CHAPTER VI

SUMMATION

The close study of the novels proves that the characters of Shashi Deshpande represent the middle class Indian woman who has been in the state of modernity rooted with the tradition. The novel *Roots and Shadows* shows the career woman who shares the qualities of the traditional women but desires to be rational and modern. The pseudo modernism in the young minds is perfectly portrayed in the novel. The novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* shows the economically independent woman finds the life difficult because of the hurt ego of her husband. The realization of the modern woman that is a successful career without a family is not fruitful is mentioned accurately through the protagonist of the novel. *That Long Silence* on the other hand brings out the speechless heart of women in the male world. The self-assertion of the protagonist provides the agony of the soul coming out of the traditional boundaries to reach the horizon of the independence in thought and feeling. *The Binding Vine* is about the human relationships nurtured through the female bonding. The novel describes the protagonist’s sincere attempt to reason the other women about the social evils laid against woman folk in the male chauvinistic society. It gives a clear account of the new woman giving her hands to other women to come out of the darkness. The novel thus shows the protagonist who is different from those mentioned in the predecessors and she fights for others besides her own battle.

The four novels show the self-assertion of the protagonists from mystification to the perception, from the dark to the light, from the silence to the expression. The three novels start with the retreat of the protagonists to their parental homes. The home gives them the place for their recollections and their revolution of character. The first novel *Roots and Shadows* illustrates the return of Indu to the parental home after a long interval. The stay has given her a chance to consider her career and compare herself with the other traditional women. Indu has been demonstrated as the young journalist but still in the traditional boundaries. She is a rebel of the family and she has been seen apart from the family picture. But the rebellious nature of Indu led her to a love marriage. She felt that she has been in the same position of the traditional women who are in her parental home. The nuclear family and the joint family systems are differentiated in the novel. The family tree has been planned with the male members of the family leaving all the female members who left the house to the in laws house. So this is the gender discrimination which affects Indu and
makes her realize the state of woman in the joint family system. The stay in the parental home makes her to recall the story of Akka, the relationship with her own father and her childhood days. The story of Akka represents the long history of Indian child marriage. The marriage has been performed without the consent of the girl and it had been a torture to the girl. The husband is free to take any number of woman as he wishes. The wife has to accept and tolerate his behavior. But the story of Akka had the twist and she had got a chance to reverse the position of her husband when he was in the death bed. She became too hard to give any chance to her husband. Though Indu was a journalist, to the female members of the family she is a childless woman. They consider the state of woman in relation to the men. Being a married woman with a son is said to be a blessed woman in the society. She may not be a career woman but her duty in a family is to take care of the husband and others. The talk with her atyas and kakis make her to comprehend the traditional impact is the main reason for the degradation of woman. The reminiscences of Indu are thus filled with the gender discriminations and that gives her a clear picture about the society. The family and the society are framed by male members and the rules are laid by the male. The motive of the rules are to keep the women in silence and the root of the tradition has been so deep in the minds of the girls that they are unable to cut off the clutches as it is in the case of Minu.

The second novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* has shown the retreat of Saru to her parental home to escape from the torture of her husband. The story as in the case of other novels opens with the return of Saru to visit her lonely father. Her stay has given an account of her own repentance for her mistakes of childhood days. She has recalled the crucial moments of her life in the parental house. She had been guilty as she was responsible for the death of her brother and her mother. But she had come out of her guilt after the purgation. Her reminiscences are filled with pictures of the gender discrimination – a mother treating the two children in two different ways because of the gender. Her childhood days give a clear account of the role of a girl in the orthodox family. The parents’ attitude towards the children differs as their wish to have the son as an asset to them. The son has to take care of them in their old age and a son is essential for them even after their death as they believe that they can reach heaven only by getting a son. The daughter is not treated to be a permanent member in the family. Saru has observed the difference in her parents’ attitude. That has been the wound in her mind and created a psychological depression in the young heart. The visit to her parental home has proved the opportunity to analyse her own past life and her present confusions.
The career has given her the economical independence but she has to find her real identity beyond her career and her family. The reputed career has not given her the complete satisfaction in her life. As a wife and a mother she has to fulfil her part in the family. The self assertion with the vivid idea about her life is provided at her stay in the parental home. The novel has discussed the relationship with her father, brother, husband and children. Saru has investigated the real part of her life which has been a shadow till then. She compares herself with other women around her neighbourhood and tries to find a difference between them and her.

_That Long Silence_ starts with Jaya’s visit to the Dadar flat because of the financial crisis in the husband’s office. As in the case of other novels Jaya has not visited her parental home but the new flat has offered her the chance to recollect her past and explore her own image. The new place has been devoid of the routine work as a housewife. Jaya feels free without her routine work. The new atmosphere has given the enough time to peep through her ‘self’. The reality of her position in the family has been assessed at her stay in the flat. She has analysed her career as a writer. Jaya has found a lot of time to go back and search through her memory what she has lost in her life. Her work as a wife and a mother has been established as the permanent image whereas her own real image is never known to her. She has been in the prolonged silence without knowing her own voice. As there is no work she has been free to look for her ‘self’. She searches for her past history in the empty pages of her diary and there is nothing important about her existence in the family. The life of a woman in the Indian family has been described with the real images. Jaya tries to question her relationship with her husband and her children. She has recollected her childhood days where her brother has been treated as important in the family. The gender discrimination has been made her to give up her dream. Her past gives the picture of a traditional marriage of Indian family where the female has no part in finalizing the marriage. Her marriage life has been filled with silence accepting everything as her fate. The stay in the Dadar flat has been provided leisure to make her voice audible after much effort.

_The Binding Vine_ also has the beginning with a crucial moment in the protagonist’s life. Urmila has been mourning for the death of her eighteen month old child daughter Anu. She has not tried to come out of her grief as she feels forgetting is a betrayal to her daughter. Her friend and sister-in-law Vanaa helps her to relax her mental crisis. Urmila meets the rape-victim Kalpana and her mother in the hospital when she goes with Vanaa. The incident makes her to emphathesis with the mother who has her daughter in the death bed. As she has lost her child she would
eventually show empathy on another suffering mother. She voluntarily helps the injured and the suffering mother. She tries to come out of the past and live on the present. She finds the difficulties in reasoning the traditional mother Shakutai about the harm happened and the injustice done on her daughter. Urmi finds a peaceful experience to her soul to meet a mother like and also fights truly for the justice. She like other protagonists goes to the past to revive her position in the present. But the past refers to her mother-in-law’s writings. Urmi finds the wounded bird singing in the poems. Mira had been a rape victim within the structure of marriage. Urmi now compares the two victims Mira and Kalpana, the former had been forced to accept the sexual abuse in the name of marriage and the latter has been forced to accept the assault on her as her own fault. Urmi has fought her best to take the case of Kalpana to the lime light. She has tried to publish the poems of Mira too. Urmi can understand her own relationships within the family, with her husband, her mother and her sister-in-law. She can analyse her wants towards her husband and realises that she has to wait till her husband could reach her emotionally. Her relationship with her mother has been revived as she talks with her mother freely. She can come across the sufferings of her mother because of her father’s domination. She gives hope to Shakutai to overcome the guilty feeling about her daughter as there is no mistake of theirs in the horrible incident. Urmi thus comes out of her grief completely and now can see the world with a clear view. She hopes to live on and on as there is a threat of ‘love’ bonding everyone around us. The novel gives the idea of ‘sisterhood’, a female bonding, to envisage a feminine solidarity towards the social feminist movement.

The four novels have the similar beginning as the protagonists have found her life in the crucial moment as well a new opportunity to travel into the memory lane and find her pictures in the past. The compare and contrast the past and present images and finds the cause for the crisis. Shashi Deshpande has used the stay at their parental home to connect their present state with the past life. The protagonists have searched for their images through their various roles in the family. They have the time to investigate as they are away from her present tension. The modern education of the protagonists have given them the modern ideas about a woman’s place in the family and society but their childhood memories have been filled with the traditional laws which lie in their mind and block their violation of rules. They compare themselves with other traditional women and try to find their image out of the various images. This is the first step of finding the identity in the androcentric society.
Feminism in the Indian society has to deal with the concepts of gender, sex and patriarchy. Moreover the concept of feminism has to explore the social norms in society, suppression of women, female imprisonment, gender discrimination and male attitude towards female idea. The idea of feminism has to be verified discussing the terms such as family and marriage, career and household work, and subjectivity and identity. The patriarchal society has the traces of gender discrimination in almost all the walks of life. The novels of Shashi Deshpande have the clear analysis of the gender bias and the novelist paints the picture with minute details.

The protagonists of the four novels experience the gender discrimination and the patriarchal rules of the society. The first novel *Roots and Shadows* presents the inferior position insisted by the authoritative god mother Akka. As a child Indu was told to be submissive and never allowed to be free as a male child could enjoy. She was once scorn by Akka for talking to a boy in the silent corner of the library. Indu has not interested in following the ancient rules in silence. She has the rebellious nature and tries to find a new path away from the old one. She listened to her Atya that her mother wished to learn music but she was contempt by Akka for learning music from a stranger. Even the story of Akka reveals the gender discrimination. The family tree framed by Kaka has been the fine example of the gender bias. The women have to be in the hearth and there is no part for them in the main stream of the family. The family consists only of the male members leaving all the female members. This shows the gender bias rooted in the Indian society.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* has the vivid picture of gender discrimination discussing the childhood days of Saru. The character of Saru has been moulded by the gender bias experience in her early years. She decided to violate the rules of the society just because she was not treated equally. She watched the death of her brother Dhruva just because she wanted to get rid of him as a rival in the family. She decided to become a doctor as it would give her the high position to enjoy equality or even superiority. Saru has never enjoyed the love of her parents even after the death of her brother. The whole story starts with the gender discrimination.
Jaya in the novel *That Long Silence* has given the account of her childhood experience where her brother has been treated special by her mother. He was described as Ai’s son. He has the deciding authority after the death of their father. The female child never has the privilege to decide anything in the family. Even the mother has to accept the decision of her son after her husband. In the patriarchal society, the family is headed by the male members. The female members are never given importance in the family. The novel gives the idea of how gender discrimination breaks the wings of the female children in the young age.

