CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

Shashi Deshpande, writer of ten novels, six collections of short stories, four books for children and a screen play, has invited wide critical attention from her readers. Recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990 for her novel, That Long Silence, Deshpande’s works have been translated into many European languages. Her success as a novelist can be gauged by the vast readership she enjoys, and the number of critical studies available on her works. However, a brief survey of the studies available on her works shows that only some of the aspects of her mind and art have captured critical attention from her critics. The concern of the critics with these features of her fiction has been so obsessive that they have either tended to ignore some of the themes of her novels completely or have failed to give them the attention they deserve. This almost exclusivistic approach to her œuvre has resulted in a rather limited and lopsided appreciation of Deshpande as a novelist. One of the aspects of life, dealt with so penetratively and pervasively in her novels, but which has not yet been fully examined by the critics, is her treatment of the theme of alienation and affirmation.

The critical studies available on Deshpande’s works can broadly be divided into two categories: full length studies of her works and articles on individual works and aspects. P.G. Joshi in his book, Shashi Deshpande’s Fiction: A Study in Women Empowerment and Postcolonial Discourse, aims at analyzing Deshpande’s novels in the light of postcolonial and feminist theories. He argues that Deshpande in her fiction deals essentially with the empowerment of women, and that the postcolonial discourse offers a convenient theoretical framework to expound her viewpoint. He analyzes six of her novels in the light of postcolonial theories of literature and concludes that the change in the position of women in any society is a reliable index to social change in general. He opines that Shashi Deshpande is “obviously concerned with feminist issues,” and his study, therefore, is heavily influenced by his feminist interpretations of her works. As a result of this he views her only as a writer of women, that too of middle class, educated ones. He, thus, fails to take cognizance of Deshpande’s understanding and delineation of male psyche and behavior, conditioned by his social and cultural milieu. The disharmony bred in their personalities by the pressures of conformity to their prescribed masculine
roles and images goes almost unnoticed by the critic. Moreover, almost exclusive focus on her female protagonists has led to his failure to recognize the commonalities which Deshpande depicts in the fate of women irrespective of class. The strengths and inner resources of women of lower classes and those who are not adequately educated remain unappreciated, resulting in a rather limited view of Deshpande’s abilities as a writer of human experiences.

Mrinalini Sebastein in *The Novels of Shashi Deshpande in Postcolonial Arguments* also goes on to discuss the possibility of postcolonial readings of literary texts and presents the novels of Deshpande in a postcolonial framework. She gives a brief critical outline of concepts such as ambivalence, problematics of recognition, mimicry, repetition as a mode of representation and the gendered subaltern. She has tried to interpret five of Deshpande’s novels in the light of postcolonial theories. However, like Joshi, Sebastein’s study remains heavily preoccupied with the treatment of women. She has, for example, treated only women as the subaltern characters, ignoring the predicament of male figures who suffer from different forms of subjugation and resultant distortions in their life. She goes on to discuss “the micropolitics of home” in the context of Indian social structure and concludes that it is difficult “to characterise her feminism as being completely influenced by Western feminism.” Her study, in this way, also suggests the critic’s predilection to interpret Deshpande mainly as a writer of woman, the colonized gender in Indian society. The critics’ interest in feminist issues in the fiction of Deshpande continues to dominate studies by Siddharth Sharma, S. Prasanna Sree, Suman Bala and Sarabjit Sandhu. For example, Siddharth Sharma notices that “Deshpande’s novels contain much that is feminist.” He finds that Deshpande “concerns herself with the women’s issues in the Indian context.” He concludes that she “prescribes a balance between tradition and modernity as a working philosophy for contemporary women.”

The tendency to read Deshpande as a writer in feminist tradition is the characteristic feature of S. Prasanna Sree’s *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande: A Study* as well. The aim of the critic here is “to study Shashi Deshpande’s women protagonists, as portrayed by her in her novels, with a view to understand and appreciate their trails and tribulations under the impact of the conflicting influence of tradition and modernity.” Like Siddharth Sharma, Prasanna Sree also points out that Deshpande “finds them caught
up in a conflict between their family and professional roles, between individual aspirations and social demands. According to this study Deshpande's women “try to redefine human relationships. Without rejecting outright the cultural and social background, they realize the need to live in the family but reject the roles prescribed to them by society.” The focus on women and their struggle against tradition continues to be the distinguishing feature of such studies as *Women in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* by Suman Bala and *The Image of Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* by Sarabjit Sandhu. According to Suman Bala, “Shashi Deshpande’s novels depict the anguish, agony, and conflict of the modern, educated Indian women caught between patriarchy and tradition on the one hand and self-expression, individuality and independence on the other.” Sarabjit Sandhu opines that their (protagonists’) “psychology is still wedded to tradition. They have started recognizing the need for change, but at the same time they continue to cling to the old values as they have been brought up with them.”

All these critics – Siddharth Sharma, S. Prasanna Sree, Suman Bala and Sarabjit Sandhu – tend to examine Deshpande’s women and their roles as mothers, wives and daughters within the tradition bound Indian society. They have all emphasized the individual aspirations of middle class educated women longing for individual identity and at the same time not renouncing their family roles. But what all of these studies seem to have lost sight of is the comprehensive view of the complete social world dealt with by Deshpande. Their preoccupation with issues related to women has distracted their attention from moral, psychological and social pressures and issues confronted by men in her world. Moreover, broad generalizations about her women have resulted in their inability to bring out the subtle but important differences between different women in her novels. They have all failed to highlight the development of her protagonists in terms of degree of their awareness, inner resources and the level of affirmation they achieve. That’s why, their studies give an impression that Shashi Deshpande’s world is rather limited, inhabited by a narrow range and type of characters. This impression gets further reinforced by their emphasis mainly on women’s travails and sufferings within the bond of marriage. Here too, their attention remains confined to the sexual exploitation of women. The deeper explorations of their psyche, revealing their alienation from their
bodies and their cherished personal images, go almost unexplored by these critics. Their feeling of alienation, even from their domestic work, which is not often of their choice and doesn’t lead them to any sense of fulfilment of their personalities, has not attracted the attention of these critics.

This rather narrow range of critical interest continues to be the mark of the studies of Amrita Bhalla and Dr. Beena Aggarwal. Though Bhalla’s analysis of five of Deshpadne’s novels in her book, _Shashi Deshpande_ is incisive and gives useful insights into such issues as a woman’s travails and turmoils, the motif of silence, feminism in the context of Hindu mythology and religion, and the relative importance of the roles of man and woman in Indian patriarchal set up, her effort is primarily aimed at discussing Deshpande’s women with special reference to their Indian milieu and tradition. Male characters with their conflicts and ironies of life in patriarchal order, delineated by the writer, have not found place in her study. She doesn’t sound to be convincing, therefore, when she observes that Deshpande’s male characters “are created simply to highlight some aspect of her women protagonists.”

