his counterparts. In the earlier group of novels, men impose themselves on women. But the relations between Sumi and Gopal are full of emotional warmth, understanding and harmony. When they go out after marriage and Sumi gets tired, Gopal lets her rest. The next day she is refreshed and cheerful.

Thus, the other protagonists decide to create order out of disorder. Sumi actually does so. For that matter there are many incidents from many writers, for instance Virginia Woolf. Virginia Woolf writing in the early twentieth century can be
considered as one of Shashi Deshpande’s literary inspirations. Woolf too wrote about women who strive towards the attainment of an identity for the self to assert their control on their lives. For instance, Mrs. Dalloway’s successful party at the end of *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) reflects her success at being able to ‘assemble’ herself.

Moreover, the stream-of-consciousness mode that Woolf wrote in is also used by Shahs Deshpande, which interestingly, in the case of *That Long Silence*, also structurally reflects upon the loss of control in the woman's life through the back-and-forth narrative technique against linearity. But the women’s movements in the West having advanced much more than in a place like India which lag behind even today as studies like *Women’s Issues in India: An Overview shows*, one cannot see the simultaneous ‘revealing and concealing’ that occurs in a writer like Shahs Deshpande, in Woolf’s writings. Woolf too resorts to a ‘rhetoric of silence’ in her heroines’ words like Shahs Deshpande does, but her message is not ‘muted’ like Shahs Deshpande’s is:

“The point to note is that Andro-centric methodology cannot use the Western feminist base of binary, male-female gender hostility... Not wanting to destroy her relationship with the community, [the woman] desires change which is critical for herself yet non-dramatic to the public gaze ... This is a subterfuge, a troupe of mild rebellion particular to Indian writing ...” (Malashri Lal p.28).

However, there is nothing suppressed about this rebellion: “This covert action is not less radical than an overthrow of the system; it is often more courageous to conform on the surface while devising resistances from within accepted institutional, such as marital frameworks.”(p.159)

Thus, women’s issues are tackled within the private sphere of the ‘home’ so that they do not acquire a mass character by mobilizing the strength of women collectively.
To come back to Jaya’s decision to return to her husband, it draws attention to a fact that the writer had raised at the beginning of the novel: “Nor am I writing a story of a callous, insensitive husband and a sensitive, suffering wife. I am writing of us. Mohan and me” (p.1). Jaya’s ultimate realization of life being made possible by effort is arrived at through a critical consideration of her position vis-à-vis the ‘other’ - Mohan - and she decides to continue in the same strain.

She realizes that she and Mohan might not after all be only ‘two bullocks yoked together’: “But in this life itself there are so many crossovers, so many choices.”(p.192). Self-introspection leads her to confess that she is not really a ‘trodden worm’. She accepts that she cannot really be the heroine of her story. She also learns to face the possibility of failing, the aversion of which Kamat had rebuked her for. So she learns not only to assert herself but also to accept herself for what she is, in other words, ‘to own up’ to her faults as well.

Therefore, if one were to try placing the position of Shashi Deshpande’s stance within her entire oeuvre, That Long Silence represents, perhaps a more mature understanding of the position of women than her earliest novel, The Dark Holds No Terrors. For, whereas Saru in the earlier novel sees her personal life going to shreds, Jaya has at least decided upon a strategy to adopt in order to improve her position. That Long Silence is actually a book where Jaya converses with herself throughout the book and in the process, is able to purge herself of the ghosts of inhibition. This understanding is replicated as provisional in the much later novel Small Remedies, where Madhu is again convulsed with self-loathing. But what marks That Long Silence as a pivotal development in Shashi Deshpande’s vision, is the fact that here the author was able to move towards a hopeful, positive assertion in the character of Jaya.

In the patriarchy, men come to assume the dominative, while women come to assume the dominated mode. These two modes are like a hanging balance in which one side is up and the other down. Shahs Deshpande suggests that because women prefer to remain silent about their condition, men begin to assume the dominative mode, which finally results in the domination of women. New Woman doesn’t refuse to react to this domination; she is rebelling either through speech or action, and breaking the silence evermore. She is shedding her feelings of passivity, inactivity, fear, escapism, the inability to communicate and so on.
Certainly Jaya is not an adolescent to think that things will change overnight. She is completely conscious of how difficult it is to transform oneself. But she hopes to change through her conscious efforts over a period of time. Thus the novel is about the significance of fearless and meaningful communiqué that can help us to unlearn the inherent dominated mode. Edward Said has said that the new way of dealing with the Orient could eliminate the Orient and the ‘Occident’ altogether. It may now be inferred that the new ways of communicating and erasing the silence might eliminate the ‘dominative’ and the ‘dominated.’ This is precisely what Shahr Deshpande suggests in That Long Silence.

Furthermore the most significant novel in the literary canon of Shashi Deshpande is ‘Moving On’

‘Moving On’ moves us in unexpected ways – (The Hindu, August-09, 2004.)

Asked to imagine a woman, most of us would probably see a woman in her role as a daughter, a sister, a friend, a wife, a lover her intellectual self may not be of significance-(The Tribune-September-19, 2004 Rajdeep Bains.)

The fictional world of women novelists today, has a wider range, than the limited social one presented by their predecessors. Today, the women characters do not merely conform to male expectations or conflict with the male world. The woman writer has to decide for herself how far she wants to de-romanticize the image created by men and also how to use her anger and resentment towards positive ends.