*The Binding Vine* has the picture of gender discrimination when Vanaa describes that she had tried hard to get the attention of her father but in vain. She had been treated in the secondary position by her father giving importance to her step brother Kishore. There is another incident where Urmí’s mother has been dominated by her husband in the matter of child care. Her mother had no word to say against him when he decided to leave the child with his parents. Vanaa had not been supported by her husband when she wished to get a son. Women had no rights in decision making within the family. Mira had been taken for granted by her husband in the marital life. He had never concerned the wish of Mira in conjugal pleasure. Kalpana had been urged to marry a man who was her uncle. But when she was not accepting the proposal she was raped and beaten. The novel presents a varied picture of gender discrimination in different dimensions.

The social norms of the society are discussed with reference to the experiences of women in the novels. There is a variety of experiences portrayed through a list of characters. The protagonists go through their past and present life and find out the biased social norms. In *Roots and Shadows* there are many glimpses of female narration about the social norms. The traditional women in the novel say about the norms such as the educated woman like Indu is considered invalid if she is childless. Women should be in the kitchen and they cannot enjoy any power in the family. Widows are viewed as wretched creatures and the traditional norms make the widows with shaven head. The norms are very severe that the modern women cannot make themselves away from them.

The girl child has to be under the guidance of the mother. She is the business of the mother. *The Dark Holds No Terror* gives the account of the mother’s attitude towards the daughter. Saru’s mother feels sorry for the dark complexion of Saru and she worries for finding a groom for her. Daughters marriage has to be given importance where as they cannot spend for her education. Her mother sees her education is over burden for them when they are responsible for spending for her
marriage. Thus the women’s education is considered over burden by the parents. In *Roots and Shadows* the education of the girl is stressed by Akka as it is helpful in finding a good groom for the girl. It is viewed as the qualification for a good life partner. In *That Long Silence* also the same view is emphasized through the character of Jaya. She was married by Mohan just because she had her education in a convent. Her English knowledge is the important factor in finalizing the marriage. The four novels consider the women’s education as the additional factor in the marital life but the protagonists use their education to differentiate themselves from the other women. They find the chance to compare themselves with other women and make a difference. They implement their education in moulding their character.

The social norms have been discussed further about the relationships of husband and wife in the four novels. The wife has been viewed as a subordinate to the husband. The traditional women described in every novel present the same image with different symbols. They describe husband as a ‘permanent article’ and accentuate a submissive behavior which they consider as essential for their peaceful life in the world and even in heaven. The wife has to be dependent even she is economically independent. There are traditional symbols such as kumkum to represent the happy life of the woman. The husband is treated as important because he gives the ‘kumkum’ which is the bliss for the woman. The traditional norms make the wife a worker of the family. The wife without a husband is invalid according to the beliefs of the society. *Roots and Shadows* points out the traditional outlook of the traditional women about the childless woman and widows. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* deals with the images of the submissive women who follow the social norms without fail. They find it easy and successful to be a house wife as being responsible for everything happens in the house. They are fond of going after the norms of the patriarchal society. They never feel for their identity or losing their identity for their husband. The characters such as Smitha find it blissful to be a submissive wife. Changing the name of the bride is a custom of certain families. The women have not opposed for changing their name as it is the form of losing identity. They are ready to life a happy life following the words of their husband. *That Long Silence* also shows the traditional norms of the society through the characters. The women are shown as ‘tough’ and ‘silent’. The women are highly responsible for the household affairs. Even the torn button has to be checked by the wife. The novel further shows the traditional women as the subordinate figures in the family. The women are viewed as care takers of the children and husband. But there is no one to take care of their health. The women have not dare to
reveal their illness as it is not welcome by the society. The physical illness has not been discussed even with other woman. The illness related to the womanhood such as excessive bleeding has to be endured silently according to the traditional women. Endurance is the best quality for the women in the society. The tragic death of Vimla shows that even her mother in law has not shown any interest in finding the cause of her illness. The other novels also have the same view as it is the case of Saru’s mother and that of Akka. *The Binding Vine* shows both the traditional and modern women in the different social strata. Urmí’s mother has been separated from her child as she had been considered invalid in bringing up a child. Akka, the step mother-in-law of Urmila, had been married as her husband wanted a woman to take care of his child. She had been a mother of someone’s child and had never complained for that. Shakutai, after many hardships for the family had been deserted by her husband for another woman. She had accepted that as her fate. Sulu her sister had no child and so she herself proposed Kalpana to marry her husband. Kalpana even though bold, could not fight back her life against her lustful uncle.

The puberty has been sighted as a burden to the girl because of the norms of the traditional family. The idea that the girl is ‘unclean’ is planted in the mind of the girls. The womanhood is the way to make the girls submissive. All the novels show the terms as the same. The girl has to be treated separately at the time of monthly ordeals. She has to maintain seclusion in the house every month. The girl is not allowed to talk to boys as it is the disgrace to the family. The girl has to maintain the chastity before and after her marriage. The love marriage has been indicated as a disgrace and so the girls are not entertained to love. The love marriage makes the girl cut off her relationship with the family. The caste system is strictly followed in the orthodox society. The low class people are not well treated even when they are in the good position. *Roots and Shadows* depicts the view of Akka not going to hospital because she does not want to be touched by the low class people even as doctors and nurses. Shakutai in *The Binding Vine* cannot accept the fact that her daughter had been raped as it was disgrace to the family. She was afraid to publish the news in the papers as it would spoil the name of the girl. She finds fault with her daughter for not behaving properly as per the rules laid down for girls. The tradition thus makes a barrier in the name of gender and sex to subservient women forever.

The women are thus suppressed by the patriarchal society by laying many hurdles on their way to emancipation. The educated women also feel it difficult to break the terms. The protagonists
of Shashi Deshpande first think of the traditional norms and the difference they wanted. There is no separate room for the woman in the house and there is no special work for the wife in the family. The woman has to take a secondary position in the family even if she has a career. The protagonists of Deshpande feel the secondary position in the family. They try to analyse their place allotted by the society and the real place they deserve. The novels of Deshpande explain that the suppression of women starts from the childhood days. They are taught by the elder women of the family how to be a good wife and a good mother. The subservient behavior is maintained by the girls from the childhood days. The traditional women advise the girls not to ask questions as it is not liked by the men. The idea that the husband is the ‘sheltering tree’ is implemented in the young minds. The girls are made to observe the idea that the father’s house is not permanent but they are to go and life in the in law’s house. Thus, the tradition makes the girls future servants. The four novels give the same idea of suppression after marriage. The protagonists observe the submissive behavior of other women in the neighbourhood. Marriage makes the women to be silent and be traditional. The family structure wants the women to be submissive. The women have to diminish themselves to maintain peace in the family. The protagonists try to accept their position in order to maintain the family because they never want to break the family and their marital life. The protagonists find it difficult to come out of the traditional clutches but they gradually they can observe their identity from the shattered pieces. The work of women in the family brings about them to break up into many images such as wife, mother and daughter in-law etc. The novels show how women are engaged with the household works daily. But they are not recognized by the male members of the family. The men take it for granted in almost all the issues of women. The traditional attitude of the men has to be mentioned here. The heroes of the novelists may not the strong character as they are compared to the female characters. But they reveal the male attitude in the society through their orthodox behaviour. Roots and Shadows discloses the conventional behavior of the modern man Jayant. He wants his wife to go for the work which she does not like as they want money to live a comfortable life. He does not show interest in his wife’s desires but it is Indu who keeps up pleasing him by the expected answers. She wants to prove that she is happy in her marriage. Manu in The Dark Holds No Terrors represents the typical men of Indian society. He has met with the problem of turning to the secondary place in the family. He could not accept the domination of his wife in the society. The economical state of his wife is
higher than that of him and so he has to bow to his inferior place. But this idea disturbs him and hurt his superior ego. He pacifies his hurt ego by physical assaults on his wife. The inferior state of the man leads to problems in the family. The modern man Mohan in That Long Silence also faces the same problem but in a different situation. The financial crisis in his company makes him feel insecure and he expects his wife to take part in the problem. His insecure feeling gives way to the break of relationship between him and his wife. Mohan expects his wife to be a conventional wife as his mother and sister. He has liked to have an educated woman as his wife but he never liked his wife to use her education in her real life. He rebuked Jaya for her repartee in the beginning of their marital life and he insisted her submissive behavior. But he desires his wife to look modern without asking questions against his wish. Though the appearance of Jaya is modern her thinking should be traditional according to Mohan. Kishore in The Binding Vine has been a traditional husband and he cannot understand his wife emotionally. He asserts himself physically when Urmi, his wife wants him to feel her emotions. He has been a sailor and so he leaves her alone for months. This break in relationship makes her to feel lonely but he never cares for her emotions. The traditional outlook of men is represented by the minor characters of the novels. In Roots and Shadows Ramu Kaka gives the total account of the traditional behavior of men. He desires to draw a family tree comprising only the male members of the family. Saru’s father in The Dark Holds No Terrors considers his daughter as his wife’s business and he even does not try to discover the illness of his wife. Urmi’s father in The Binding Vine had dominated the family and his wife till his death. Harish, Vanaa’s husband has his wife under his control as a traditional husband.