The tendency to make protagonist centric study is characteristic of the 2009 book length study, _Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande_ by Beena Aggarwal as well. She has dealt with all of her novels and has claimed that besides paradigms of feminism her “focus remains to explore a universal pattern of human experiences that is above the rigid conventions of gender defined roles.” But an analysis of her study reveals that it is woman’s experience – the question of her identity, sexuality and motherhood – which occupies her attention most of the time. Moreover, one feels that the study has evaded some of the important questions which spring up during the course of the readings of her novels. For example, she only makes a passing reference to the feeling of guilt which possesses the mind of Indu in _Roots and Shadows_ after her sexual encounter with Naren. The conflict raging in Indu’s mind and her failure to be honest to Jayant in this respect shows not only her cowardice but also the stronghold of the image of traditional Indian femininity on her psyche. The alienating effects of this guilt-ridden consciousness and its causes have been conveniently sidetracked by Dr. Aggarwal.
Like full length studies most of the articles, too, on individual works of Deshpande deal with feminism and woman question. Though Shashi Deshpande denies the label of a feminist yet S.P. Swain, T.M.J. Indra Mohan, Urvashi Sinha, Gur Pyari Jandial and Anne Collette have studied Deshpande’s novels with feminist perspective, though taking into account different nuances of it. S.P. Swain holds male domination in a patriarchal structure responsible for the tragic predicament of Deshpande’s protagonists. In his article, focused on the novel *Roots and Shadows*, Swain observes that Indu, the protagonist represents “the meek, docile and humble”\(^1\) female who has to suppress her voice, the needs of her body and creative urges. She, according to Swain, “finally emerges as a bold, challenging, conscious and rebellious woman.”\(^2\) The essay, however, does not highlight the fact that the tendencies of Indu to question traditions is an integral part of her personality evidenced by descriptions of her adolescence and her decision to marry Jayant, a man of different caste against the wishes of the family. The caste constraints, which had led her father also to suffer a kind of social ostracism because of marrying a woman of not of his caste, find no mention in the essay. Moreover, even men like Kaka, in the novel, are meek and resigned to their subordinate position in the family because of their economic dependence on Akka, the powerful matriarch. All these blind spots in the essay make the study rather simplistic and clichéd.

This trend of viewing Deshpande’s novels only as stories of a single woman character can be discerned even in the articles of T.M.J. Indra Mohan on *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*. According to Indra Mohan, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* “presents a fair picture of a woman’s life who encounters problems, because of her marriage against her parents’ wishes and her husband who is possessed by male ego.”\(^3\) In his opinion, Sarita’s problems are of her own making. He accuses the protagonist, Sarita, of being “a self-willed person and her problems are due to her outsized ego and innate love for power over others.”\(^4\) The critic even suggests that the unconventional people like Sarita suffer for violating “the accepted norms of society” and that the answer to their problems lies in realizing “the wisdom of traditional ways.”\(^5\) The whole argument of the essay seems to hold Sarita, the protagonist, responsible for her situation. Certainly, Deshpande seems to value highly the individual’s role in determining one’s course of life. But she also places her characters in a social milieu which plays a
very significant role in shaping her characters' psyche and, thus, destiny. Strangely enough, Indra Mohan completely ignores Sarita's life before her marriage. To examine Sarita, by completely isolating her from her shaping childhood and girlhood experiences in a highly patriarchal society, one cannot claim to arrive at a fair assessment of her character as well as the writer's treatment of the larger social issues. Indra Mohan's study is severely limited because of its exclusions of a range of other characters who also provide a perspective on the problems faced by the protagonist.

These limitations characterize his article, "Feminist Perspectives in Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence and The Dark Holds No Terrors" as well. He remains preoccupied only with Jaya's experiences as a wife. Again, he focuses more on Jaya's own role in scripting her problems. According to him, it is a story of a woman who submits herself to the domestic tyranny before moving towards the realization of self assertion and the need for self-expression. The larger family and social world inhabited by Ajji, Jaya's mother, her Kakas, Kakis and so many others which has shaped her mind and decisions, find no place in his discussion of Jaya. As a result of this, the intricate interaction of different currents of formative influences and the consequent conflicts and complexities in Jaya's life have escaped the critic's scrutiny. The study, therefore, seems to narrate in conventional critical idiom of feminist writing, the story of the protagonist of the novel without even touching upon the deeper issues of loneliness and alienation, afflicting in different ways and degrees, the life of a vast number of characters in the novel.

A.N. Dwivedi's study is not much different in substance from that of T.M.J. Indra Mohan's. In his article "Shashi Deshpande's That Long Silence: A Feminist Reading," he points out that "Shashi Deshpande made her novels, including That Long Silence (1988) women oriented, opting for the 'two inches of ivory' like Jane Austen and allowing the domineering role to her female protagonists." In this article, he concentrates on the protagonist i.e. Jaya's journey from "fragmented self with a tormented consciousness" to her resolution "to break the icy silence which has plagued her family since long." Dwivedi holds Jaya's "false sense of pride" mainly responsible for "the icy silence" between her and Mohan. A close study of the novel, however, reveals that Dwivedi's assertion is not fully borne out by the text of the novel. It is Jaya's effort to please her...
husband, in order to prove to be a good wife, which makes her submissive and leads her to adopt silence lest he should be offended. Moreover, the essay touches upon the surface of Jaya’s life without making deeper explorations into different dimensions of conflicts and their causes. He has completely ignored the lives of not only other women but also that of other men, like Makrand, who shed light on the kind of challenges and pressures which men and women both have to face in tradition bound societies like ours, which demand for complete conformity from the individual. The whole essay by Dwivedi consists of a number of observations and assertions, without going sufficiently deep into the intricacies of Jaya’s psyche.

Besides these studies of Deshpande as a feminist, there are a number of articles aimed at studying her treatment of the theme of marriage and sex. Though these studies don’t openly tag themselves to feminism, they tend to deal with the theme almost in the same vein. Their scope, however, gets a bit narrowed down to the questions of marriage and sex alone, often ignoring most of the factors impinging on the theme. In this context the studies of Urvashi Sinha, Gur Pyari Jandial and Nisha Trivedi are noticeable. Like the already discussed critics, the tendency to avoid deeper thrusts to explore the split in the protagonists’ personality is perceptible in “Marriage and Sexuality in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande” by Urvashi Sinha and Gur Pyari Jandial also. These scholars of Shashi Deshpande have given a condensed and lucid account of her novels without making any significant attempt to analyze incisively the nature, causes and consequences of the experiences of Deshpande’s women. For example, their study of The Dark Holds No Terrors in this article tells us nothing about how sexual assaults on Saru by her husband tend to alienate her from her body, turning it into ‘the other’, a kind of hindrance in her efforts to realize herself. Without a word about the marriage and sexuality of other men and women such as Smita, Boozie and Padmakar, the article fails to give a comprehensive and convincing view of the treatment of this theme by the writer. Moreover, Saru’s marriage and sexuality cannot be examined fairly without placing them in the context of her experiences as a girl in her parental home.

Nisha Trivedi in her thought provoking article, “Treatment of Love, Marriage and Sex in The Binding Vine,” focuses on the issue that proper admixture of love and sex can guarantee happy marital relationship. Lack of sexual satisfaction on Urmi’s part and
loveless sex on Mira’s part poison their respective married lives. She concludes that “feeling of having sex as an adventure has started threatening the age-old institution of marriage – which is based on fidelity and mutual love.”

24 Though Nisha Trivedi’s observations are interesting and illuminating, the effort is not without certain gaps and imbalances. For example, treatment of Kalpana, her rape and the divergent responses to the incident from different men and women do not find sufficient discussion in the article. She also discusses the theme of love strictly within the framework of Chesser’s concept of love expounded in the book, Cost of Living. The interpretation of this theme, using the concepts and definitions borrowed from Chesser, makes the discussion rather constricted. The overarching human problem of the physical, emotional and spiritual need to relate and connect to each other and their failure in this quest has eluded the attention of the critic.

If the focus of Gur Pyari, Urvashi Sinha and Nisha Trivedi has broadly been only on the sufferings of women within the bond of marriage then critics such as Anita Singh, K.M. Pandey, A.K. Awasthi and Kamini Dinesh concentrate more sharply on how these women move towards discovery of their identity without discarding human relationships. Though, they too, tend to discuss Deshpande’s women, mainly within the marital relationships but the main focus shifts to the strivings of these women towards “a certain autonomy” and towards the realization of their “immense potentialities for action and self-actualisation.”