Shashi Deshpande on one occasion says that all the stories that have ever been told are the stories of families from Adam and Eve onward. She further says, “Each novel is a voyage of discovery for me, a discovery of me, of other humans, of our universe”. She has written Moving on, a novel of great strength and intensity in which her involvement comes through. It is almost as if she has submerged herself in her protagonist. Her ease with the medium she writes in makes the book a treat. Shashi Deshpande’s forte lies in telling a story as it is, says Deepa Alexander in Literary Review:
“When asked to what extent her works are autobiographical Deshpande says, some personal experiences do enter every novel. It is incidental and my thoughts were explored more in my first few novels”. (The Hindu, 5th Sep 2005.)

In the Opening the novel is so intriguing with Baba’s diary, and gradually Manjari is introduced, remembering her old home, her dead parents. She is a young woman, thirty-five plus, a prematurely widowed, she is left alone, parents are now dead and her grownup children are away; left alone with her own world and her own sexuality. Manjari, along with narration, is also a reader, for she reads her father's diary, she visits her parents past and wonderfully discovers the hidden twists and curves of their lives. Manjari is not an affectionate reader of her father’s diary, but a critical reader; she knows very well, that, any act of violation is a means of gaining access to alternative knowledge.

Manjari being entangled in the past cannot easily unshackle herself and to move on, for her own experience, was similar to the experience of others. The real and imaginary gets mixed up and challenge the idea of autonomy. To become autonomous is a problematic one, but Manjari, a rebellious daughter and having tried at some point in her life, to be on her own, can be seen as a radical feminist. Shashi Deshpande has been making a conscious effort, to show in most of her writings, that feminism's exclusivist predicament often does not work. But she revises this predicament and says in her essay why I am a feminist:

“…..I believe that Nature, when conferring its gifts on humans, did not differentiate between males and females, except for the single purpose of procreation. I believe that motherhood does not bar everything else, but motherhood is a bonus, an extra bonus that women are privileged to have will the antifeminists deny all this? (Deshpande p.83)”

The novelist does not protest too much when she declares in an article titled “Writing from the Margin”: She says, “When I sit down to write I am just a writer-my gender ceases to matter to me. I am concerned with the same problems of language, narrative, structure and continuity”. In Moving On, She has left behind the
raw anger of her earlier works like *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *That Long Silence* and *Roots and Shadows*, and presented with a much more mellowed work, as if she herself has moved on to other; Softer, forms of Writing.

The novel *Moving On* also projects the protagonist Manjari as a woman who resists the patriarchal ideology and tries to live her life on her own terms. The novel exhibits amply our perception of the other, not in the outside social space of gender and caste hierarchies, but within the limited space of the family, where in the drama of superiority and inferiority is played daily. She displays enormous courage and steadfastness in her decision to give up studying medicine to marry Shyam, and again during such trying moments when it is revealed that her own younger sister Malu is made pregnant by her husband.

Manjari experiences trauma when Malu dies after giving birth to Sachi, followed by Shyam’s suicide, poor Manjari has to face a painful period of struggle and strain. Estranged from family, living among strangers, she grapples with a number of difficulties to support herself and her baby son. She turns down Raja's repeated proposals to marry him because she thinks that marriage without the foundation of love and only as a means of social security for a single woman is not acceptable to her: “I had no time to brood or grieve. It was down to the basics, work, eat, sleep, wake up, and go back to work”. (p.213)

Manjari decides to face life alone, without anybody’s support either morally or financially. When she hears about her mother’s death, she comes back to her father. She has outgrown all kinds of hesitations. She drinks openly in front of her father and in the company of her cousin Raja. She is too familiar with slices of her body to feel erotically aroused, for they grew up together.

Since, she firmly decides not to get into marriage again, neither persuasion nor other considerations—physical, financial, emotional can prevail on her. She learns to drive her car and even runs it as a taxi, by installing and operating a computer at home and typing out the manuscripts for others, as a means of self employment when she fails to get a satisfying job she really shocks Raja, who is the upholder of patriarchal norms. She faces real test of her life when, she has been visited by strangers and receives anonymous phone calls from the mafia underworld. “We don't
want to hurt you, but...’ There is a pause before he adds, ‘You’re a woman, don’t forget that.’ I realize this is a threat to my body. By pointing out my femaleness, they are warning me of my greater vulnerability”. (p.167)

A lot of mental pressure is put on and forced her to sell out her ancestral house. She is physically assaulted on ignoring the threats, almost on the verge of rape, only to sell the house. She becomes more obdurate and decides to stay and fight, she doesn’t listen to Raja's concern and his advice, and refuses to succumb to the pressures either from the mafia world or from Raja, her cousin: “This is what they want they’re trying to reduce me to this shivering cowardly mass of fear. I won’t be scared”.(p.167) When she is threatened by the mafia underworld and subject her to psychological pressure, and then, coerce her to sell out her ancestral home, Manjari disapproves Raja’s role of the protecting, male in her life saying, “I want the brakes under my feet not some One else's I don't want a dual control, the control showed by mine, mine alone”. (p.88)

And later she dismisses the driver, telling him that she is capable of looking after herself Manjari’s struggle for freedom and for being autonomous is tentatively a challenge to patriarchy, not confronting it headlong but in discovering one’s own strength as a woman. Her both children, want her to marry her cousin Raja, for she had become a widow, when she was hardly twenty-one years, but she refuses her children’s desire by saying that, “She feels she has gone too far, from where she can’t go back”.(p.191)

It is seen and understood that self is never free. Thus the question of selfhood and autonomy becomes problematic issue in the novel. Manjari, in her many acts of violation, has sought freedom, and autonomy. Living all alone, can she find freedom? Can she live of her own volition? These questions are not only posed to Manjari, and as an individual and as a woman, but to the central to the predicament of feminism as well as to all humanity. The book Individual Autonomy and Self Realization-Writing Difference defines:

“The term ‘autonomy’ has been defined differently in different fields and has different meaning for different women, the conceptual thread, that binds them all is the idea of self-
determination—the right of all women to make individual life choices freely and independently without any form of external influence, in a self-reliant manner, within the constraints of what one regards as morally permissible.” (Chanchala p.20).