The social norms make the female members of the family within the enchantment. The women are treated submissive by the male members by means of the traditional believes. The women too have the traditional images in their conscious and unconscious mind as they are imbibed many centuries ago. The psychological analysis of the Indian women shows that the images are there in their mind so strong that they cannot come out of them easily. They are surrounded by the tradition everywhere and every time.

The modern woman has been described as the puppet with the unseen thread of tradition around her. She has been modern in appearance but the same as other women of previous
generation. The ideas given by her Kakis are put down in the inner mind of the protagonist. The traditional belief that the man is the protector of the family is stressed in the words of Kakis. Indu wants to be a good wife like other women of the Hindu society. She wants to be with Jayant. Moreover she wants to do what he would like. That is the duty of a good wife but she regrets for her own thoughts. She could not blame Jayant for her thinking. She feels sorry for her own fragments and being whole of her own. She tries to find the individuality in the fragments. The thinking of Indu is the ‘collective unconsciousness’ of a Hindu woman. The series of thoughts reflect the mind of a Hindu traditional woman. These thoughts come from the inner self. The ‘collective unconscious’ images are represented through the words of the protagonist.

The second novel The Dark Holds No Terrors has described the economically independent woman Saru and her dilemma as a typical Indian woman. The novel has showed the disturbed ego of a man and the disturbed family. The protagonist of the novel is a reputed doctor and she has the self content life style with her own earning. But the economical independence cannot provide a deep clarity of her identity. The career is incomplete to fulfil her own identity. Saru as a bread winner of the family could not enjoy the freedom and peace in the family. Instead she suffers a lot just because of her earning high. The physical attack she has to endure in silence reflects the real reward for her financial support to the family. Saru dares not to complaint the brutal attacks of her husband to anyone as her inner conscious reflects the tradition. She gives the reason that she thought of her children sleeping in the next room. But that is not the real reason and she never likes to break her marriage. Hence she endures the sufferings in silence. Later she finds the harmony in the household works. She compares herself with other women in the neighbourhood. Her image of the traditional couple, wife going a few steps behind the husband, explained to the college students show the perfect example of her mind. These are the collective unconsciousness of Saru. The traditional values that are insisted form her childhood and also the primitive laws of Indian society come out through the character Saru.

The gender discrimination is deeply discussed in the novel. The protagonist Saru is neglected by her mother because she is a girl. The boy is welcomed by the parents whereas the girl is a responsibility to set off. The laws of Manu claim the supremacy of the parents who have the son to do the funerals after their death and that is the only way to them to find a place in heaven. The parents of Saru have the same opinion and they are affectionate towards Dhruva. The girl
child has not shown any importance in the family. Saru wants to claim the importance in the family and decides to go away for some time. The plan has been the worst plan for her as it ends with the death of her brother. Dhruva represents the male members of the family who get the attention and affection. Saru’s life has become worse after her brother’s death. The gender discrimination in the mind of her mother has been stronger and it comes out in the words. The agony of losing the only son becomes the deep anger in her minds and it pours out on Saru. The death of her brother thus makes her life so dark that it could not have a dawn at all. The novelist has painted a clear picture of the heart of a girl child in the family which neglects in the name of gender. There is the depiction of the sour relationship between the mother and daughter because of the gender bias. The gender discrimination is the part of the man made laws to support the male dominated world. Saru at last understands her mother and her husband as she realizes the reason for their behavior. The internal persistence of the traditional sayings are the real cause for the behavior of the two and so they are not to be blamed. The realization helps Saru to come out her guilt.

That Long Silence presents the deep silence of Jaya as a traditional woman. Jaya has represented the middle class Indian woman who has been muted after the marriage. The novel has given the idea of choosing a career for a woman after marriage. The career has to be with the consult of her husband. The women in the household are responsible for all the happenings of the home. This attitude is spoken by Mohan and his sister. The character of Jaya has been changed to Suhasini after marriage. The valiant Jaya has changed into the lovable mother and submissive wife. The image of ‘sheltering tree’ represents the ‘collective unconsciousness’ of the Hindu woman. There is a fear in the mind of Jaya that she could not live if Mohan leaves her. This fear also gives the collective unconscious image. The image of ‘bullocks yoked together’ presents the fundamental icon of the Hindu family. There is no passion between the two but only the partnership of a mechanical life is stressed.

The tragic story of Mohan’s mother has presented a vivid picture of the traditional wife who has been submissive to a man without a word. The silence is out of the at most level of anger on the tradition. The older generation has accepted the submissive position in the family as their fate. The male members expect the subordinate place of the female members in the family. The modern educated men have not been changed their attitude. Mohan has not allowed Jaya to argue after marriage. He has believed his mother as a symbol of perfect wife and he expects the same from his wife. The appearance of the woman has to be changed as per the wishes of the husband.
Jaya has changed her appearance as said by Mohan. These reflect the dominating perspective of the men even in the present day. Shashi Deshpande reveals the male and female psyche through the characters in the four novels. The analysis shows the family structure of the Hindu society in the present day. There is little change in the outlook of the male members. The female characters show the traditional clutches through the ‘collective unconsciousness’.

Marriage has been discussed in all the novels of Shashi Deshpande under various conditions. The problems of love and marriage in the Indian context are unthinkable when we compare the conditions of the west. The heroines are tormented by the choice of their own life partners in the novels *Roots and Shadows*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *The Binding Vine*. In India the love is not followed by marriage; it always marriage that proceeds. The marriages in India are arranged based on the class and riches not on the love and affection. The love marriage may be beyond the conventions of the society but there are the same trap as it is concerned by the women. Indu, Saru and Urmi married the men of their own choice but their marriages have led them to the traditional shackles once again. This is because of the traditional attitude of men towards marriage and women. The arranged marriage of Jaya has been made her a silent worker in the new house. She has lost her identity in the roles assigned to her by the society. Minu in *Roots and Shadows* has been ready to accept any groom as there will not be any difference in the marital life. The character of Smitha in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* conveys how marriage changes the whole identity of a woman. Akka in *The Binding Vine* accepts to marry a widower as there is no other hope for her at the age of twenty-seven.

The traditional women like Vanitha Mami considers their marriage is the bliss but the modern woman tries to decide their real identity in the marital relationships. The new woman of Shashi Deshpande has been trying to come out of the trap of marriage; they have to redefine their roles in the family. At the same time they are not breaking their relationship totally from the family.

The view of men on the female is almost traditional. The characters of Shashi Deshpande present the traditional attitude towards the female. Jayant in *Roots and Shadows*, Manu in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Mohan in *That Long Silence* and Kishore in *The Binding Vine* are the traditional men. They want their wives to be modern in the appearance but they want a submissive wife. The novels show the male characters as the traditional symbols. The men cannot tolerate their wives to be superior to them. The men knowingly or unknowingly disturb the wives to make their visions traditional and take decisions on their career. The female characters feel the insecurity
without their men. The major factor of the men’s attitude is this female attitude of insecurity. The women take their family as their vital concern and this becomes their prison in reality. The men take it for granted to dominate the women in the name of family. The men are conventional when they treat women not only as wife but their mother and sister also. Roots and Shadows present the male characters as traditional in their view on women. The Old uncle and Naren are not totally conventional. Indu’s Kaka has the completely conventional so as his sons. The marriage of daughter has been the biggest target in the life of father. He looks for the better groom for his daughter since he concerns only the wealth of the groom. The male characters of The Dark Holds No Terrors are with the conventional outlook; Saru’s father does not feel his duty as a husband when his wife is in the death bed. Padmakar has been a traditional husband but wants a modern wife. Bozzie is not conventional but his relationship with Saru has not been the traditional one. That Long Silence has the list of conventional characters. Mohan’s father is the typical man. But Kamat is modern in thought and he advises Jaya to be frank and clear in her outlook. The Binding Vine provides conventional men such as Kishore, Bhasker, and Harish. All men are in the typical traditional style and treats women as their subordinates. Kishore and Harish like their wives but they do not give importance to the emotions of their wives. Bhasker has treated Urmi not as his friend but as his lover. When Urmi expressed her love for her husband, he cannot accept the reality and after that he avoids her.

The career decisions of women are taken only by the men. The women have to discuss their career with their husbands. The traditional motif of the men is to make women conventional beyond their education. The women are expected to be subservient even after a good education and career. The final decision inside the family is taken by the male. The woman has to adjust her desires according to the wishes of her husband. This compromise is done by most of the Indian woman just because to maintain the family structure. The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande are also in the same cross roads to male-adjustments for the family. Indu in Roots and Shadows and Jaya in That Long Silence are discussing their career options with their husbands. Indu takes up journalism though she is not satisfied with the work. She wants to have her own writing but Jayant her husband does not want to lose the salary of Indu. The financial status of the family is given more importance than the emotions of woman. When Jaya wrote a remarkable story Mohan has been very sad just because it narrated a husband who was unable to reach his wife’s emotions.
After reading the story Mohan was upset and said to his wife not to write in the same manner as it would make the readers to think that he was that kind of man. He insisted Jaya to write a light writing and so she began to write column in a pseudo name ‘Seeta’. Not only the name but the matter it contained are also conventional. The story of Saru, in The Dark Holds No Terrors finds the same crisis. Her career as a doctor provides the comfortable life to the family. But her husband Manu cannot tolerate her superiority at the same time he never wants to lose the financial support of Saru. Whenever Saru tries to give up her career for her family it is only Manu who prevents her for doing so. Vanaa has been a medical social worker but mostly considered as a housewife by her husband. Mandira her daughter feels that it is the duty of a woman to be a mother. The novels illustrate the career of the woman is overpowered by men though they like to have the financial support by woman.