25 Anita Singh’s study concentrates on this theme in Roots and Shadows and That Long Silence and asserts that both Indu and Jaya “achieved self-realization, found their voice. They return to society or become a part of it.”

26 Anita Singh’s article, in this way, highlights the growth in the personalities of Indu and Jaya, a fact which has to be recognized by the reader. But a close scrutiny of the article shows that Anita just touches upon main events in the lives of these characters and hurries towards asserting “the triumph of the independence of women” without revealing sufficiently the nature, causes and different manifestations of their subjugation or the loss of their voice. In her enthusiasm to declare the independence these women achieve, the critic makes certain sweeping statements which are not borne out by the novels. For instance, she asserts that Indu “suffers no guilt in her extra-marital relationship with Naren” but the novel offers sufficient evidence to show how the feeling of guilt
gradually rises in her heart and becomes one of the causes of split in her psyche. As a result of this misreading of the novel, the critic has not been able to appreciate the conflict between the attainment of her autonomous self on the one hand and the consciousness of a socially constructed image of a faithful wife on the other. Moreover, the critic has taken no note of the silences of other men and women, their struggles and their failures, so essential to place the success of Indu and Jaya in a balanced perspective. The inclination to talk about only the search of women protagonists for identity without juxtaposing them with the almost similar predicaments of other characters, both men and women, is in fact one of the major limitations of the studies dealing with the question of identity in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. This is discernible in the article “Tearing the Veil: The Dark Holds No Terrors” by K.M. Pandey as well. The critic finds in Saru, the protagonist, a woman who “accepts the challenge so as to prove herself as a good daughter, a good wife, a good mother, a good doctor and a good human being....” He goes on to observe that she “ends up as a self-sufficient woman who goes to Manu not to seek help but to complement him.” Like Anita Singh, Pandey too, tends to be lyrical in praising the strength and stamina of Saru “not to surrender, not to run away from the problems, not to commit suicide ... in a word, not to accept defeat.” The critic seems to have been carried away by his feelings of admiration and appreciation for the protagonist so much that he overlooks some of the important aspects of Saru’s life and experiences. For example, she appears to have been motivated not so much by the desire to prove herself a good daughter as by her strong reactions against the neglect and discrimination she has to face from her parents, particularly from her mother. Again, the assertion that she goes with Manu “not to seek help but to complement him” is not supported by the text of the novel. On the contrary it is her father’s advice which makes her feel inclined to face the situation and there is no evidence hinting at her thoughts and plans to complement Manohar in any particular way. The whole study is, thus, rather simplistic and fails to explore the social, psychological and moral tensions, conflicts and estrangements presented by Deshpande in the life of her protagonist, embedded in a specific milieu.

Anne Collette’s study on the question of female identity, however, has something new and illuminating to say. She, in her article, “The Relationship between
Existentialism, Materialism and Feminism in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande," draws attention to a complex interplay between her quest for “the ‘real’ self or ‘essential’ self” and her “relational selves.” Here, she examines the relationship or conflict between materialistic independence and existentialist identity of a woman. She concludes that a woman cannot realize real liberation without “freedom of the female body – a freedom that, despite middle class acquisition of a room of one’s own and economic independence, is yet to be realized.” This perceptive study by Collette, however, remains centred on the issue of Saru’s quest for her existentialist self largely within her marital relationship affected by her search for economic independence. In the absence of any in depth study of experiences of other characters such as her own mother, Smita and Nalu, confronted with similar problems, the critic has not been able to give a comprehensive and holistic view of the novel. One tends to agree with Collette when she suggests that excessive concern for material freedom contributes to the problem of marital adjustment of a woman in a predominantly patriarchal society, jeopardizing her sense of self as a woman. But there are forms of alienation from self which even male characters like Boozie, Padmakar and Madhav’s father suffer, even though they represent in their own ways the values of their male dominated society.

The subjects of existentialism, search for identity and alienation from self have come up for discussion in “Self-assertion of Woman: Shashi Deshpande’s Roots and Shadows” by K.V. Raghupati also. Raghupati, in this article, has made some very provocative observations and statements which have not been duly substantiated by him with necessary illustrations and explanations. For instance, he asserts that the more the women of Shashi Deshpande assert, the more they feel alienated. According to him, Deshpande the novelist, “takes pity in her women characters for the predicament created by themselves through self-delusions and hallucinations....” Further, Raghupati asserts that Indu achieves “an awareness of the futility of her autonomy and yet she realizes that she is a being, and not a dependent on Jayant.” It is evident from these observations, not supported in the article with any textual illustrations, that they are not a reflection of a balanced and holistic understanding of the novel in general and the character of Indu in particular. The lopsidedness of critic’s understanding of the novel is revealed further by his assertion that Indu fails in her efforts towards her freedom and “strikes a compromise
to the old traditional life.\textsuperscript{38} A close look at the novel, on the contrary, shows that though she makes some compromises in order to achieve adjustment in her marriage with Jayant, she exercises her freedom of will and takes independent decisions regarding her job and as the head of the family after Akka's death. Raghupati concludes his discussion with the statement that "though the novel gains its feminist stance, it goes beyond the limits of feminism and touches the very predicament of human existence."\textsuperscript{39} But again he appears to have made no efforts to go beyond his focus on Indu and explore the predicament as an aspect of general and universal human experience. That's why, the existentialist predicament of such men as Naren and Baba goes totally untouched in his study.

Besides these studies on Deshpande's thematic concerns some of the critics have also turned to an analysis of the important technical and stylistic devices used by her in her fiction. In this context the studies by Vimala Rama Rao, S. Sengupta and A. N. Dwivedi are noticeable. The article by Vimala Rama Rao, "Myth and Folklore in Shashi Deshpande," provides useful insights into how the novelist "has created a familiar world anew in which authentic experiences of interior landscape of Indian women are powerfully projected through devices including myths, folktales and so on."\textsuperscript{40} According to her, "One of the most enjoyable feature of Deshpande's writing is the unselfconscious use of literary allusion, myth and folklore which seamlessly meshed her work with earlier literature."\textsuperscript{41} Effortlessly used allusions to such myths as those of Dhruva, Tulsi, Ganapati, Krishna and Sudama and allusions to Mahabharata, Ramayan, and the Gita and to Western literature have been discussed by Rama Rao. She shows the artist's success in using these allusions in a way that they not only illuminate the characters, but also sustain the narrative and impart depth and complexity to all her material. S. Sengupta also has attempted to shed light on some patterns of imagery in her novel That Long Silence. He highlights particularly "the recurrent images of death, decay and desolation"\textsuperscript{42} used by Deshpande to reveal the workings of "a fetid brain with its overemphasis on the dismal and sordid side of life."\textsuperscript{43} Since he remains preoccupied with images depicting "the ugliness which is an echo of her (Jaya's) own unhappy character,"\textsuperscript{44} the study is rather limited in its scope. Unlike V. Rama Rao and S. Sengupta, A.N. Dwivedi widens the scope and includes in his discussion of metaphors Shashi Deshpande's five novels instead of one or two. His article, "Recurring Metaphors in Shashi Deshpande," seeks to explore
and explain some recurring metaphors like "‘the dark’ and ‘the sunlight’, ‘death’ and ‘life’, ‘silence’ and ‘the binding vine’" to "highlight the dichotomy of human life, characterised by sorrow and joy, failure and success, death and life." Dwivedi’s study highlights the use of these metaphors with special focus on their use by Deshpande in making "a powerful study of female psyche and its problems."