Autonomy means a condition of self-governance, the right to self-rule. The individual has to be bona fide and free and self-reflection to have self-governance. The struggle for autonomy is still vital for women, as an ideal to be achieved. And the theme of autonomy, self-hood and self-realization, still is an integral part of contemporary feminist writing. In all most all societies, a woman is culturally assigned the norms of behavior, in which standards of conduct, taste and decorum, set the limitation for her as external signs of seemingly proper and respectable within the differentiated hierarchy called Gender. If, at all, a woman deviates from the set norms or any display of transgressive potential in violation to the ideal image of womanhood, makes her an unruly woman and outcaste by the society. As Bartky points out, that she is in such a situation that, though she is free and autonomous being, finds her in a world where she is compelled by man to assume the status of an interior to whatever man imagines him to be:

“Women are bound to their oppression by male control of the dominant institutions and the dominant ideology, by women's lack of solidarity with one another, by the biological necessity that requires coupling, by the very antiquity of oppressive arrangements that make them appear natural, hence unalterable and sometimes by woman complicity.” (Body Polotics. A Companion to Feminist Philosophy, p.85).

Hence, in order both to gain equality and to realize their human potential, women must transcend their distinctive femaleness to lead the kind of life men do, in other words, they must be autonomous. Beauvoir exhorts women, “to achieve autonomy, to discover and nurture their authentic self through lived experience for self-realization”.
Manjari negotiates many opposed discourses and moves forward in a quest to know who and what she is. Shashi Deshpande in her essay *why I am a feminist*, makes it clear, that to be feminist, is to accept one’s womanhood as a positive gift and not as lack, different or inferior. Feminism is not anti-men but to achieve, a better, a more meaningful and companionable relationship between man and woman, as against the conventional, sacrificial models of relationship. Women can fulfill themselves only if they are not oppressed.

Shashi Deshpande manifestly points out that she promises for relational autonomy for women, instead of being economically, emotionally and psychologically dependent on men, they would independently nourish ambitions and pursue goals for self-fulfillment. In this changing world, it has become essential to do away with separate domains for women and men to redefine man-woman relationship as equal and complimentary and not on terms of domination and subordination. For Shashi Deshpande, “A world without frightened, dependent, trapped, frustrated women is a better world for all of us to live in” (*why I am a feminist-Writing From The Margin*, p.85).

At the very outset Shashi Deshpande’s novels have specific, modernizing women even in their traditional milieu. Critics have said that *Moving On* will widen women’s space. Manjari challenges the essentialized notion of female identity as male fabrication and leaves the door open for social and cultural change. But on the other hand in the novel, the bonding among women does not take place as one finds that Mai, Malu, Manjari, Gayatri and Suchi contexts. In the book *Moving on: Individual Autonomy and Self Realization Writing Difference by Chanchala Naik*. Relational feminists argue that:

“The concept of the independent, autonomous, impersonal self represses the reality of our situations and dependence upon relationships, the normative ideal of the separate and autonomous self of woman betrays a “Masculine Denial” or repression of the original relationship with and dependence upon the mother. ... Relational autonomy focuses on ‘female’s experience’ and as a concept is a mediary between the assertion and rejection of the ideal of autonomy.” (Chanchala, 2005)
In this context another novel of Shashi Deshpande by the name *In The Country of Deceit* has to be expounded. It brings credit to the author as one of the best writers of fiction in India. With her enchanted stick of imaginative conceptual power, she presents human interaction comprehensively in a new light what often was said but never so well expressed. Through the novel, she depicts a theme that speaks about the myriad feelings of love. This is a love story which explores the slimy, faithless environment that love takes people into.

The demolition of the family house induces sentiments. Symbolically, this autumnal decay is followed by sense of a rebirth, a fresh beginning, and a season of renewal which adds new colors to the central character Devayani Mudhol. Devayani chooses to live alone in the small town Rajnur after her parents’ death, ignoring the gently voiced disapproval of her family and friends. Teaching English, creating a garden and making friends with Rani, a former actress who settles in the town with her husband and three children. Devayani’s life is tranquil, imbued with a hard-won independence. Then she meets Ashok Chinappa, Rajnur’s New District Superintendent of Police, and they fall in love despite the fact that Ashok is much older, married, and as both painfully acknowledge from the very beginning about the relationship without a future.

Devayani, as a, “New Woman” shows patience, courage and pleasing spirit to face the ensuing problems in life. Through her protagonist, the novelist depicts the fact that one must understand the meaning of life and learn how to face it. She gives Devayani a new perception of life by making her more compassionate and tolerant of human frailty. Devayani challenges all the suggestions given to her by her kith and kin from time to time. Her new novel creates a surprise one never knows what’s coming and where it’s coming from. *In the Country of Deceit* has been a surprise for two other reasons. First, generally, once a novel is executed, the characters withdraw gracefully, making room for other people but Devayani, a character in an early novel *Come Up and Be Dead*, lingered. The second surprise is that this is a love story.

The novelist exposes the delicate procedure of oppression and gender differentiation exists within the institution of the family and the male-centered Indian society at large. Her feminism does not mean to uproot the woman from her background but to expose the different ideological elements that shape her. These
include communal and emotional factors such as woman’s subordinate position in the family and her restricted sexuality. The author does her best to expose the traditional bound philosophy by which a woman is trained to play her submissive role in society.