The family assumes more importance in the life of woman than her career. The protagonists are ready to sacrifice their career in order to get hold their smooth family relationships. But they understand that they have to maintain the two ‘family and career’ as this balance is essential to build their whole image. The career has to provide the woman a satisfaction and emancipation and so is she who has to choose her career. The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande at last decide to take up their own career; Indu and Jaya as serious writers; Saru decides to continue her medical career. Only her career calls her back to meet the reality in the end of the novel, The Dark Holds No Terrors.

The career has been depicted as the first step to their emancipation as it helps the women to decide their place in the family and the society. The career gives the clear mind to look into the status of women and so women of Shashi Deshpande have given their importance to their choice of career. The novelist stresses that the career of a woman has to give her not only satisfaction but an illumination in her.

There should be an assessment about the household works done by women. The protagonists feel the relaxation in doing the household works sometimes but the over view illuminates the real psyche of Indian women in doing all the household tasks. Saru cannot overlook her household works when she is working outside the house. She has to be successful in both the places. She will be a wrongdoer if she neglects her family and her children. When she had been late she was scorned by Manu. She has to serve food and she cannot expect any help from her husband. She wants to give up her ambition as she wishes to be happy in the family. Saru finds
harmony in doing the domestic chores when she spends time in her parental home. It has been the change to her mind from her routine medical career. She feels relaxed when she has been doing all her household tasks. But it is not the permanent satisfaction to her psyche. The everlasting fulfillment is her medical career as she discovers it when she has been called by her neighbor to treat a child. The novel That Long Silence depicts the bewildered condition of Jaya after reading her diary which has the account of menial things. When she recalls her life there is only a collection of tedious works which has no meaning at all. She finds it so difficult to accept the reality that there is no life for her without the domestic chores. She has spent most of her life time in doing such chores. She cannot find her image from the monotonous works. She has lost almost her ‘self’ in the daily works. When she has been away from her routine work the reality strikes her harder how much time she has wasted in her life. Indu has been the modern as well conventional woman who spends time in household works just to exhibit their modernity. To her it is monotonous but she keeps on doing the same thing just to pacify her husband. She understands that it is not real nature of her and wants to be free from that. In total the domestic chores make women dull and away from their real self. The novelist makes it clear that the women are enslaved by the chores and it is the hurdle in finding the real image.

In India the modern woman has to take care of her career as well her home and it makes her double slave. But the home is the power to get the total identity as it is significant factor in the society. In west woman create her own life with her own desires. But in India woman is created by the society with the insisted desires. The west makes woman free and the free woman controls herself. But in India the woman is controlled by the norms of the society. The structure of the family in India has been designed by men but the total structure is based on the cooperation of women. The Indian woman needs to adjust her work within her family in addition to keep up her desired career. The Indian woman has been working in finding the whole identity within the new parameters. The successful new woman finds it necessary to create a balance between her family and career; career and chores. The duty as a wife and mother is considered crucial by the women as it is the call of her womanhood. But there should be a change in the attitude of man towards the roles of woman. The change has been gradual as said by Shashi Deshpande. Everything cannot be changed in one day. But the protagonists expect the changes to come gradually. They are clear with the idea that they are going to be true to themselves and they will depict the real identity.
The new woman has understood the subjectivity of herself to the conventional fetters designed by the patriarchal society. The education has provided her the new knowledge of feministic ideas. The new woman in India has to redefine their conventional roles by means of her modern education and her career. The novels of Shashi Deshpande describe the voyage of woman from the traditional notions to modern reality. The new women of Shashi Deshpande are on the way to assert their individuality, and confront their husbands in search of freedom. In addition to that they try to redefine human relationships. The novelist insists that the women have to come forward to analyse their conventional roles and it is the women who have to get their freedom from their own age old ideas. There is no one to give the woman the freedom but she herself has to get it from within. The identity of the woman has to be emerged from her own self. For this she has to understand the ‘self’ which is shattered by the conventional images of woman as daughter, sister, wife, and mother as well her career. All the images have to be united and to be built into a whole identity of the new woman. The redefining of the relationships starts from the new built identity. The new woman looks at the society and family from the view of her new identity.

The first step of finding their new identity, the women of Deshpande initiate their quest for self expression. The new woman analyses her position and that of the old woman. Then she compares and contrasts the two. This capacity to compare and analyse, to understand and criticize is a distinguished character of the new woman. The old woman cannot think broaden or her mind cannot be open. Saru realizes the work of men and women as it is in the west as well the east. She thinks of a man as working and earning money; women maintaining the house, the man and the children. Saru has found that the pattern has changed little. Even today the men went to work; children to school; women stayed at home doing all the chores.

The new woman distinguishes her position with that of her traditional counterpart. She realizes the futility of her high status and position. She understands that her equality is only theoretical. Jaya in *That Long Silence* laughs at the idea of giving woman an equal status and honour in marriage ‘a pair of bullocks yoked together’. When the image is scrutinized it is easy to understand that in reality the woman is turned into a submissive docile and humble creature. She knows that if she learns to be protesting she will not be able to enjoy a happy married life. Saru also realizes the same as she never likes to dominate her husband. Indu in *Roots and Shadows* has the same idea on protesting. The realization of practical subordination and theoretical equality make the new woman to look into the reality as it is. Urmi in *The Binding Vine* advises Vanaa to be independent in her
thoughts. She wants Vanaa to assert herself without asking her husband’s opinion for everything. She guides Preeti to look at the life as a realist not as a pseudo-feminist. She has the proper outlook on feminism that she has believed in self assertion and self identity.

The modern woman is more rational than emotional. Women in the past are blind believers of the customs but the modern woman questions their rationality. She understands that applying kumkum and circumbulating the Tulsi plant cannot prolong the life time of her husband. But there are some faith lies in the latent in her subconscious mind. She does not get any logic in pronouncing the name of her husband and so she pronounces his name without any hesitation. She says that she does not want him and this idea of ‘not liking’ him never occurred in the past. The revolutionary idea of disliking the husband shows the change in the woman’s attitude. She argues that if she does not find happiness in one man it is natural to find it in another man. The extramarital relationships depict the woman’s want of sexual freedom in the society. The man has all rights to have many illegal relationships and he would not be blamed for it but would be praised for her power. The same cannot be done by the woman as it is the norms of the society. The woman has to maintain her chastity before and after marriage. The new woman considers her sexual freedom as her real freedom. Indu has the extramarital relationship with Naren, as it is in the case of Saru with Bozzie, Jaya with Kamat and Urmi with Bhasker. The four women have never considered these relationships as violations but they need this type of relationships to release her tension or to show her power or to pacify her hurt psyche. They have the hesitation in the beginning but they give themselves explanations and thus the new woman has made her achievement in getting the sexual freedom. But they do not want to disturb their family and children. They have analysed the outcome of the extramarital relationships and find out that there is no real happiness in such relationships. Shashi Deshpande does not advise these relationships as other radical feminists. The heroines of Shashi Deshpande do not continue such relationships as they discover that the real fulfillment would come from only within.

The biological condition of the woman has been considered by the feminists as the tool of patriarchal society to control women. The physical difference has been the cause of the fetters of women for the centuries. Simon de Beauvoir feels the biology of woman is the prison to her. She looks at the womanhood as the trap used by men to restrain women. The women in India have been insisted to keep up their womanhood as sacred but the troubles of womanhood is considered as secrets. The French feminists feel the psychological influence in making the woman. The
conventional woman has not been free to discuss her illness to anyone. She has to endure the physical and mental illness without any complaints. But the new woman has considered her body much and she is willing to help the other woman to get the remedies. Saru chides the conventional women lurking with illness as ‘stupid silly martyrs’. This scientific attitude to the body has been the source to overcome the patriarchal fetters.

The psychological approach to the feminism is the outcome of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*. The psychological concept of Freud has been argued by the feminists. The modern education and the clear idea of sex and marriage have given the new woman a newer approach. The conventional women in India feel ashamed of talking about sex. Even the new woman like Saru has the fear of sex as it is forbidden by the society. The fear of sex causes from the social norms that restricts women’s freedom. The men are independent in their relationships but the women are always dependent in their affairs. Though the new woman has the knowledge of men and women, and the association between them, she has not the will to reach the new height beyond the tradition. The new woman may try to overlook the meaning and necessity of the institution of marriage. But she understands the difference between a wife and a mistress. This shows that the social conditions have not changed. The new woman has changed her attitude but the unchanged social order makes her position worse. Though she is ready to live separately the conventional society makes her living difficult without the hallmark of marriage. The new woman has to compromise with the family to maintain the family system in the society. The other cause for her compromise is her motherhood. The new woman is the new mother. She has to take care of her children and it is her responsibility to pacify the physical, mental, psychological emotional needs of the children. The new mother has the new objective that is to make their children to grow with modern idea expecting to create a new society. Jaya decides to change her attitude towards her son as it is her duty to inspire her children in the right way. Urmi has been a good mother not to give a discriminate attitude towards her son.