It is evident from this brief survey of criticism available on Deshpande’s fiction that her critics have remained all along preoccupied with the question of woman in her fiction. The treatment of woman has been discussed with some shift of focus from one aspect or the other of her existence. If she has been discussed as a colonized gender by some of the writers using post-colonial theories, there are others who employ feminist vocabulary to underline her oppression and sufferings at the hands of man, mainly within the bond of marriage. A large number of them have tended to talk about women’s sexual oppression and exploitation. Even those who use concepts of existentialism and try to bring out their quest for identity have confined their attention to their struggles for freedom from sexual subjugation. Images as wives and mothers have, therefore, been at the centre of their endeavor.

The interest of critics in the treatment of woman and her problems is certainly understandable, because most of her novels have women as their protagonists. But like any other major artist, Deshpande also deals with larger human issues, transcending gender, class and generation. Even when she depicts woman’s life in its various facets, she places her in a broader social and historical context, suggesting a complex and subtle pattern of cause and effect in her fictional world. In this context her delineations of men also appear to be of crucial significance. She has presented the problems of men with as much of incisiveness as is discernible in her treatment of women and their predicament. She, in fact, views men and women only as “two halves of one species.” Her interest lies in “interpersonal relationships and human emotions,” extending beyond the narrow confines of husband-wife relationship. It is this preoccupation of Deshpande with the larger human issues, with different social, moral, psychological and philosophical dimensions and nuances, which has not been adequately appreciated, resulting in a number of gaps and imbalances in her assessment as a novelist. It is only by exploring in depth and detail those of her themes and concerns which serve as important and unifying
element for the entire body of her fictional product, that a comprehensive, fair and balanced assessment of Deshpande’s mind and art can be made. One of such themes which has either gone totally neglected or has been touched upon rather inadequately, is her treatment of the human experience of alienation suffered by a large number of men and women, young and old, rich and poor in different ways, dimensions and intensity. It emerges from her novels that she does not confine herself to a depiction of human loneliness in a sombre and pessimistic manner. On the contrary, she also reveals human urge and potential to find meaning and harmony in life both with his inner self and the world around. This complex relationship of feelings of alienation on the one hand and affirmation of life on the other, presented by Deshpande in the powerful and realistic manner evincing her deep understanding of human nature and realities of larger social world appears to be, therefore, so essential in order to appreciate the depth, complexity and range of her fiction. It is this necessity of looking afresh at her fictional world with a focus on her treatment of the theme of alienation and the journey of her major characters towards affirmation that has motivated the present attempt. But before venturing to outline the way Deshpande deals with this theme and how it impacts her art, it appears in place here to explain the basic terms and concepts related to this theme.

The one term that may describe the predicament of modern man is ‘Alienation’. Though it’s an age old concept and has been in use in theology, sociology, philosophy and psychology for long but it has become more subtle and pronounced in the modern age. Modern man is unable to relate to his environment, to other persons and events and has become an indifferent bystander. His encounter with the surroundings, events and persons is fragmentary, casual and remote. Consequently, he suffers from a sense of bewilderment, disillusionment, frustration and inner conflict. He doubts even his own existence. Such a depersonalized and miserable condition of modern man can best be put as ‘Alienation’. In modern literature alienation has taken the shape of such a “meaning nucleus” that its other variants such as isolation, loneliness, disintegration, segregation, exile, estrangement, disillusionment, pessimism and rebellion tend to converge into it like supporting wires of an umbrella.

Alienation is such a diversified term that it is not easy to describe it in a few words. The meaning and the form of the word changes according to the field in which it
is applied. The literal meaning of the word ‘Alien’ is foreign. All those who are alienated are foreign to themselves and their surroundings. “An alienated man is ... a stranger to himself; he has lost his essence; he is in search of his being.”

In its basic conception alienation is “an art or the result of the art through which something or somebody, becomes (or has become) alien (or strange) to something or somebody else.” In law, alienation refers to a transfer of title of ownership to another party. In medicine, it refers to splitting apart, of the faculties of the mind. An alienist is an old name for a psychiatrist who attempts to reintegrate an alienated mind. In sociology, alienation refers to the individual subject’s estrangement from its community, society or world. In the fields of theology and philosophy, alienation is used as “a concept denoting the element of separation of two entities with resulting tension and frustration.” In the words of Morton A. Kaplon, “Alienation occurs when an individual perceives absence of meaningful relationship between his status, his identification, his social relationship, his style of life and his work.” According to Kaufman, “Alienation is neither a disease nor a blessing but for better or worse a central feature of human existence.” Fromm in his book, The Sane Society, explains: “…by alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experienced himself as an alien.”

The concept of alienation is the basic theme which runs through religious, mythological and literary expressions. A basic theme of Hebrew and Christian mythology is the estrangement between God and man. Christian concept of alienation holds the original sin as its root cause. According to this concept, man’s real essence lies only in his relation to God. Man is perfect and complete when he is aware and has complete knowledge of that being. But with his fall from heaven, he undergoes the curse of being separated from heaven and living on earth. Whenever the awareness of his curse or the sin committed by the first man becomes heavy on his mind, he feels isolated or separated from God and there lies his alienated, estranged self. As Emmanuel Kant says, “The very essence of religious history is to reconcile man to himself and with nature. Sinful man is however the victim of an accidental estrangement, the estrangement which separates him from God because of sin (and the result of sin) committed by the whole of creation including himself.”
According to existentialists, man is free. Each man is to be what he chooses to be or makes himself; he cannot escape the responsibility for his character or his deeds by claiming that they are the predetermined consequence of factors beyond his power to control. Burdened with the feeling of suffering of being, every awakened individual finds himself without personal history, as for him there is no pre-existent reality beyond his own self. Meaninglessly thrown into this world, one can witness through one's separate environment, the naked absurdity of being in the world. This knowledge of lugubrious human condition generates a terrible sense of isolation and alienation in man who feels homeless and abandoned in this vast and vicious world. Heidegger says, "Homelessness is becoming a world fate."\(^58\) This crisis of alienation deepens further with the threat of anonymity posed by the modern technological society, modern materialistic utopia with its crippling security of easy life that has taken away man's existential humanity and his freedom by enslaving him to the tool. Man's alienation has four distinct parameters in existentialism – from God, from nature, from society and from his own true self.

Hegel used the term 'entaussrung' which may be translated as 'self-alienation.' For him, alienation is an ontological fact, inherent in the nature of man's existence in the world. It is an inherent dissociation between man as a subject and man as an object, so that man's own creation (his art, language etc.) stands outside him as alien-object. Kierkegaard claims that "man is not yet a self unless he has achieved a synthesis with god, with the power which constituted him."\(^59\) This lack of synthesis is called alienation which causes sickness or despair in man. Nietzsche rejects god altogether and says, "Away with such a god! Better to have no god, better to setup destiny on one's own account ... better to be god oneself."\(^60\) Kafka presents the predicament of man engulfed in a world robbed of all spiritual possessions. He writes of himself, "I am separated from all things by a hollow space and I do not even reach to its boundaries."\(^61\) According to Sartre the basic polarity between conscious subject (pour-soi) and the factor of negation (en-soi) is the root cause for the feelings of tension, isolation and frustration which characterize human existence.

A sociologist like Marx's analysis of alienation is firmly embedded in recognition of the material condition of the wage-worker under early capitalism. This separates Marx from all those writers on alienation from Hegel to existentialists who see alienation as a
necessary characteristic that haunts people through all times irrespective of their material conditions. Instead of seeing alienation as a part of human condition, Marx argues that it is a result of specific set of social relations where human productive activity is reduced to wage-labour and where the worker has no control over the means of production or productive activity.

Marx gave his fullest treatment of alienation in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844*. In it, Marx is referring to alienated labour or economic labour. He begins his analysis of alienated labour by noting what happens to workers under capitalism. The wealth created by the worker is for the capitalist and not for the worker or direct producer. In this manner, the condition of the worker deteriorates. The worker produces commodities, out of these commodities capital is created and capital comes to dominate the worker. As a result, the worker himself becomes devalued (worthless). Marx notes, “The devaluation of human world increases in direct relation to the increase in value of the world of things.”