In her conversation with Gita Viswanath, Shashi Deshpande opines that “we are shaped by our childhood and our parents”. (Writing Difference: The Novels of Shashi Deshpande, p.229) The society’s views about Indian women and their behavioral patterns are inscribed and pre-determined by the caste into which one is born. The values and traditions of a culture that upholds archetypal images of woman are imposed on the feminity.

Shashi Deshpande’s In the Country of Deceit begins on an autumnal note, with the demolition of a family house. Devayani and her sister Savi looking at the empty space where once the house of their childhood was. The new house is a complete reversal of the old house; it is large, spacious, filled with light. When there is dark still there is silver line which symbolizes hope. Although it is true that seeing the end of anything is painful but the demolition of the old house was not painful for both of them. Devayani quotes that ‘this was not an end, but a beginning.’ (p.3)

This kind of kindled fraction of idea is followed by the sense of a fresh start, and a season of renewal and what this new season holds in store for Devayani, the narrator, a young, single woman who lives on her own in a small town called Rajnur, is just recovering from the loss of her mother who had died from long illness. The old house has been pulled down, the new one designed by the architect-sister, its construction supervised so that it will give most satisfaction to its new inhabitant, Devayani, the female protagonist. She explains that “I felt as if I was waiting for the curtain to go up, waiting for something to happen”. (p.8)

Devi, the protagonist starts life anew, with the modern house and sheds her conservative outlook on life. This alteration comes with the arrival of Rani, a retired actress and Ashok, a police officer into Devyani’s life. Devyani has a brush with the filmdom given Rani’s persistence as Rani makes a last ditch effort to court the camera. A complete reversal of the old house was the happiest moment for Savi also. While she returns with her doctor husband and children to Delhi, Devayani moves into the new house, happy to remain in their hometown Rajnur. She spreading her arms wide and said that she had done that. Devayani says:
“... For her this was a new beginning. She was suddenly watching up with her life, with all that she had given up when Arjun was born. Both birth and death make you take your eyes off the clock. Time comes to a standstill: the hands of the clock cease to move. For Savi it was the birth of her two children, for me, my mother's dying. Two years when I did nothing but watch her struggle to breathe, fearful that at any moment she would stop and it would be over. ...Now time had begun moving once again for both of us”. (p.5)

Basically satisfaction, gratification of desire, fulfillment and not deferral, will be one of the two main lines of movement of this novel. As Devayani thinks: “I want a needlepoint of extreme happiness; I want a moment in my life which will make me feel I am touching the sky (p.25)”. An extended discourse on desire the discourse unfolding itself on the one hand through Devi’s experiences of her body and on the other through her aunt. Sindhu's letter in which she reveals her own life and though at first inadvertently comments on or complements on Devi’s experiences. Sindhu told her predicament and shares her experience with Devi through her letter and try to convince her for marriage. She writes that, “Life is lived through the body (p.41)”. She continues “the body is important, and so are the demands of the body. ...your natural desires will be with you for many more years”. (p.42)

The narrator, Devayani Mudhol, a woman almost twenty seven years of age, freed to live alone by her father and then by her mother in a new house, her own life, a state of being that she isn’t quite used to. She spends her time teaching English and caring for her garden. Her relatives live in the US and also in other cities of India. Her life is tranquil, filled with a hard won independence. As she starts to deal with life on her own terms, she discovers that there is more to her than just tradition and submission; she flirts metaphorically with the film industry, courtesy of the retired actress Rani, whom she has befriended. She is very rich and beautiful ex-film actress, who is married to a rich man, her second husband and three children, has moved back to India from the US. “They built an enormous, beautiful, and luxurious house and live there with her children.” Rani has a degree in law but she teaches English to some children privately.
Devayani falls in love with Ashok, a police officer who is older and married, with a ten year-old daughter, and they unexpectedly embark on a passionate affair. He develops a habit of calling her up in the middle of the night and engaging in a somewhat strange combination of heavy breathing and existentialist conversation. Savi, her sister who opposes it but Devi ignores and gets what she longs for i.e, the physical desire and its gratification through sex/ sexual love. Her feeling ranges from pleasure and passion, even lust, to joy, bliss and ecstasy. Sindhu who, early in the novel, uses the Sanskrit word Ananda for ecstasy, linking it, as the Upanishads do, to the generating organ as the centre of all pleasure, Considering the range of experiences that have come to her, Devi says:

“Nobody, but nobody has the words for what sex with your beloved is like. It's the same with music. You have to hear it, you can’t describe it. “You want sex,” Savi (her sister) had said, cruelly, savagely, deliberately trying to shock me....Bliss. And he could give it to me with a touch, with a wod. It was this man, not the sex. This man’s love, not the sex. And yet, the sex too”.

(p.93)

Rani’s mind is quietly lost in thought with memories of her film career as she thinks Devayani a wonderful character; smart, considerate, and formidably demure. Devayani had been the accompanist to other people’s lives but her own life is still alienated. As she contemplates that first she had a follower of her spirited, beautiful older sister, then in charge of parents’ lives and for a brief while she had acted for her cousin Kshama’s helper and later she had been Sindhu’s attendant after surgery. Now for the first time, she had to play solo. She had no one else to look after, no one to think about.

Shashi Deshpande has an amazing skill in portraying inner psychology to build a tale of beauty rather than cheating. Promises of a durable relation are neither made nor expected. In being together, the lovers find tenderness and understanding; apart, they do not exist in each other’s functional world. Their ecstasy outweighs the pain of separation. The novel exquisitely captures fragile relations. Adultery is an ugly word that has been stripped of its ugliness. The Novel
signals to a larger entity but Shashi Deshpande doesn’t think of it as big or small. She knows that love is a basic and universal human emotion, so is the pain that comes on betrayal. She finds it a problem that divides novels into big and small.