The new woman is more brave and courageous and she is in the quest of self expression. The frankness is another important feature of the new woman. Her openness makes her to decide her relationships. The modern woman is freer but she is not completely free from the male domination. Physical, mental and sexual assaults on women are common even in the present society. The new woman is not completely different from the old woman. She is emerging from the old woman. The post modern consciousness described in *The Golden Notebook* by Lessing
correctly explains the condition of new woman: the state of mind is a jumble of contradictory moods—a wrenching nostalgia for the comfort of the past forms, a paralyzing fear of the formlessness of the present, a despairing sense of emptiness and futility, a positive will to confront chaos, often counter-pointed by a public of defensive ‘cool’. The woman is forced to form an ambiguous relation to the two poles of chaos and order.

The woman has provided the interest in getting the power to them. The want of power makes the heroines of Shashi Deshpande to move against the current. ‘Hegemony’ as said by Marxist feminists is the key word of domination in the society. The men of all classes have the dominating attitude on women. The men exercise their power on women and this is the reason why the feminists feel the need of power changing in the society. The women have been on the way to obtain equal power even more power in the society. The economical and biological powers are the essential characteristics of men to govern the world especially women for centuries. The men are physically stronger than the women and they biological structures as their strength. The women have never thought to dominate men on the biological ground. The new woman has the wish to overcome the inferiority in the society and in the family. Woman has no power in the family where she is considered as the menial worker. The new woman has the point of view that the power changes have to take place first in the family. The protagonists of Shashi Deshpande have the same view and they try to dominate the family. They express their wish to be treated equally by men. The women of Deshpande have been powermongers and hence they wish to use their power and to change the traditional setting. The gender role of women has been changed and it naturally leads to the power changes in the family.

*Roots and Shadows* depicts how Akka has become a dominating power after her husband has been an invalid. Here Akka has been physically stronger than her husband. She has wielded her power in her brother’s family as she has returned with her riches. She has learnt the lesson of domination. Akka rules the family as she has the economical influence. She has made Indu as her heir because of Indu’s quality of dominance. When Indu has realized the comparison she has decided to utilize the property as per her own wish. She exercises her power over the total family and understands how her wealth has been a tool to overpower others. This is the same principle used by the society to exploit the poor. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* has the domination of Saru as she has been the bread winner of the family. Her longing for power makes her to run from the family in her childhood. She has become a doctor as she think of the career would give her a special
power in the society. In her family also she has overpowered her husband as she has become economically stronger. *That Long Silence* has the same idea in a different situation. It is Mohan who thinks that he has been diminished by her wife as he has lost his job. Mohan observes the abnormality in the behaviour of Jaya in the new place. But in reality Jaya has felt insecure in the new scenario. It is Mohan’s fear of losing ground that has made him to rebuke Jaya. In turn Jaya has not explained her position in the case instead has given a peel of laughter which outrages the hurt ego of Mohan. Her love for power is revealed from her childhood as she has been visualized by her father as ‘victory’. She has not given her concern in moving to Dadar flat and she has not given the keys to Mohan. She wants to hold her power over the flat. Urmi in *The Binding Vine* has developed ‘female bonding’ to overcome the patriarchal supremacist. She counsels other women about the modern ideas and age old fetters. She shares the experiences, beliefs and goals with other women. She maintains good relationship with women to work solidarity. When the economical condition of the women rises above that of men, the women have the choice of domination over men. The ‘hegemony’ has made the women who have been exploited over centuries find the chance to conquer the high position in the society. The economical status has been the tool of the new woman in getting the power over men though it is not liked by men.

Shashi Deshpande is a realist in making the characters. She portrays the real characters of flesh and blood as representing the real scenario of the society. As she focuses on the middle class women, the dilemma of tradition and modernity is high. The protagonists have the modern education which gives them the motive of self assertion but the beliefs of tradition never unbound them. The characters are shown in the pace of going towards the modernity leaving behind the unwanted traditional believes. The novels *Roots and Shadow* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* show the period of self assertion of the protagonists in their respective parental homes. But *That Long Silence* shows the protagonist analyzing her self in the simple flat but away from the routine work. The quest for identity starts with the stay in parental homes and they start questioning their past and present. In *The Binding Vine* the self assertion starts with her reading the poems of Mira. That is the incident relates her to the past.

Her female characters are very authentic, not merely fictional. Her stories are life-like; pleasant and at the same time rational. Her novels are different from those feminine novels as the treatment of Shashi Deshpande is not peripheral. She never glorifies the conventional feminine virtues of Indian woman such as patience, and devotion etc. She creates “live characters out of day-to-day life and very
carefully avoided creating wooden characters to fulfill her dream. The novelist excels in the portrayal of women characters. But she is against the character of superwoman or idealizing them” (Dr Neeta Sharma, *Authentic Female Characters in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande*, 14). Her women are ready to fight against the challenges. They are capable of living independently and authentically.

The four novels begin with the protagonists go to the new place away from their routine. The visit provides the enough time for their self assertion. The protagonists analyse the past life and their current position in the family. The past life especially the reminiscences of the childhood days provide them their real attitude and they can understand how they have changed after marriage. The rebellious nature of the protagonists in their childhood gives the sharp contrast situation they face after their marriage. They can compare themselves with the other traditional women. The comparison shows the minimum difference in their attitude as they are thinking of their self assertion and the other are not in the quest. The margin between the two set of women is very thin as they have the same broad views in common.

*Roots and Shadows* shows Indu in her parental home thinking of her past and her present issues. The past images show her as the rebellious child who never compromise with the traditional ordeals. The present position of Indu portrays the contrast picture as now she has become the traditional wife who works hard to pacify her husband. The time she spent in the parental home helps her to come out of the traditional boundaries. She realizes her mistakes and changes her thoughts. She thinks of her outlook with her husband, her career and her relationships with Naren. She analyses her relationship with her father and other members of the family. She compares herself with her aunts and her cousin Mini. She comes to a string conclusion of her self-identity. The parental home and the new surrounding provide the base for her quest for her identity. She can revive her real rebellious nature towards the tradition after her recollections. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors* Saru visits her father after a long time. She has visited there as a refuge from the present problem. The stay has provided the situation to think of her past guilty feelings and the solution for the present problems. The quest comes to the completeness of her identity. She feels sorry for her brother, mother and her husband. The analysis of her past gives the solace to her hurt psyche. The comparison of herself with the other women of the nieghbourhood allows her to think of the real nature in her. She as a child is totally against the tradition but the concept of marriage has made her a submissive wife. She finds solace in the household works but she realizes her self
identity in the inner self. She analyses her position in the family and society. Her lecture to the college students shows her self-assertion. The talk shows her belief in tradition but the inner psyche of Saru never accept the traditional images. The quest for identity in the relationships shows the heap of broken images before her. The parental home helps her to complete the image with the past, present and future. That Long Silence starts with the retirement of Jaya and her husband to the humble Dadar flat. There is no routine work for her in the new flat. She has reviewed her past in the silence. The past life bewilders her as she could not find any important things in her diaries. The life has been filled with menial and trivial things. The recollection of her past gives the ideology of self assertion. Jaya has evaluated her past and present position, as well her idea about her career. Mira was the reference to the past in The Binding Vine and her poems show a modern woman among the conventional women. When Urmi reads the poems of Mira, she imagines herself as the daughter of Mira and it creates a bonding between herself and Mira. She visualises the sufferings of Mira through her words. She compares herself and Kalpana with Mira. This recollection of the past makes her to revive her relationship with her mother too. She finds the ‘hope’ to live through these bonding. The self quest for complete identity has started from the recollection of the past. Shashi Deshpande uses the recollection of the past to show the characters in the direct contrast and the clear image of their real nature.

The protagonists show the same attitude towards the concept of marriage after their self analysis. They compare the difference between the love and arranged marriage. Indu in Roots and Shadows finds the love marriage as the route to escape from the traditional family setting. But her love marriage makes her an obedient wife and there is no difference between the love and arranged marriage. But the opinions of Mini about marriage give a lucid description of the Indian woman in the marriage. There is no choice given to the girl in the arranged marriage. The family decides the groom and it is the fate of the girl to accept the marriage. The Indian family takes the marriage of a girl as their responsibility and being the father of a girl is the worst thing in the Indian society. The father of the girl has to accept the condition of the groom and his family. The girls are given education not to reason them but to send them to rich homes as wives. The education of a girl is viewed as a better qualification in the marriage fare. The girls are brought up with the traditional attitude that the in laws house as their permanent home. The noel gives the frame work of the Indian marriage.
Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* also compares the love and arranged marriage. She loved and married a low class man in order to reject the traditional rules of her mother. In course of time she thinks of her problems and compares her state with her friend. When there was a problem in the life of a girl who has got married with the concern of her parents, the family supports her and helps her. When there is a problem in her marriage life, Saru could not get any help from her family as it is her decision to marry Manu. When Saru meets her childhood friends, Smitha and Nalu, the novelist presents the three different pictures of women. The character of Smitha represents the traditional wife who has changed her name to please her husband. She never has enjoyed the economical freedom in the family. Moreover she enjoys the present life in spite of the shortcomings. The character of Nalu portrays the spinster and her disgust in life. The idea that career without family would leave disgust in clear in the words of Nalu. Saru has been enjoying a profession and a family. The novelist explains the importance of family along with the career through the protagonist.

The novel *That Long Silence* also shows the limitations of arranged marriage. Jaya could not have the choice of her marriage. She had to accept the choice of her family. There is no other way to neglect and so she is ready to accept Mohan. Her education has been the main idea of solemnizing the Marriage. As Mohan liked to marry a girl who knows English, he is ready to marry Jaya. Thus her education has given her the better husband. This shows the parameters followed in Indian society in marriage. Thus the society expects the girl has to be the subservient wife and caring mother after marriage despite of her education and career. The changing name for the girl after the marriage is a custom in certain Indian families. The change of name refers to the loss of identity but Jaya refuses to change her name. She is not ready to lose her identity in marriage. But in course of time, she has changed her mind and has become a submissive wife.