Marx outlines four different aspects of alienation of workers under capitalism. They are:

1. Man’s alienation from the product of his labour.
2. Man’s alienation from the productive activity.
3. Man’s alienation from human essence.
4. Man’s alienation from other men.

The first type of man’s alienation results from his relation to the product of his labour. Marx says, “The alienation of the worker from his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, and that it becomes a power of its own confronting him.” The product of man’s labour is legally owned by someone other than the worker. Because the worker is working to produce something for someone or something other than himself, the product then becomes alien to the worker. The product becomes so completely alienated from the producer that it is in opposition to him. The product is no longer merely a thing, but it possesses qualities of
a connection to the worker, or in this case, a disconnection. These characteristics display a strong and intense alienated relationship of the worker to the product.

The second aspect of alienation follows from the first. Alienation of the worker from his productive activity means worker does not feel one with the work he does. His labour does not satisfy him. The kind of work and the condition of work that worker has to accept is inimical to his essential being. This work does not bring satisfaction because it is forced. This wears the worker down leaving only frustration.

The next mode of alienation, alienation of man from human essence relies on the actual form of alienated labour. Alienated labour changes "species - existence of man" into something alien to him. Life activity is the entire character of a species and this life activity is the essence of man. In alienated labour, man is alienated from his essence. Consequently, alienated labour makes it a mere "means of existence." That is what man would naturally do as a part of life; he must take hold of as a sort of tool in order to survive. It is no longer essential but an alien "means for his existence."

According to Marx, the last form of alienation is the alienation of man from man. The worker is alienated from the product which he produces and which belongs to someone else other than the producer. The worker produces a product alien to him, then it is handed over to another man more powerful than the worker. This man is alien to the worker; hence, the alienation of man from man.

Freud, a renowned psychologist has also used the term 'alienation', though indirectly. According to him, an alienated person takes himself to be the sole master of his activities. These activities and their consequences become his master whom he religiously obeys and consequently he is alienated from the rest of society. Freud thinks that alienation is rooted in the psyche of man and it is not the result of society. According to him, in man's psyche there is always going on a conflict between "eros" (impulse of life or love) and "thanatos" (impulse of death or hate). As a result of "thanatos" man withdraws from society and becomes alienated. In his view, alienation is not a growth of society but an innate tendency of soul. So, it can never be totally done away with.

Some of the variants of alienation are powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation and estrangement.
The feeling of powerlessness arises when a person feels that his destiny is not under his control but is determined by external forces like fate, luck and government etc. In such a situation he feels himself “trapped,” “hung-up” or “in a rat race.” Powerlessness, in fact, is “the expectancy or probability held by individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcome or reinforcements he seeks.”

Powerlessness originated in the Marxian view of the worker’s condition in capitalist society. The worker feels powerless in the modern industrial society when he realizes that he is unable to influence his own destiny in the social system to which he belongs. He feels himself powerless; firstly, when he sees that others have the power of decision over him, especially as far as his work is concerned; secondly, when the worker is unable to influence the decision-making process of the leadership of the enterprise; thirdly, when the individual has no influence over his employment and terms of employment and lastly, when the worker is unable to influence or control the work process. This sort of worker’s powerlessness is merely one special case of universal trend of alienation. For example, modern soldier is equally separated from the means of violence, the scientist from the means of enquiry and civil servant from the means of administration. An endless monologue, mounting at times to an important rage, goes on in the minds of Saul Bellow’s Herzog, powerless as he is against the social, personal and cosmic forces.

Meaninglessness is experienced when the individual no longer understands the functioning of social organization of which he is a part. As a result, the individual can no longer predict the consequences of his own actions and he fails to understand the meaning of his own actions. It is especially true of those historical periods which have witnessed events of catastrophic nature. The post war period, besides being full of frustration, loss of values, loss of faith and moral degradation, has been a period of comparative barrenness. The old order has lost its credibility; the new is without any sustenance. It has its echo in literature in the theatre of absurd. Camus’s Myth of Sisyphus and his novel, The Outsider, portray such a meaninglessness of human existence.

The third variant, normlessness, can be described as the experiencing of the inability to reach socially acceptable and desirable goals through those channels which are accepted by society or by the social organizations to which the individual belongs. Emile Durkheim describes “anomie” as a state of relative normlessness or a state in
which norms have been eroded. The original meaning of anomie did not refer to a state of
mind, but to a property of social structure in which individual desires are no longer
regulated by common norms. This erosion of common norms results in alienation,
isolation and desocialisation. Normlessness in extreme condition leads to suicide also.

The fourth variant is isolation. An alienated person who experiences normlessness
accepts the goals but he is not concerned about using legal or legitimate means to reach
that goal. According to Seeman, a person who experiences isolation goes a step further.
He does not accept the goals, whether they are related to society or social organization to
which he belongs. The individual experiences his negative attitude to the socially
accepted goals so strongly that he retreats from his social roles and isolates himself.
Isolation, thus, presupposes a need for affiliation or belongingness.

Being self-alienated implies being something less than one can ideally be, if the
circumstances in society were different from what they are. It can broadly be of three
types: Alienation in relation to one’s own ego, alienation in relation to his own life,
alienation in relation to life activity. To be alienated in relation to one’s own ego means
to feel one’s own person as something alien, something with which individual is unable
to identify. It arises when a person becomes aware of the conflict or divergence between
what he wanted to be and what in reality he is. Individual feels alienated from his own
life as a result of frustration caused by a life which does not correspond to the model
which man has created for himself. This feeling of an unfulfilled life lies at the
foundation of the loss of meaning in life. Meaninglessness arises due to the lack of
socially internalized goal. Alienation from life activity arises when an individual feels his
traits, talents as things / commodities and uses them according to the demand of the
market rather than making their creative use according to his own will.

Alienation can be cosmic, social, cultural and interpersonal depending upon the
presence of one or more than one variants. Under severe stress, the feeling of alienation
gets so intense that it may take the shape of “Anomie.”

Cosmic dimension of alienation constitutes man’s relatedness to cosmos or
nature, to god or being and his own destiny. Alienation from nature or cosmos is the
result of severance of ties between man and nature, consequent upon the pressures of
modern lifestyles. The literary tradition with its Judeo-Christian heritage, the religious existentialism, the mystical theology of both, East and West, dwells upon man’s separation from his true being or god. Expressions such as pessimism, nihilism and even cynicism have their roots in this constituent of cosmic alienation. We find glimpses of the death of god and man’s consequent forlornness in the writings of such writers as Nietzsche, Eliot and Samuel Beckett. Man’s divided self, the split personality, the conscious aspect of self trying to cancel the more real self of the unconscious, thus creating a sort of self-alienation, too account for cosmic alienation.

Cultural alienation is apparent in those societies and situations where some sort of dislocation, geographical or political, has taken place. Large scale migration of Jews from Europe, and their consequent sense of insecurity and alienation among the native inhabitants of their adopted places, is an example of cultural alienation. In spite of their economic growth, they feel alienated and separated from the main-stream of their cultural and religious resources. Similar feelings of estrangement mark the destiny of minority and small ethnic groups in countries where they feel their cultural existence is threatened by the dominant community. The maladjustment of man in a modern industrialized and commercialized set up and his attendant insecurity and powerlessness is another dimension of cultural isolation. T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* gives expression to this kind of alienation in a devitalized society.