It is easy to go in but tough to come out. Generally love is considered to be simple but really it is very complicated. The novel tells about the beauty, simplicity but also complication of love. For Devayani, her meeting with Ashok is natural, beautiful and yet very mysterious. Who can reveal the mystery of love? Devayani welcomes Ashok as a reality of her life, to enjoy the body of Ashok and her own body. For her, it is more than sex; she deserves to enjoy the beauty, sacredness, and sweet taste of love.

She walks on the wild side with her relationship with Ashok and that is the pivot of the story. She also realizes that her love with Ashok is temporary and in the end the novel peters out to an expected end without much bother. She has to come to a bitter decision to be apart from him. However wrong she has gone with Ashok, she keeps him in her memory:

“Pictures will remain intact in my memory. Pictures of Ashok’s face looking at me, loving, wanting, enjoying me, Ashok kneeling before me, his face humble, supplicating, Ashok on the beach, holding out his arms out to me, Ashok folding me in his arms Must I forget his tenderness, the gentleness of his touch, the urgency of his passion. No, I don’t want to forget, I want to remember; it is not remembering but forgetting that will be my greatest enemy. It is what my life is going to be like from now on - a constant struggle between trying to forget and wanting to remember?” (pp.258-259)

More often than not when people are separated in love, they will try to forget, but Devayani tries hard not to forget. The novel does not tell us about Devayani and Ashok, but includes other problems and people like Sindhu, Shree and Kshama who appear in their letters that build the novel into a beautiful and memorable experience. When Shashi Deshpande was asked, “Is the quality of love different in adolescent, youth and maturity?” She replied that:
“It is very difficult to distinguish love according to the level of mental maturity. A sixty years old man or a woman can fall in love and behave like a child. People realize the true meaning of love only when they fall in love. My novel is about adult love. The first thing the man tries to tell the woman is that I promise you nothing. But I stand outside your gate and cannot get you out of my mind. I think that's the real sign of love”. (The Hindu, Jan-17, 2009)

Ashok Chinnappa is in a highly visible post in this small town where everyone knows everyone else; Devayani is unmarried and lives alone. Yet there is a desperate madness in their relationship. They meet furtively but repeatedly: in the car, in a friend’s house, even in her house one rainy night. Devayani feels that there is something sordid about meeting like this; but she cannot end it as both painfully acknowledge from the very beginning older- it is a relationship without a future. She says silently in response to admonishments from her family. “There are no boundaries for love (p.199)”

According to Shashi Deshpande relationships are not something one decides on. They happen naturally, especially, adult relationships, and one must know what the consequences are and take responsibility for it. It is very difficult to judge if adult love is good or bad. Human beings always crave for love, even in death a dying man wants to hold someone's hands. Love and relationships stir the storyteller in her. Shashi Deshpande tells about the relationship in her new novel In the Country of Deceit which has just got the familiarity:

“All my books are, about relationships - particularly the new one, which is about love between an adult man and an adult woman. Most of my novels emphasize love because I am fascinated by the idea of love. Devyani, the protagonist of my new book “In the Country of Deceit”, falls deeply and passionately in love”. (The Hindu, Jan-17, 2009)
Rumina Sethi says that Shashi Deshpande in her novels has described about the world of ordinary woman. These are women who live a humdrum existence, mainly jobless, surrounded by children. She highlights her views:

“What struck me repeatedly while reading In the Country of Deceit was the enormous line Shashi Deshpande has with Jane Austen. Both writers come from a completely different space and me but that little phrase I learnt in college while studying Austen has strangely remained in my memory: “little bit of ivory, two inches wide”. It seems appropriate in describing Deshpande’s world too. For, Deshpande’s novels are about the ordinary lives of women, too ordinary I might add”. [http://blogs.thehindu.com.delhi, p.5351.]

Like Jane Austen again, Shashi Deshpande’s novels are inhabited by many characters, all of whom are related to the central character. Uncles, aunts, cousins and friends-Sindhu, Keshav, Savi, Shree, Gundu, Asha, Tara, Kshama, Rani and, of course, Ashok, the married man Devayani eventually falls in love with. She becomes Ashok’s mistress-his “girl”- and begins her long journey of guilt in the “country of deceit”. Ashok is the stock Mills-and Boon hero, tough but tender, whom Devayani typically resists but soon he becomes her “sun, moon and stars”. He visits her surreptitiously and showers her with love and passionate embraces, but Devayani cannot accept the role of a “whore” or a “floozy”. She blurs out: “I must stop this. We can’t go on. We must stop. I will stop, I won't go on with this, I must tell Ashok I Can't go on, I will tell him it’s over,” (p.162).

The above utterance of Devayani is a sample of the anguished expression of a woman in love with another woman’s husband or an emotional outburst straight out of a Bollywood film? Torment will be torment in both literature and in commercial cinema, but somehow one expects interpretation in literature to belong to another plane. It is vexed through the rest of the novel which assumes a recriminatory tone as Devayani’s sister and brother-in-law try to recover the “Devi (they) know”, urging her to choose between a clandestine affair and the respectable option. They expound her that she can have loyalty only through an honorable marriage. How can she expect a man who is disloyal to his wife and his marriage to be loyal to her? Devayani’s
relationship with Ashok pulls her out of the warm circle of love given to her in kind
doses by her aunts, uncles and siblings which becomes conditional once they discover
her wrongdoing.