The novel *The Binding Vine* portrays the limitations of both love marriage and arranged marriage. Urmi married a man of her choice whom she knew from her childhood. But that could not make her marital life wonderful because her husband Kishore has never attempted to understand her emotionally. She can be a career woman and maintains her family peacefully. She loves her family and wants to balance her career and family. She is a good mother and mourns the death of her child daughter. The story gives the limitations of arranged marriage through the life of Mira, who was married to a traditional husband. Mira was expected to be submissive wife but
she could not destroy her own identity. She could not accept her name changed to ‘Nirmala’. She never responded to anyone who called her Nirmala. Thus she showed her protest. She had recorded her inner sufferings in her poems. The novel shows the arranged marriage in the modern setting through Harish and Vanaa. Both are modern in education but traditional in their mind and they have their life as a traditional couple of ‘master and subordinate’.

The concept of marriage is dealt with much care by Shashi deshpande in her novels. The protagonists analyse their marriage and the problems of marriage. The novelist presents the picture of the Indian marriage and the problems faced by the woman in the marriage. The marriage makes the family, the social unit but the marriage is viewed as a commercial process in making the woman as permanent slaves in the name of tradition.

Shashi Deshpande expresses the process of asserting self- identity through her characters. The protagonists go through a long process in their life before attaining the self identity. The novels usually begin with questions and end with the solutions. All the novels end with the positive note and give the hint of the upliftment of the protagonists. The novels show the problems of the protagonists in analyzing their position in the family and society. In course of the story the novels develop the problems and their dilemma in tradition and modernity. The protagonists analyse their current position and atlast decides how to be in the future. They understand that they cannot get the completeness outside but from inside. The process of self assertion is stated with the stream of consciousness techniques as it would help to give the deep analysis of the character.

Shashi Deshpande's novels are concerned with a woman's quest for self; “an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist's place in it”. (P.Ramamoorthi, “My life is my own”, 116). Deshpande's novels usually begin with an unconventional marriage leading to the problems of alienation, accommodation and adjustment. Her attitude to her character is compassionate and sympathetic. The conflict that her protagonists face is largely due to desperate unconscious submission to traditional roles. When the men in the life of the protagonists began to pull up the very roots of their existence, they rose in defiance them and found a way of the own, rejecting all over-riding influences. The strength of Shashi Deshpande's novels is her close involvement with the subject. She presents a fair picture of life in her novels. She gifts her protagonists with a double vision to analyses their life as well as the others. Deshpande's protagonists struggle to find their own voice.
In an interesting interview, Deshpande reveals that all her characters are concerned with their "selves" and they learn to be "honest" to themselves. Being true to one's self, not as being true in the sense that nature/culture demands of you, is the wisdom that Deshpande protagonist learns.

Women in these novels have established themselves as autonomous beings, free from the restrictions imposed by society, culture, nature and also free from their own fears and guilt; that women have reached a stage of understanding the fundamental truth; You have to find it for yourself. Saru's marriage is a means to get away from her mother and her home. The departure of the heroine from the mother is the first step towards autonomy; for, mother is the first pedagogue of the do's and the don’ts on the woman. Marriage, the promised end in a traditional society, in feminist fiction becomes only another enclosure that restricts the movement towards autonomy and self-realization.

The woman in order to achieve her freedom seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. She resents the role of a daughter and looks forward to the role of a wife with the hope that her new role will help in her winning their freedom.

Shashi Deshpande's heroines reject rituals that are the vestiges of the past. In their rejection of their mother, they also discard the meaningless rituals like circumambulating the Tulsi plant. Both Indu and Saru refuse to undertake such rituals which are meant to increase the life span of their husbands. The rejection is an indication of their autonomy and their capacity to see their lives independent of their mother/past. Indu and Saru tend to associate their mothers/mother-figures with the stereotype normally created by male writers- the stereotype of a mother who is passive in her suffering, who showers affection on the male child and who makes a lot of sacrifices for the sake of the family. These heroines shudder at some of the natural biological functions of the female (associated with the mother) and they have developed, from their childhood, apathy towards their body.

The idea that she is "unclean" has been planted in her mind. She develops an aversion to the body and all bodily functions. Indu cannot understand how a woman could breastfeed her child in the presence of another human being. Saru too has similar frightful experiences. She has her painful middle-class inhibitions and one constant image the novelist uses is "like removing your clothes in public" and though she has had two children, Renu and Abhi, yet the maternal instinct in her is not
focused. The Shashi Deshpande heroine is confronted with the problem of what the mother stands for and the only way out for her is to seek a new environment where the mother cannot exercise her will.

At the end of the novel, Indu realizes that Akka is not a sadist. Indu has confronted her real self and she knows her roots; she need not be ashamed of her body and sexual needs; she has to decide what her job will be; she is capable of taking decisions not only for herself but for others too, and life does not come to an end with individuals, be it Indu or Jayant.

Saru in The Dark Holds No Terrors also undergoes the arduous journey into herself and learns to free herself of guilt, shame, humiliation and she is also initiated into the mystery of human existence. The epigraph of the novel

You are own refuge

There is no other refuge

This refuge is hard to achieve (The Dhammapada)
gains its total significance when Saru realizes that the parental home cannot be a refuge. She understands that neither her father nor her husband Manohar can be her refuge. She is her own refuge. She has to overcome herself; she has to kill the ghosts that haunt her; she has to find her own way to salvation. The parental home initiates the protagonists into an understanding of the meaning of human life. Saru reflects on the human situation:

All right, so I'm alone. But so's everyone else. Human beings. . . they're going to fail you. But because there's just us, because there's no one else, we have to go on trying. If we can't believe in ourselves, we're sunk. (200)

Saru has gained the assertion of will and confidence in herself. She learns to trust herself. Saru, who had instructed her father not to open the door for her husband Manu, now tells her father: “And oh yes, Baba, If Manu comes, tell him to wait. I'll be back as soon as I can” (202).

This does not mean that she will go back to her husband but it only suggests that she is capable of facing Manu and asserting her own rights and individuality. The casualness in her words, "Oh yes, Baba" and "as soon as I can," assert her individuality. She is no longer doubtful about her potential as a human being. She thinks of the sick child she has to
attend and begins to diagnose the illness. The novel ends with Saru restoring herself the pride of her profession, a doctor.

It is to be noted that Saru, at the end of the novel, has come to realize that her profession as a doctor is her own and she will decide what to do with it. "My life is my own." She will no longer be a puppet. Her marriage is a shadow. She held on to the marriage because she did not want to prove her mother right. Only she can be her refuge. Everyone is lonely and that there is no cause for despair.

The movement of the Shashi Deshpande heroine from her parental home to the outside world, through education and marriage, does not really initiate them into knowledge of the self. Their defiance of the mother does not ensure them the freedom they desire. Their return home, in the absence of the mother/mother figure only helps them realize their own selves. They had imagined that their mothers stifled their growth and so defied them. But when husbands began to kill the very roots of their existence, they defied their husbands and find a way of their own, rejecting all over-riding influences. Their fear of losing themselves in the dark mysterious universe is dispelled by their understanding that *The Dark Holds No Terror* if one can believe in one's self and if one accepts the responsibility for one's life. *That Long Silence* ends with the promise of the telegram ‘All’s well’ which means that Mohan has solved the problem in his office. Jaya at last decides to speak out her ideas without any restrictions. There is an idea of continuing her writing career. Thus she has come out of her silence to the reality.

Women, she feels must not be reduced to the level of a breeding machine. I have a very strong feeling that until very recently women in our society have been looked upon just as 'breeding animals'. They had no other role in life. I have a strong objection to treating any human being in that manner. .... The whole chronology of their life centers around child birth..... The stress laid upon the feminine functions, at the cost of all your potentials as an individual, enraged me. ..... May be too much of thinking has made me express a sort of dislike for the purely physical aspects of feminine life, making it seem as if I am against all feminine functions, which is not the truth at all. (Geetha Gangadharan, "Denying the Otherness (Interview)." The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande, 251)

Deshpande is against categorizations. Deshpande has portrayed the new Indian woman and her dilemmas, her efforts to understand herself and to preserve her identity as wife, mother and, above all, as a human being in the tradition-bound, male-dominated Indian society. The Indian
woman's plight is a part of a general human predicament, though her experience is significantly more intense. Virginia Woolf points out the differences in male and female experiences, and their expressions in literature are different. She says: “There is the obvious and enormous difference of experience in the first place; but the essential difference lies in the fact not that men describe battles and women the birth of children, but that each sex describes itself” (Qtd.in Toril Moi, *Sexual/textual politics: Feminist literary theory*, 200)

Deshpande's novels contain so much that can be regarded as the staple material of feminist thought: women's sexuality, the gender roles, self-discovery and so on. But she can be called a 'feminist', if at all, only in a certain specific sense. The interview given to Lakshmi Holmstrom throws significant light on her stance:

I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a feminist. In my own life, I mean. But most consciously, as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has come to me very slowly, very gradually, and mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first, and only then discovered my feminism. And it was much later that I actually read books about it (*Wasafiri*, 25-26).