The social dimension of loneliness takes the direction of social exclusion, exile, ostracism and rejection on the basis of such considerations as those of caste, creed, colour and social status. The victims suffering from social alienation feel themselves being “shoved out, left out, shut out, shipped out, kept out or lost sight of.” They are forced to assume the role of an outsider, outcast, a loner, an oddball or a disconnected individual. In extreme cases of alienation, they are labeled as “criminals, misfits, no accounts, queers, perverts, parasites, niggers, traitors or undesirable aliens.” This is the fate of blacks in America, and coloured immigrants in countries like England. Arthur Miller’s Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* represents another aspect of social alienation when he is driven to suicide because he is a misfit in the world of salesmanship.
Loneliness is an awareness that something essential is lacking in one's personal world. It is alienation within the close filial relations. Parents come to feel alienated from their children as much as the children's love of parents takes the course of formality. Disintegration of family in Europe and America is an alienation of interpersonal relationship. High rate of divorce, broken marriages, homosexuality, lesbianism arise from such a feeling of loneliness. Man-Woman relations and the problem of consummation in the novels of D.H. Lawrence constitute this sort of interpersonal alienation. Warmth of interpersonal relations is the last straw for a man who is otherwise alienated socially and culturally. Coldness in this vital relationship completes the process of dehumanization and insensitivity. In the extreme "the person stops feeling altogether and tries to live solely by rational means and cognitive directions. This is the terrible tragedy of modern life – the alienation of man from his own feelings, the desensitization of man to his own suffering and grief, the fear of man to experience his own loneliness and pain, and the loneliness and misery of others."72

The second term with which we are concerned here is affirmation. To take a broad comprehensive view 'affirmation' is taken to mean unflinching solidarity with some ideology or the very act of binding oneself to positive aspects of life. This solidarity or affirmation may be practiced through one's work, activities or even intentions in respect of certain values and convictions which may be sociological, philosophical, political, biological and economic etc. Besides, the term affirmation seems to come nearer to such expressions as 'accommodation', 'adjustment', 'adaptation', 'conciliation' etc. in meaning and usage.

Encyclopedia Americana presents the term as "functional adjustment made by an individual to his social environment, attained through modification of habits."73 Webster Universal Dictionary clarifies the term as one's ability "to adapt or adjust to anything,"74 to "reconcile what appears to be incongruous or inconsistent,"75 to "accommodate oneself to circumstances."76 In Biology the term 'affirmation' has been used in reference to "the balance between various organs or parts of the organism in their total functioning."77 In terms of Psychology the concept of affirmation has been used with special reference to "statistical averaging of experimental findings."78 A similar situation operates in mechanics where the term connotes "rearrangement of parts to produce better
functioning." As a concept in philosophy the term 'affirmation' stands for a positive attitude and ideology of essential goodness of life. In sociology the term 'affirmation' stands for the functional changes which take place in the habits ... of persons." The term is also used to denote "the resolution of the conflict between two opposing ways" of thinking and doing and "the emergence of a new pattern of behaviour." Thus, the term is found to have various connotations and implications, but in the context of this thesis, the concept of affirmation is used in the socio-philosophic sense.

These aspects of human life – experiences of alienation and affirmation – discussed and defined by scholars and thinkers in different ways constitute the very warp and woof of literature particularly that of modern times. It is true not only of the literature produced in the West since World War I but is equally true of Indian literature, especially the one which has appeared nearly during the last three decades. Among Indian women writers Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal have dealt with this theme quite extensively in their oeuvre with a particular focus on the conflicts and tensions, frustrations and struggles of their women characters. Shashi Deshpande’s treatment of this theme, however, has its own distinctive nature and significance in the scheme of her fictional world. It emerges that almost all her novels deal with this theme showing the alienation of her men and women from themselves and their society. Feelings of alienation from their bodies, their aspirations and ideals and sometimes even from the work routine they are trapped in, appear to be a common feature of the life of her men and women. Shashi Deshpande, through her variety of characters – male or female, primary or secondary, educated or uneducated, belonging to middle class or lower class, economically sound or poor – has shown that alienation is the common human lot in present century. She has presented this theme in all its complexities revealing a subtle pattern of cause and effect in its workings in human life. The reason she often hints at for the feelings of desolation and isolation include separation, unwholesome childhood environment, sibling rivalry, maladjustment, lack of communication, childlessness and peculiar nature of her characters. Those who are shown suffering from this experience are often sensitive, idealist, egoist and escapist individuals.

In this way various dimensions of alienation such as social, psychological and interpersonal are perceptible in the novels of Shashi Deshpande. But interpersonal
dimension is the area where her forte lies. Interpersonal alienation includes alienation in close interpersonal relationships such as mother-daughter, father-daughter, brother-sister, husband-wife and among friends. In Shashi Deshpande’s novels mother is not presented as conventional, kindly and sympathetic figure. She is presented as an instrument of patriarchal power, seeking to socialize or force the daughter into the socially determined role of woman, which creates tension in their relationship. Father, being a product of patriarchal system of society, is unable to relate with his daughter. Brother-sister relationship is the victim of sibling rivalry. Shashi Deshpande concentrates most of her attention on marital maladjustment. Clash arises between husband, a true representative of Indian male psyche, and wife, aspiring to free herself from conventional bondage.

Failure of interpersonal relationship to provide required warmth and love in the world characterized by alienation compels her characters to seek solace in outer environment or society. But here also, they find a wide gap between their desires and the norms society expects them to adhere to. They find themselves at a complete loss and unable to relate to society. Consequently, they either isolate themselves from society, as in the case of Gopal, or try to violate societal norms by indulging in socially abnormal activities as in case of Dr. Varma. The case of Manu’s sadism in The Dark Holds No Terrors is the result of lack of social recognition as a lecturer and failure in performing the role of a traditional husband.

Getting disappointment at this level also, they turn towards their jobs. Jobs or profession provide them only a very illusory satisfaction. Jaya, a writer, and Indu, a journalist, are not satisfied with their jobs because they have to write according to the market demands. They don’t find free representation of their real self in their writings. At one point of time they become so disgusted with this forced work that they even decide to leave it for good. Gopal does not find self-fulfilment in his job and ultimately leaves it. The reason behind the alienation from work is: firstly, it is forced and not an expression of their own will; secondly, it does not bring that fame and recognition that they expect from their work.

Being defeated at all fronts by various forces Deshpande’s characters reach a stage where they don’t feel one with themselves. In order to gain social recognition, they
try to adopt an image or personality quite different from their real selves. Kierkegaard sketches an excellent picture of self-alienation when he says that such a man finds it too venturesome a thing to be himself, far easier and safer to be like the others, to become an imitation, a number, a cipher in the world.

These types of alienated persons express their feelings of emptiness of life and senselessness of their existence in an escape into alcohol, sexual fixation and crime etc. They fail to find any positive aim in their life resulting in an acute sense of futility and nothingness in their existence. These feelings of frustration and meaninglessness further intensify the feelings of emptiness and existential vacuum. All the characters who fall prey to the feelings of loneliness and emptiness keep their thoughts up to themselves. These suppressed and unfulfilled feelings cause anguish, despair, loss of identity and even mental disequilibrium as it happens in the case of Kusum and Mohan’s mother. Sometimes they become even aggressive, as in the case of the sadistic behaviour of Manu. In some cases, it is revealed in their tendency to escape into the world of fantasies or in their tendency to keep themselves aloof from the world around them. There are still others who go silent and suppress their feelings which further threaten their physical and mental state. It is apparent from this brief critical look at the treatment of this theme of alienation by Deshpande that she has presented it in all its complexities, revealing a subtle pattern of cause and effect.