Here the novelist deliberately projects Hindu Women who make open revolt
against tradition, customs and male domination. Shashi Deshpande’s women blame
the duality and dubiousness of the moral standards that prevail in India. Woman’s
social fears and fear of failure and victimization are explored deeply in the novels of
Shashi Deshpande. She in her novels has attempted to portray various faces of Indian
womanhood and how ordinary Hindu woman go through the ordeals of their daily
lives. She focuses on how the ‘Man made manacles’ make their lives miserable. Her
message is that in order to improve the living condition of women in India, woman
themselves should make attempts to stand on their feet by getting educated and
employed.

The protagonists in the earlier group of novels decide to alter their relationship
with the persons they live with. But these later women break old bonds and develop
new ones; they do not try to run away from commitment. A bourgeois world of moral
and ethical values in which Devayani has to distinguish between right and wrong is
exposed. She does break off with Ashok finally but it is not clear whether it is a result
of feeling cheap or because he does, not tells her that he has been posted out of
Rajnur. The narrator tells of her love story only on the last but one page of the novel
when Devayani faces the reality of life and remorse on what she had done without the
consent of the family members:

“Why did I do it? Why did I enter the country of deceit? What
took me into it? I hesitate to use the word love, but what other
word is there? And yet, like the word atonement I kept hearing
in Kashma’s conversation. Though she never uttered it, the
word love is too simple for the complicated emotions and
responses that made me do what I had done. Ultimately, I did it
because he was Ashok, because we met. That's all. Our meeting-
it was a miracle, a disaster”. (p.257)
Like its forerunners, In the Country of Deceit is a carefully constructed and calibrated novel, its first-person narrator's voice and limited view finding their counterpoint in a series of letters, first and foremost those of her clear-sighted and candidly outspoken, admirable aunt Sindhu. It is mainly through these letters that Devi is forced to consider and reconsider her own position and come to her own decisions, and it is these two voices, Devi's and Sindhu’s, that contribute to the charm of the novel: “What does your Jane Austen say?” (p.27)

Indeed, what would Austen have said about a woman who so determinedly grasps her share of bliss? In her time, as Devi points out, there were only two options: marriage or spinsterhood, and she would have more than blushed, though not blanched, at Devi's daring act of self-fulfillment. Self-determination, however, truth to oneself, was paramount for Austen. And this she might have respected, had she lived to see more of the world. When all is said, and no more left to be done, Devi sums up: “I too had a moment, a very brief moment, when I raised my arms and my fingertips brushed the sky (p.259)” It brings back to her initial desire. It is roused by a scene she has witnessed earlier, after a football match, when a man raised his arms high above his head - in triumph. The man is Ashok, who will eventually become her lover.

If desire is one line of movement of this novel the second is betrayal or deceit as the title has it. Ashok is a married man, and again it is Sindhu, writing from her daughter’s home in the US, who points out and admits in her letter to Devayani that body is important and so are the demands of the body. She exhorts Devayani for marrying as she is young; her natural desire will be with her and also tells about the redundant costumes in patriarchal society particularly in India and says that “Our country does not allow women to fulfill these desires without marriage”. (pp.42-43)

Sindhu had in fact just met a man she thinks might be a suitable boy for her niece, and her husband, reminding Devi of her favorite author, “Jane Austen, bells in: Doesn’t every heroine get married at the end of the story? (p.27)” Devi is not convinced she says, “I know that Jane Austen believed in marriage, and that her heroines got their men at the end. But she believed in marriage with the right person. Why did she remain a spinster otherwise?” (p.28)
So Devi embarks on her relationship with a married man, undergoing, in due course, all the guilt and remorse to be expected from an innocent. Just as desire is spelt out in so many ways, so is deceit, the country of deceit being ‘our country’ just as much as that hidden, secret space that Devi now inhabits. While, though rare, Devi’s gratification of desire is not singular, deceit is universal, ranging from various forms of betrayal to adultery, but also from disloyalty to treachery and fraud.

It is the particular imbrications of desire and deceit that makes the novel so convincing pleasure. Nearly every other figure, and certainly the sub-plot around Rani, could tell a story of adultery (remember Sindhu’s early warning about sex out of wedlock). This kind of deceit is everywhere, in every class and segment of society, a constant reminder that it is most of the time women and families who suffer from it, that bliss is purchased at a high cost and that it will not last. *In the Country of Deceit* ends on a question mark which Devi puts: “Is this what my life is going to be like front now-a constant struggle between trying to forget and wanting to remember?” (p.259)

One of the sub-plots revolves around another kind of deceit, that of fraud. Like Jiji in *Moving On*, Devi comes under threat from the property mafia, though with less nasty consequences. On the contrary: Not only does the sub-plot, just like the one around Rani, serve to situate the main plot in a wider, socio-economic context, it also provides a glimpse of hope for Devi, of future fulfillment at least through professional activity. This glimpse of hope, however, does not make for a stale ending. Shashi Deshpande has never had pat solutions, no facile evasions for her female figures.

The ethical idea in itself is a dynamic idea that alters not only from time to time, but also from person to person. Shashi Deshpande’s *In the Country of Deceit* provides with the scrutiny of Indian society the stereotypes of the lonely Bollywood actress, the witty old aunt and the street child-turned-governess of two adorable, cherubic children, no far so well. But the Shashi Deshpande in this novel presents the intersection of varying lifestyles, presenting at the end their common condemnation of a universal crime beyond redemption and, one is left wondering- is it the crime of Love or that of Deceit?
But love, more often out of than in wedlock, has been a topic in Shashi Deshpande’s writing from its very beginning, though it has not been scrutinized to the extent *In the Country of Deceit* does. Love in all its exciting as well as its sordid aspects, has been in the foreground of so many Indian novels for so many years: In Shashi Deshpande novels it is part of a quest. Devi is one among Shahi Deshpande’s modern women trying to come to terms with themselves and their place in family and society; trying to reconcile their individual freedom to that of their ‘given’, which is not simply ‘culture’ or ‘society’ or class/caste, but also the freedom of others. All her figures reach their moment of epiphany that sets them on their arduous track towards crisis and resolution.