To Deshpande's mind, no amount of theorizing will solve women's problems - especially in the Indian context. Elucidating her viewpoint she further remarked:

But to me feminism isn't a matter of theory, it is difficult to apply Kate Millett or Simone de Beauvoir or whoever to the reality of our daily lives in India. And then there are such terrible misconceptions about feminism by people here. They often think it is about burning bras and walking out on your husband, children, etc. I always try to make the point now about what feminism is not, and to say that we have to discover what it is in our own lives, our experiences. And I actually feel that a lot of women in India are feminists without realizing it (26).

This is a highly sensible approach. Deshpande, unlike hard-core feminists, does not agree that being a wife or mother is something that is unnecessary imposed on a woman. According to her, "It's needed". She craves for "a greater sense of balance". Self-confessedly, she feels trapped in the woman's world. She says: "...maybe I want to reach a stage where I can write about human beings and not about women or men. ..... For I don't believe in having a propagandist or sexist
purpose to my writings". If her writings present such a perspective, it is only a "coincidence" (*Literature Alive*, 13-14).

The strong point about Deshpande's novels is her delineation of the woman's inner world. She herself admitted to Geetha Gangadharan in an interview:

> We know a lot about the physical and the organic world and the universe in general, but we still know very little about human relationships. It is the most mystifying thing as far as I am concerned. I will continue to wonder about it, puzzle over it and write about it. And still find it tremendously intriguing, fascinating (Qtd. in R.S.Pathak, *The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande*, 11).

Deshpande's protagonists are women struggling to find their own voice and are continuously in search to define them. But they "become fluid, with no shape, no form of ..... (their) own" (*Roots and Shadows*, 15). Jaya, in *That Long Silence*, undertakes a futile search for her 'self'. "The real picture, the real 'you' never emerges. Looking for it is as bewildering as trying to know how you really look. Ten different mirrors show you ten different faces"(1). The experiences of Indu, in *Roots and Shadows*, also are not different. "This is my real sorrow that I can never be complete in myself" (34), she bewails. She thought that she had found in Jayant, her husband, "the other part of my whole self", but she came to realize that "this was an illusion" "But can perfect understanding ever exist"? (34), she asks.

That Deshpande has been genuinely interested in issues pertaining to the lost of women in India is irrefutable. What makes matters worse for Indian women is that there are no choices before them. Like marriages, their decisions are made in heaven - in their husband's mind. It is creditable that despite her family background - in particular her father's intellectual pursuits - and her own philosophical orientation, Deshpande has taken up for discussion some crucial aspects of woman's life such as sex, sexuality and her body."Sex is only a temporary answer," declares *The Binding Vine* (139), but it is an answer nonetheless. The 'pseudo-Puritanism' and 'sham', mentioned in *That Long Silence* (3), have to be set aside. Indu in *Roots and Shadows*, for example, resents her womanhood and as woman feels "hedged in my sex" (87). In a male- dominated society a woman is expected to be 'passive' and 'unresponsive', for it shocks people like Jayant "to find passion in a woman". In this repressive atmosphere Indu finds herself just "an anachronism" - "A woman who loves her husband too much. Too passionately. And is ashamed of it" (83).
Although physical aspects of body have not been allowed to have a way, creditably enough the novelist is not oblivious of its legitimate claims. Apparently, as said earlier, her women characters seem to be rather fettered by the natural functions of the body.

It is creditable that the novelist has not ignored body and its demands. Michel Foucault comments:

> Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power holds in check. ..... it is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not as a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasure, the incitement of discourse .... are linked to one another

(_The History of Sexuality_, 143).

The time has come when woman's "body must be heard" and "Woman must uncensor herself, recover her goods, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal. She must throw off her guilt ...." (Raman Seldon, _A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory_, 150-51). Anything like this is yet to happen in Deshpande's fiction, notwithstanding anatomical descriptions and detailed specifications in her short stories, but the absence of total reticence in this respect in her novels is a reality and woman's plight in India. While remaining well within the bounds of the Indian middle-class respectability, the novelist has raised some significant questions pertaining to the position of women in society and gender issues.

Deshpande’s use of steam of consciousness technique is to project the psychic reverberations of her characters in order to make the story more real and authentic. Her heroines like Jaya are rebels but only passive ones whose incarcerated lamentations are but cries in the wilderness, “mute and desperate calls to restructure the groove of society” (Menon, Commonwealth Quarterly, 32) Rebellion and suffering in Jaya has a proclivity for being transmuted into an artistic expression. In her there is an inner need of creativity and fulfillment but this creative expression in her is inhibited due to lack of privacy, of sheer physical space to reflect and work in. Virginia Woolf attributed woman’s need of a room of her own to give way to her creativity. In case of Jaya, strong social and family pressures suppresses her creativity and holds all creative activities in subservience to her role as a home-maker. Feminists like Helene Cixons and Luce Irigarary identify the feminine at levels of silent and unconscious. The metaphor of
silence is her retreat, a defense mechanism which helps her to express herself more comprehensively and artistically.

The first person narration helps to express the agonized reminiscences. It is an apt means to communicate the crushing need to use words, to become a writer. The narration presents the characters in the real scenario and they talk in a clear voice to the readers. The protagonists articulate the voice characterized by sobriety and this “follows the natural movements of a mind experiencing, moments and expressions that became meaningful spots of time”. (S.P. Swain, *Articulation of feminine voice*, 98) the stream of consciousness symbolizes the flow of mind that registers experience in the prose of recollection and nostalgia. Shashi Deshpande has made her story self-propelled without the novelist acting as a meddler and as an omniscient narrator. Her writing style has channel “thereader directly into the interior life of the characters without any intervention by way of comment or explanation on the part of the author”. (Bowling, *What is stream of consciousness technique*? 345).

The realistic treatment of human predicament in Deshpande's fiction along with the contemporary angst in an existential manner might appear to be depressing, but the final impression of her works is far from being gloomy or depressing. Significantly, her women characters learn in due course how to arrive at a compromise and find a sense of balance in life. At the end of *The Dark Holds No Terrors* Saru, for example, goes back home with all those selves she had rejected so resolutely at first, and so passionately embraced later. The guilty sister, the undutiful daughter, the unloving wife ....all persons spiked with guilt. Yes she was all of them; she could not deny that now. She had to accept these selves to become whole again. But she was all of them; they were not all of her. She was all these and so much more (201). And, to cite one more case, Jaya, taking stock of her 'achievements' in life, remarks in *That Long Silence*:

I' m not afraid any more. The panic has gone. I'm Mohan's wife. I had thought, and cut off the bits of me that had refused to be Mohan's wife. Now I know that kind of fragmentation is not possible...... two bullocks yoked together - that was how I saw the two of us the day we came here, Mohan and I. Now I reject that image. If I think of us in that way, I condemn myself to a lifetime of disbelief in ourselves. I have always thought - there's only one life, no chance of a reprieve, no second chances. But in this life itself there are so many crossroads, so many choices. 'Yathecchasi
tatha kuru'..... If I have to plug that 'hole in the heart', I will have to erase the silence between us. ...We don't change overnight. It's possible that we may not change even over long periods of time. But we can always hope. Without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know now it is this: life has always to be made possible (191-93).

The novelist does not believe in offering ready-made solutions. But the conviction that "we can always hope" and that life has always to be made possible speaks of a genuinely positive to life. Deshpande's protagonists finally try their best to conform to their roles, and the novels end with an optimistic note with the possibility of some positive action in future. The novelist emerges in them as a bridge-builder between the old and the new, between tradition and modernity. For this and for portraying the basic reality of Indian society and the place of women in it in a sensitive and authentic manner her novels are of immense value.

The present analysis may be concluded with a brief account of Shashi Deshpande's attitude to and views on technical matters pertaining to fiction writing. She is a careful and conscientious writer. Certain ruthlessness characterizes almost all her writing. She frankly told her interviewer Geetha Gangadharan that "Even writing requires a certain amount of ruthlessness" (Qtd. in R.S.Pathak, The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande, 11). This ruthlessness and self-consciousness is nothing unexpected in a writer who had a pretty late beginning as a writer. Her writings nevertheless give the impression of spontaneity.

Deshpande is not unconcerned about Indian reality in respect of the lot of women, but she is not a strident and militant kind of feminist who sees the male as the sole cause of woman's problems. Her concern, in fact, is nothing less than human predicament. As a chronicler of human relationships, she is superb. The interplay between tradition and modernity and tensions generated by it has been faithfully presented. Deshpande does not inflict ready-made solutions, for she believes, in literary writing "one does not pose a problem and present a solution. It's not maths" (Literature Alive, 13) but the vision of humanity and the value-based fabric of life that she projects are of great significance. Her best work, she says, is yet to come, and hopefully it will realize one day all the potential of the novelist.

Thus one finds that through these four novels Shashi Deshpande defines woman as a subject in her own right. Indu, Saru and Jaya strive for and obtain certain autonomy; they have
realized their immense potentialities for action and self-actualization. Their return home is not defeatism but the triumph of the independence of women. They learn to live in society. Their perception is best expressed in the words of Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*: "There is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind." Knowing that they thus achieved personhood, achieved self-realization, found their voice. They return to society or become a part of it. Michael: Rosenthal's statement in Virginia Woolf regarding Mrs Ramsay and Lily can be extended to include Indu and Jaya as well:

What unites (...) them, despite their vast personal differences, however, is their mutual reverence for life and their desire to make something ordered and whole out of the flux around them. (Qtd in Anita Singh, "A Voice After the Long Silence: Shashi Deshpande's Roots and Shadows and That Long Silence." *Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Spectrum*, 82)

Shashi Deshpande’s frank and uninhibited discussion on a wide range of topics concerning women has prompted several reviews to categorize her as a feminist. A close study of her work also reveals that she is a highly sensitive writer who is clearly aware of the male-female imbalance in society. Her male characters conform to the standard feminist description of a middle-class husband who is insensitive, egoistic and sometimes over-ambitious. But, at the same time, most of her women characters too suffer from some weakness or other so much so that it becomes difficult to label her work.