The realistic treatment of human predicament in Deshpande’s fiction along with contemporary angst in an existential manner might appear to be depressing, but the final impression is far from being gloomy or depressing. She is not the writer who has a pessimistic approach towards life and who presents only bleak side of the picture. Rather, she emerges as a writer who has immense faith in life and humanity. Though her characters are shown being alienated, lonely and conflict ridden, this conflict and loneliness compels them for self-introspection. When they find no alternative around them, they sit back and brood over their predicament. All their defense mechanisms fall and they ponder over the ways through which life can be made possible. Like Hardy’s characters they don’t leave everything to fate. Rather, they themselves try to make amends. This self-examination makes them more mature, and a kind of enlightenment dawns upon them that they “can always hope.” Finally, one sees them accepting their
roles as awakened individuals and the novels end with an optimistic note suggesting the possibilities of some positive action in future.

Though the experience of alienation afflicts a large number of her characters, including the minor ones, the ability and strength to encounter and overcome it is displayed mainly by Deshpande's protagonists. In this development of the protagonists from alienation to affirmation a common pattern has been noticed by the critics in all her novels. The first stage in this journey is that of innocence and romance. It has been pointed out that most of her protagonists in their early phase of life display a marked tendency of having a bright vision of their future life and relationships. They look to their life ahead with high expectations and hopes. A strong desire and wish for a life of freedom and happiness characterizes this adolescent phase. As their understanding of themselves and their world is not based fully upon their authentic experiences, an element of naivety and immaturity is reflected in their outlook. Their sprouting ego tends to infuse their hearts and minds with inflated confidence, not tempered with sound understanding of life and its realities.

From this stage of conflict, tensions, anxieties and dissonance, they move on to a state of mind leading them to indulge in a state of introspection. With the help of their memory, they recall the past, hold it to scrutiny and try to understand what, when and how things went wrong. This enables them to gain a better and maturer understanding of themselves and of the world around them. With this enhanced knowledge and awareness, coupled with the desire and will to change their world, they begin to make certain resolutions and, thus, develop a new vision of their life. In this way they tend to come out of their illusions and prepare themselves to face realities with hope. This marks a readiness for acceptance and adjustments without sacrificing their own individualities.

This pattern of growth traceable in the lives of Deshpande's protagonists, which has invited the blame of repetitiveness in her novels, proves that the studies of these critics are characterized by over-simplifications and generalizations. This is because the critics have not taken due cognizance of the fact that within these broad outlines of the stories of her protagonist, in each of her novels, Deshpande has portrayed life in subtly varying colours and shades, giving fresh insights and conveying new meanings. This is
amply evidenced by the way she has dealt with the theme of alienation and affirmation in its different dimensions, depths, nuances and complexities in her works. Consequently, the characters who serve to project this theme appear to have their distinctive individualities with different levels of sensitivity, consciousness, ability and capacity to learn and grow in their struggles to cope with and respond to the challenges and pressures of their existence. Critics have failed to recognize these differences as well as the wide range and variety of characters, situations and points of view depicted in her novels. A steady development can be observed in her themes, characters, plot, narrative technique and levels of affirmation of protagonists. For the recognition of these differences from earlier novels to later ones, a chronological study of her works becomes necessary.

On the basis of forms of alienation, their artistic rendering and the growth of attitude of affirmation towards life in varying degrees, evinced mainly by her protagonists, Deshpande’s novels seem to fall broadly into three categories, representing three phases in her growth as a novelist. The first phase is represented mainly by *The Dark Holds No Terrors, Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence*. In these novels, the treatment of this theme appears to be at a simpler level. It remains centered mainly on the interpersonal relationship within the area of marriage and sexual life. The focus, therefore, falls on the feelings of alienation from body, mainly in the case of women like Saru, Indu and Jaya, besides the feelings of estrangement which both men and women suffer at their emotional, intellectual and social levels. But here too, the novelist has presented variations on this theme by creating different kinds of situations within the bond of marriage, enlarging the scope of the theme. For example, Saru, Manohar, Saru’s mother Smita, Nalu and Padmakar, all have to suffer in different ways the loneliness and pain of being dispossessed of their expectations.

Saru’s professional and economic ascendancy hurts Manu’s ego as a husband, provoking his wrath, which is articulated through physical assault on her in bed during night. This possession of her body by force brings various pains with it for Saru. She starts hating her own body which was once a source of intense joy. Smita, a house wife, who is totally dependent on her husband, submits to him so completely that she emerges as no more than a mere shadow of an authentic human being. If she seeks to achieve feeling of security by pleasing her husband, Saru’s mother goes to the other extreme and
puts armour of domineering and nagging wife and mother. The reasons for tendency to impose herself lie in her childhood, deprived of love and security, and her unconscious lack of self confidence. If wifehood is the main cause behind the sufferings of Saru, Smita and Saru's mother then there is Nalu who denies herself the fulfilment of her biological, psychological and social self by her decision to remain unmarried. This unstated divorce between her natural desires and needs as a woman and the pattern of life she imposes upon herself, convert her into a frustrated woman who is not in harmony with self. Manohar's frustration, borne out of his failure to play the traditional role of a husband, makes him a split personality who is a rapist at night and a loving, cheerful and concerned husband in the morning. In Roots and Shadows, stories of Indu, Minni and Akka also reflect alienation, characterizing Deshpande's treatment of marital and sexual relationships in this novel. But again if Akka's husband was too demanding for an innocent girl of thirteen, Indu's husband goes cold whenever he encounters in her, arousal of her own passions, forcing her to suppress the desires of her own body. Minni does not even like the man she has to marry under compulsions. She feels humiliated and dispossessed of her self-worth as a girl because of her frequent rejections by men and the consequent anguish and dejection her parents have to suffer. The loneliness and the breakdown of communication with others which Naren has to undergo, and the isolation his parents have to face from the society because of their intercaste marriage, add new dimensions to the theme of alienation in the novel. Similarly, Jaya's agony at surrendering her own image as a strong woman that she had before her marriage, and subsequent compromises she has to make, gains wider significance when examined in relationship with the marital experiences of other men and women such as the parents of Mohan, Kusum and her mother, Vanitamami, Vimala and Mukta. Estrangement from family and community which Makrandmama has to suffer for adhering to his own aims and ways of life further enriches the reader's understanding of how Deshpande has dealt with this reality of human nature and experiences in its depths and complexities.

This goes on to show that an analysis of this theme, projected by the writer even through the minor characters, throws light on the predicament of Deshpande's central characters. It not only reveals diversities of experiences of alienation within the bond of marriage but it also gives insights into a wide range of different factors responsible for
plunging men and women in a state of discord with themselves as well as with others. Another significant aspect which invites critical attention in these novels is the degree of affirmation her protagonists display in their vision of life. One finds that Saru, Indu and Jaya seem to reach a stage of affirming the possibilities for a meaningful and fulfilling life at the level of their thoughts only. In her decision to face the situation, instead of turning her back on it, Saru shows signs of some resolution and will to confront life. Indu, after a long and tiresome journey, comes to terms with life and her relationships. She realizes that any freedom she desires, she must seek within the bounds of her obligations and responsibilities. That's why, she returns to Jayant but decides that from then onwards she will not suppress her feelings only to please Jayant. Jaya, like Indu, seems to return to her cocoon of marital safety but with a renewed awareness and confidence. She realizes the need of interdependence but not at the cost of her individuality. She rejects her habit of total submission and decides to express her own opinion. She hopes for a better life for herself and Mohan though she is not yet seen as making some tangible effort to realize this hope.