Brute force and great tenderness, here, are two aspects in a man who knows himself, who knows how little he fits into Devi’s world, and who yet is the only one to give her the “complicated emotions and responses that (make her) do what (she) had done Our meeting - it was a miracle, a disaster.” (p.257). In the context of the changing world we live in, it has become imperative to do away with separate domains for woman and man and to redefine man-woman relationship as equal and complementary and not on terms of domination and subordination.

One has to draw some tentative conclusions about Shashi Deshpande as a writer, and will naturally consider all her novels together and try to locate an underlying pattern in them. Besides these novels, one can also examine her occasional articles and interviews in literary periodicals. Lastly, one can make an attempt to show how Shashi Deshpande is different from other writers, and what exactly her unique contribution to literature is. If all her novels are taken together, it is found that Shashi Deshpande is obviously concerned with issues related to women. Not only all her protagonists are women but also the story is narrated from their point of view. It is only in one of her novels, *A Matter of Time* that she has shifted to the omniscient narration, but there too it is the women’s point of view that prevails.

As it would be seen, the protagonists of all her novels are middle-class educated women. Indu, a journalist, Jaya, a housewife and a creative writer, Saru, a doctor, Urmi, a college teacher, Sumi, though educated, takes up a job only later, while Devayani, a teacher and Manjari a script writer and taxi driver and women also making their entry in creative jobs. Shashi Deshpande thus seems to believe that it is
the educated and the creative woman who will liberate herself first and contribute
to women's liberation both actively as well as through her exemplary behavior.

While the lower-class working woman is handicapped for want of
education and economic opportunities, the upper-class woman is a slave to material
comforts for which she makes compromises. Besides, Shashi Deshpande’s stress is on
creativity rather than on anything else. Even though it has been recurrently barbed out
by Shashi Deshpande’s critics that she is a feminist writer, she herself says that she
writes about human beings only. In an interview given to Sue Dickman, she says:

‘And, number three, are you a feminist writer? And, number
four, if you’re a feminist writer, then why do your women…? People seem to think you are writing about women. I am writing
about Jaya. I am writing about Saru. I wrote about Sam, and
then Saru is over; and I am writing about Jaya, and then Jaya is
over; and then I am writing about Mira. Not women. And my
books particularly, I feel, get slotted as women's books, more
than anyone else’s. I don’t know why.(p.129)”

In the same interview she was asked whether this happened because the main
characters in her novels are all strong women. She replied that women should not be
judged merely as women and that she is happy that readers are able to relate
themselves to her characters. But she also says that there is nothing wrong in being
called a feminist writer. She says:

“Because by saying so you’re saying there’s something wrong
with being a woman writer, something inferior or subordinate in
being called a woman writer. So I don't want to do that either. I
am a woman, and I write about women, and I am going to say it
loudly. I don't want to disassociate myself which is like saying,
‘Look, that's an inferior kind of a club, and I don't want to be a
part of it.” (p.35)
Thus in creating a protagonist who is somewhat feeble at the beginning but emerges in the end as a stronger woman with a transformed consciousness, Shashi Deshpande follows a liberal- feminist ideal where growth in consciousness is the objective. Chandra Holm interviewed Shashi Deshpande for Indian Review of Books. Holm told her that her protagonists change a lot when they marry and lose part of their identity and self-confidence. But all of them end up becoming complete human beings. In other words, her main characters have an incredible inner strength. On this Shashi Deshpande commented:

“Yes, I do believe that women have a great strength. All humans do. Actually we have reserves we are often unaware of. But for women the situation is made more complex by the fact that they have been told they are weak, they are made to believe in their weakness. And often they learn to hide their own strength, because a woman’s strength seems to weaken a man.” (p.5).

In most of her novels the protagonists are not only educated, creative and liberated but also mature and compassionate enough to reach out to others who are at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. Indu Roots and Shadows helps Padmini to settle down and Vithal to have his education even though the latter is not related to the family. In *The Binding Vine* Shakutai find her own voice through Urmi’s sympathy and supervision. Jaya in *That Long Silence* helps the crazy Kusum against everyone's wishes and later helps Jeeja when her son has an accident. Saru in *Dark Holds No Terrors* takes great interest in her patients.

In almost all Shashi Deshpande’s novels, it is found that the protagonist is exposed to some shock at the beginning. When *That Long Silence* opens, Jaya’s husband is accused of corruption and has been advised by his accomplice to remain in hiding for a few days. That’s what makes them shift temporarily to their Dadar flat. All this sets Jaya thinking. In *Roots and Shadows*, Akka dies, in *A Matter of Time*, Gopal walks out on Sumi. Saru is repeatedly attacked by Manohar, her husband. In *Small Remedies*, Madhu’s son is killed in a communal riot. Chandra Holm raised this question in her interview: ‘It is as if all of these characters needed a strong kick to be
shaker out of their placid existences to discover the stuff they were actually made of. Why is this? In reply to this question, Shashi Deshpande said:

“My novels always begin in a moment of crisis. Most of us go on unquestioningly until we are shaken out of the rut by something catastrophic or disastrous. Suddenly all that you have taken for granted becomes doubtful, everything falls apart. You begin then to question everything. And it is through this questioning, through this thinking that you move on, pick up your life once again. But you are never the same after this. This is true of all human beings, not just women. . . .In this thinking process, humans do discover their own potential. So do the women I have written about”. (p.9)

The novelist here portrays the modern, educated woman’s predicament in that although she has become aware of egalitarian values; her emotional conditioning in childhood has been in a patriarchal environment. So, like her uneducated counterpart, she can neither accept it as natural nor can she fight against it very easily. The subtle forms reinforce the impression that patriarchal values are both natural and universal. Anything, therefore, that deviates from them appears abnormal.