Shashi Deshpande’s feminism is not militant feminism adopted by Western writers. The problems discussed in her novels are that of Indian women and set in the Indian context. That should be treated with the Indian point of view and so it is not like that of Western writers. She regrets that there is no clear idea of the concept of feminism in our country.

Shashi Deshpande refers to myths and puranas in her writing. He describes the traditional concept of ‘devoted’ wife, mentioned in the puranas. She says:

All the women in the myths have been created by men to fulfill their various needs. There is eternal child to be protected and controlled, the self-sacrificing mother to the nurture and cherish the best partner to guarantee exclusive rites of the man over her body as well as an undoubted paternity of children and the temptress to titillate and provide sexual gratification. And finally, the goddess to provide morality. What
place does a real thinking? feeling woman have in this agenda? Women were bound
to have these doubts. (Writing from the Margin and Other Essays, 90).

In an interview entitled—‘Everyone Has a Right to Choose a Language’, Deshpande tells
Stanley Carvalho that:

Perhaps, being a woman, I find myself sympathizing with women. If others see
something feminist in my writings, I must say that it is not consciously done. It is
because the world for women is like that and I am mirroring the world. I find a lot
of men unsympathetic to my writing and a lot of women extremely sympathetic.
This is because the world is viewed in different ways by men and women. (Qtd. in
Sidhartha Sharma, Shashi Deshpande’s Novels A Study, 29)

The term feminism itself demands a broader definition. In a generic way it has come to
mean a movement to support the demand for equal social, political and economic rights with men.
Feminism connotes not only an awareness of women's plight but also a determination to change
the situation. The treatise 'Half the Sky' aptly defines feminism as "the awareness of the women's
position in society as one of disadvantages or inequality compared with that of men and also a
desire to remove those disadvantages." One wonders whether Deshpande as a novelist fulfills these
two requirements so as to be termed a feminist writer. We may not be sure of her strong desire to
remove the disadvantages of women in society, but even a casual reading of her novels and short
stories convinces us that they abound in her acute awareness of women's disadvantages and
unequal position in society. Shashi Deshpande further states:

Most of my writing comes out of own intense and long suppressed feelings about
what it is to be a woman in our society, it comes out of the experience of the
difficulty of playing roles enjoined on me society, it comes out of the knowledge
that I am something more and something different from the sum total of these roles.
My writing comes out of consciousness of the conflict between my idea of myself
as a human being and the idea that society has of me as a woman. All this makes
my writing very clearly woman's writing. (30)

What, however, we have to bear in mind is that Shashi Deshpande does not take the radical
view of the early Western feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer and Kate Millett.
The opinion of most of these feminists with regard to marriage remains more or less the same. In her
famous book, *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir writes: “It has been said that marriage diminishes man, which is often true, but almost always it annihilates woman” (200). Germaine Greer suggests, “If independence is a necessary concomitant of freedom, woman must not marry” (*The Female Eunuch*, 132). Kate Millett feels that marriage reduces the status of woman to be a mere object for decoration and a tool to be used for man's sexual gratification. Deshpande's protagonists are, no doubt, victims of this unequal power structure in marriage, but in all her novels she shows how one can rise above such injustice and lead a meaningful existence. In the end, her protagonists almost always strive to make their marriages work. As J.Bhavani observes: "This is not a negative as the backbone of society, what is stifling is the persona of the wife and not the institution of marriage" (J.Bhavani, “Nirdvanda: Individuation and Integration as the Heroines'n Quest in Shashi Deshpande's Fiction”, 14). Her feminism is positive.

We may say that Deshpande's views coincide with modern feminist thought which has changed much since the radical feminism of the 1960s. In her book, *The Feminist Mystique*, which took American society by storm, Betty Friedan challenged the universal belief that a woman should find contentment in motherhood and domesticity. Two decades later, Betty Friedan in her book, *The Second Stage*, says that humanity can survive only if women make certain compromises. She suggests that women should pursue some meaningful activity within marriage in order to find happiness and contentment in their lives.

But it is obvious that Deshpande never intends to subscribe to the views of any feminist. Her characters, though urban and educated, are firmly rooted in India with the weight of centuries of tradition and culture behind them. In his essay, "Problematising Feminism," Jaidev says: "It is very necessary for us to have feminism in this country but then this feminism has to be authentic, rooted and context-bound. One does not too clever or good at quoting western critics or weaving intricate post-structuralist cobwebs" (*Feminism and Recent Fiction in English*, 19).

Deshpande may not be a formal feminist in the strict sense of the word, but it must also be observed that feminism can mean different things to different people. Arshia Sattar in her thought-provoking article on the position of the feminist movement at present observes: "feminism is no longer a single voice rather, a 'rainbow coalition' of rights, desires, agendas, struggles, victories. Not all issues apply to all women, our battles need not be the same, and more and more, we tend

The conventional manacles still have the effect on the new women who want to triumph over the men. The age old sayings have been in the inner psyche of the women which controls their new desires and decisions. But the process of comparing helps the new women to come to a clear decision. The new women compare their state with the traditional women. Shashi Deshpande makes the vivid picture of two different types of women in her novels. As the novels depict the women of 1980’s the power of tradition over the women is much stronger. The present condition of woman is not more different than that of the woman in these novels. The power of tradition has been traced till now in the families. The household chores have been done by the women whether they are house wives or career women. The present society also expects women to work for the family without any condition. The education of the girl has been viewed as less important to that of boys in the family. The marriage has been a fair to fair girl as it is the expectation of most of the men to have a beautiful and educated wife in a traditional way. The family with girls has been bewildered how to manage the cost of marriage. There may not be open dowry system but there are customs in the Indian marriage setting and that makes the girl’s family to feel inferior. The love marriage may be welcomed by the young generation but it is not welcomed by the society whole heartedly. Even now it is considered as a disgrace to the family when the girl of the family has eloped with somebody. Even the love marriages do not bring complete happiness to women as there is no equality in the marriage. The men are the same in both love and arranged marriage. It is women who are made their mind to liberate themselves from the conventions. The career of the women has been decided by the men; father, brother or husband. The women have been selecting their new career options in the present scenario and this will eventually help them to reach new heights. The middle class women have been the puppets of tradition but there are some changes in the attitude. The self assertion has been viewed as important and there is a chance to get the complete freedom one day. The quest of new women as illustrated by Shashi Deshpande has begun from the woman’s self analysis and then her understanding of her powers. The woman has to realize her psyche in the limelight. She has to come across the conventions that are controlling her from reaching her destination. The new woman has to take care of her career as well family as it is the basic unit of the society.
Today we have women presidents and prime ministers, scientists, commanders, administrators and almost in all walks of life. The feminist movement aims at overcoming social prejudices that lead to the oppression and victimization of women. Feminism in the modern world aims at the change in the individual and also in the society. The feminist movements work on the women’s liberation from their own past images.

It disputes the conflation of sex and gender categories and releases women from confinement of gender roles. It aims at making women the subject of her own story and not the object of male desire and male satisfaction or a whipping block for male frustration. Women come to realize the inauthenticity of the lives lead and struggle to discover for themselves their own impulses, reactions, desires and needs. Their quest is for self-knowledge and self-realisation which can in turn lead to relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. Individual change and social change, both are desired goals, together with an eventual change in male perceptions and attitudes. Shashi Deshpande’s novels aim at the self realization of the women as well the individual and social changes which lead to change in the male perception. Shashi Deshpande’s works aim at creating the new woman with the features mentioned by the feminists.

Shashi Deshpande has established the novels as feminist literary genre as it is expected by the French feminists. The writing of her has been the view of a woman about other women. It criticises the male culture or patriarchal society through the words of the protagonists. The female characters represent the ‘Symbolic order’ as well the new order created by new women. Shashi Deshpande creates the new order in order to replace the Old Symbolic order of the man. The novels have the force to reinvent the assigned roles of men and women. The female protagonists identify themselves with the mother after their realisation of lacking subjectivity as per the laws of the father. They can understand the semblance of mother and daughter and thus leads to the relationship of women in their natural terms. Shashi Deshpande divides the characters into two sets: traditional and modern and they are used to contrast each other. The modern woman has the critical stage of overcoming the law of the father or Symbolic order. She has been the one distinguished from the rest to come over the existing order with the help of real identity with her ‘mother’ but not the same as her mother. The new woman of Shashi Deshpande can initiate the role changes in the family and also in the society. The modern education supports the changes in the attitude of new woman but the self-realisation is stressed to obtain the complete change in the society. French feminists advocate the deconstruction of the constructed order with the help of
language. Shashi Deshpande uses the language as the tool to express the female experience. There are little pages which are not filled with female experiences. The novels are totally a projection of new woman in Indian society by changing the old order. The ‘hegemony’ has been highlighted as it is the significant factor in determining the social structure. The power, economically and emotionally, has to be converted to the female arena that is the purpose of the feminists. Shashi Deshpande’s new women have recognised their power in their ‘selves’- the power to take their own decisions and all the novels have the hope of the change in the male to accept the power changes in the age old customs. Shashi deshpande emphases the female experiences and uses these experiences to narrate the feminine culture with the help of her new women. The language is used to express the unspoken and encoded female feelings. Thus, the novels of Shashi Deshpande show the feminism in the Indian setting.