When we move on to the next three novels – *The Binding Vine, A Matter of Time* and *Small Remedies* – we find that they appear to mark a clear development in the writer’s treatment of the theme of alienation and affirmation. In these novels, the feelings of loneliness, breakdown of communication, gap between what one desires or wishes and what one actually gets, inexplicable feelings of boredom and even an inability to understand one’s own motives or desires buried deep in one’s own unconscious act as alienating agents. These subtler forms of alienation introduce in the content and texture of these novels a kind of gentle philosophic element without diluting the social and psychological significance in the presentation of this theme. For example, Gopal’s whole character and behaviour remains rather mystical, almost impenetrable not only to his wife Sumi and his daughters but even for himself. Though the question of man-woman relationship remains important in these novels also, the problems causing dissonance, disconnectedness, loneliness and emptiness in marital relationship are not rooted only in sexual and domestic roles and expectations of husband and wife, conditioned by patriarchal culture. The estrangement of Gopal and Sumi does not seem to have anything to do with these aspects, which are the major factors bedeviling the life of her characters.
in the earlier novels. Here, men, with only a few exceptions, do not appear to be very sexually oppressive to their wives. For example, unlike the husbands of Saru and Jaya, Kishore, Gopal and even Som, the husbands of Urmi, Sumi and Madhu respectively don’t seem to impose themselves on the bodies of their wives. On the contrary, Urmi feels sexually discontented as Kishore is often away from home serving in Merchant navy. Sumi, too, is never heard complaining about Gopal’s sexual demands on her.

The most important point of difference between the novels of this phase and the earlier ones is, however, perceptible in the presentation of the elements of affirmation of life and its possibilities. In this phase, her important characters do not seek meaning of life only within the area of their personal family relationships. They tend to become more socially oriented and responsive to issues concerning others as well. Urmi, for instance, in *The Binding Vine*, seeks the fulfilment of her self-realization in helping Shakutai when her daughter Kalpana is raped. She even brings the question of atrocities against women and callousness of the system to public notice by using the medium of press. Similiarly, Leela in *Small Remedies* transcends personal family problems and tries to serve the cause of the weaker sections – the poor, the sick and the factory workers. They, thus, are not mere thinkers, but active participants in larger social life, translating their desires, will and thoughts into real and concrete action. Their horizons become wider and they get involved in real struggles to actualize their dreams and personalities. This indicates the enlargement of their human sympathies and the resultant growth of feelings of sisterhood among women in the novels of this phase.

Another aspect which distinguishes these novels from the earlier ones is noticeable in the number of important characters in each of these novels. If Saru, Indu and Jaya stand out as the only important figures in earlier novels, then Mira and Shakutai in *Binding Vine*; Gopal, Kalyani and Aru in *A Matter of Time* and Savitribai and Leela in *Small Remedies* emerge as strong and powerfully portrayed characters besides the protagonists of these novels. Her novels, in this way, achieve a wider canvas and greater depth and complexity in their themes, plots and structures.

*Moving On*, the novel of later phase, appears to be in some significant ways different from all the earlier novels of Deshpande. This is most strikingly visible in the
way value and importance of life, with all its realities are affirmed strongly not only through the protagonist Manjari but also through the thoughts and actions of some of the male figures who are more sharply and vividly delineated than their earlier counterparts. For example, Manjari’s grandfather, a Gandhian, bravely suffers social ostracism and alienation from his immediate family members when he married first, a harijan girl and then after her death, a girl with an inauspicious Mangal in her horoscope. Her father too, emerges as a man of strong will, reason and passion, who affirms the value of relationships and the urge to survive even in the face of disappointment, disease, decay and death. His life with Vasu, his wife, is fraught with silent conflicts due to incompatibilities in their temperaments, outlooks and value systems. Vasu’s life appears to be the most powerful depiction, in Deshpande’s novels, of how puritanically austere attitude and the pressure of conforming to the patriarchal definitions of being a good woman and wife, causes tearing tensions and alienation between mind and body, conventional ideals and actualities, in the life of a woman. Sibling rivalry between sisters with its far reaching effects of estrangement between sister and sister, parents and children, and husband and wife also appear here, for the first time in her novels.

This novel also marks a development over the novels of early and middle phase in terms of the character and personality of protagonist who emerges as more sure of herself than Deshpande’s earlier protagonists. Passing through the sound and fury of life she is determined to bring her life on track and face its pressures and challenges resolutely. She displays greater exuberance and confidence and accepts her responsibility towards others. The protagonist shows a marked refinement of sensibility and consciousness. If she fulfils the longings of her instinctive self, her rational self enables her to steer her life according to her own wishes. Due to this blending of instinctive and rational self she emerges as complex and dynamic individual capable of taking responsibility of her actions without blaming others for her predicament. This is evident further from the way she outgrows her feeling that life is without pattern and moves on to a position from where she can exercise her choices discriminately and confidently, affirming her faith in values of life.

Like Moving On, In the Country of Deceit, her last novel, also highlights the value and significance of human relationships. Though the novel brings out how betrayals and
disappointment can act as powerful alienating agents in one’s life, the dominant mood of the novel is characterized by faith in human abilities to survive all such crises on the strength of love, compassion, human solidarity, courage and faith in human goodness. One finds that not only the protagonist, Devi, but also Kusuma, a woman of the lower class, appears as strong individual possessing the qualities of human sensitivity as well as reason and rationality, enabling her to sail through difficulties with a very positive and affirmative attitude towards life.

This subtle pattern of development, in the treatment of her theme of alienation and affirmation, suggests that in spite of some broad similarities of patterns in the treatment of her protagonists, there are clear indicators revealing a definite pattern of growth in Deshpande’s development as a writer. It is not only the theme that gains in depth, breadth and maturity as she grows as a writer, her art of creating more complex characters and weaving an intricate pattern of life depicting a variety of men and women also becomes apparent if her novels are studied in a chronological order. Moreover, a gradually maturing vision of life and constantly increasing confidence in human abilities to encounter life and its pressures with greater self-confidence, courage and dignity, emerges sharply only when a chronological study of her novels is made. In view of the possibilities of new insights about her mind and art, the present study has been divided into five chapters.

The first chapter introduces the topic and the author. It also gives the general idea of various dimensions of alienation and protagonists’ journey towards affirmation, found in Deshpande’s novels. In the second chapter named ‘Thinkers: The Novels of Early Phase’ study of three novels has been included which shows that the affirmation of the protagonists’ remains limited to their thoughts only. The third chapter named ‘Fighters: The Novels of Middle Phase’ includes the study of next three novels and shows how the affirmation of the protagonists gets implemented in their actions. The fourth chapter named ‘Winners: The Novels of Later Phase’ includes the study of her last two novels. It shows how the protagonists, undaunted by life’s uncertainties, face it courageously and how through their efforts they ensure the victory of their will. The fifth chapter sums up the findings arrived at in earlier chapters.
NOTES


3 Ibid., p. 169.


5 Ibid., p. 15.

6 Ibid., p. 111.


8 Ibid., p. 19.

9 Ibid., p. 123.


15 Ibid, p. 95.

17 Ibid., p. 104.

18 Ibid., p. 103.


20 Ibid., p. 146.

21 Ibid., p. 146.

22 Ibid., p. 146.

23 Ibid., p. 146.


26 Ibid., p. 86.

27 Ibid., p. 86.

28 Ibid., p. 86.

29 Ibid., p. 83.


31 Ibid., p. 56.
32 Ibid., p. 56.

33 Ibid., p. 56.


35 Ibid., p. 77.


37 Ibid., p. 130.

38 Ibid., p. 126.

39 Ibid., p. 130.


41 Ibid., p. 207.


43 Ibid., p. 214.

44 Ibid., p. 215.


46 Ibid., p. 227.


49 Ibid., p. 252.


56 Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (1956; rpt. London and Henley: Routledge and Regan Paul, 1976), p. 120.


64 Ibid, p. 63.

65 Ibid, p. 64.


71 Ibid., p. 50.

72 Quoted in *Anatomy of Loneliness*, p. 56.


75 Ibid., p. 25.

76 Ibid., p. 25.

78 Ibid., p. 438.

79 Ibid., p. 438.


81 Ibid, p. 403.

82 Ibid, p. 403.