The novelist also professes that it is women themselves who perpetuate patriarchy through their own actions. Jaya of her own agreement decides to model herself on the women of Mohan’s family. She also tries to please Mohan as a woman. Even the educated Vanaa in The Binding Vine allows Harish to dominate her. Sunanda, instead of fighting against patriarchal domination, becomes cunning and devious. Thus Shashi Deshpande blames women too for perpetuating patriarchy in the following ways: 1. By refusing to change themselves 2. By not rebelling against patriarchy 3. By dominating those who are weaker.

Although most men are self-centered and cold-hearted, there are a few who help the protagonists to evolve their own identity. Kamat is one such man who wants Jaya to work hard on her writing and use it as a means of liberation. Another such man is Naren liberated himself; he wants Indu not to make any compromises as a person or a writer.
In fact all the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande’s novels like Jaya, Indu, and Saru, make resolutions to change themselves through self-realization. But Savitribai, Leela, Shakutai and Sumi change themselves. In short, the protagonists of the novels in the first group think much and act little, while those in the second group think as well as act. Their thoughts shape their actions, and actions influence their thoughts.

The most significant attribute that almost all Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists have is their passion for writing. To them, writing is not just a hobby or a pastime, but means of self-expression and liberation. Jaya is a writer and she takes her role seriously. However, two things upset her. In one of her stories, there is a man who cannot reach out to his wife except through sex. Her husband Mohan, who is too insensitive to understand literature, feels that Jaya has written about him. He fears public ignominy. He gets so upset that he scolds Jaya, and she decides not to write anything that will even remotely resemble her life.

Secondly, her story about a child widow is rejected by a magazine. It is Kamat who tells her what is wrong with the story. He tells her that she is holding herself in. Jaya’s predicament is the predicament of all those writers who have been suppressed. But under Mohan’s influence, Jaya turns to popular writing and write a column called Seeta. In Indian mythology, Seeta, of course, stands for total self-surrender. Shashi Deshpande makes us aware that a woman writer can misuse her gift of writing in order to perpetuate patriarchy. Thus Jaya closes the doors of her mind on all those women who suffer, and about whom she wants to write.

Mira in *The Binding Vine* is also a writer and expresses her agony through her poems and diaries. She is so committed that she wakes up at an odd time of the night and writes without any one’s knowledge. It has already been seen why she chooses two different languages for her poems and diaries. Shashi Deshpande portrays patriarchal domination in the field of writing too. When she meets her favorite poet Venu, he passes a remark that a beautiful woman like her needs not write poetry. It is ironic that a man who is himself a well-known poet sees a fellow-poet as just a woman. Venu achieves fame, wealth and glory as a poet while Mira has to write stealthily.
Indu in *Roots and Shadows* is also a journalist and a writer. She particularly writes about women and she is unhappy when she has to write untruth about a certain woman. However, she is conscientious and decides not to repeat her mistake; this makes us hopeful that in the future she will use her writing for positive purposes. Sumi in *A Matter of Time* writes a play based on a story. It is notable that she turns to writing after Gopal has walked out on her.

Shashi Deshpande wants women writers to take their role seriously. In the interview with Sue Dickman, she says that women writers can show the world and say things that no one has until now said. About commitment to writing she says:

> “Even when I was sick - I had a lot of health problems - even in bed I used to sit and work and write and somehow I knew that was it. This kind of a commitment, I find, not many women have. A lot of people want to say that they are writers, but they are not willing to commit themselves to that extent.” She adds: “In one of Patrick White’s novels there is a painter, and somebody asks him’’. Are you still painting?’ And he says. still breathing?’ I mean ‘Are you still eating, are you still shitting…?’ It is only since I got the Akademi Award that people recognize that I am a writer. And people now, when they ring me up, do say, ‘Am I disturbing you?’” (*Ariel*, 1998, p.35)

In the interview given to *Indian Review of Books*, Chandra Holm asked her with reference to *Small Remedies*, whether there was any specific reason for her to use music as a symbol of rebellion, as a symbol of the breaking up of shackles that chain women in the present society. In answer to this, she said:

> “I have always been interested in the woman artist, the woman creator. From Indu, the journalist-writer, to Jaya, the writer who tried to silence herself and Mira, the poet who was silenced by society, I have now reached Savitri Bai. Any act of creation outside the family was considered wrong for women, therefore, any such act was an act of rebellion. And it is
amazing how, in spite of all these taboos, there have been women writers, painters, musicians etc.” (A Writer of Substance, p.7)

Shashi Deshpande through her writing proposes that women have to be fully equipped so that they will be able to overcome any kind of stress. Women should also be given mental support from the family members who enable to perform her duties well. A problem is a problem always whether it is mental, sexual, psychological, physical or anything women need to spoke out and solve it. The modern women are entering into creative jobs too to give their best. In the next chapter an attempt is made to discuss the various techniques and devices that are used by Shashi Deshpande to narrate her fiction. The progression of female and male characters, the way they were depicted is also divided and discussed in chapter six.