

An Exploration of Human Psyche in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande



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SUMMARY

We see through the ages that humans are always curious to know more and more about universe and their inner selves, so a quest for betterment roams into their psyche. All the hours they are involved in creating something new that is unknown to us and open new vistas by their innovations. Is this quest of man for getting happiness? This question has always haunted people and strikes the attention. In his famous treatise 'Social Contract' Rousseau affirms that in the initial phases of life humans were free in their natural state. They were free to make choices and what they wanted to do as they were used to live and wander in the forest freely. They used to sleep in natural caves and quench their thirst by drinking water direct from natural water resources. They had not any personal property and used all natural products combined.

But in the course of the time progressing human psyche started to possess natural resources as their own and other creatures accepted the dominance and there arouse the feeling of struggle and quarrels to exist in the world. At this stage some social structures developed and man was caught in the mighty web of rules and regulations. He asserts that the limitations which were imposed on humans by the society have restricted them. But he also emphasizes that human had easily and heartedly accepted those social contracts. Those contracts facilitate human's life and with the pace of time there also developed religious concepts. In that ambience humans were gratified and contented because the ambience was surcharged by love, ease, comfort, compassion, peace and satisfaction.

Human virtues as wisdom, justice, fortitude, self control, love, positive attitude, hard work, integrity, gratitude and humility had higher place in society. People were more close to nature and lives were extremely simple. The world was like that of More's Utopia that slowly and slowly converted into dystopia. But with the course of time man feels fed up with the social, religious and cultural practices. They have instinctual revolt against all dogmas and practices; they feel society and religion a demonic force which diminishes human's freedom. There are numerous reasons behind the change of human behavior and nature and one of them is evolution made by science. Science has affected human's life largely. Due to the scientific innovations there was a change in social scenario and we were familiar with the new world of technology entered into the different world of industrialization, urbanization and globalisation which we had ever imagined.

The emergence of science gave new interpretation to each and every single atom of universe and in this way humans started to doubt the accepted social beliefs, norms, customs, conventions, traditions and whatever existed prior and even in the existence of God. Along with, there is a wide spread of over-crowding, housing-shortage, growing forces of vice and crime, decline of moral values, sexual promiscuity and ugliness everywhere. It is because of automobile old has lost control over the young and social scene becomes more and more complex. This social complexity is due to rootlessness which has left man alienated and he feels withdrawn from the universe.

Man's emphasis to give importance to material possessions lay aside to his belief of an omnipotent power to control him. Now, humans wish to be in full control of themselves and aware to their existence in this materialistic world and ignore and reject the concept of hell and heaven after death created by God. Now, they believe there is no life after death and in this way, they wish to satisfy all their desires, will and for this they fight with the other creature of their own race for the survival at the earth. This attitude shows their materialistic approach. Man's all efforts are to exist in the world freely belong to the existentialism philosophy Their entire emphasis is on getting happiness at any cost as it is described in utilitarianism doctrine.

In making life heaven they are amid frustration, anxiety, depression and have mental unrest while creating hell about them. On one side, man struggles hard to survive in this world but on other side, he encounters all his actions futile and meaningless and finds his life absurd and wishes to die with the declining values of living. Man's thoughts are pragmatic in modern time. His psyche is well developed with the idea of pragmatism while ignoring emotional aspects of life. He is more concerned about his own self and is less approachable to others.

Since the ancient age man was running on the pattern which has been demolished in few centuries. Human made progress in every field of life without sensing what he is going to loss. A new pattern evolved by him when does not fulfill his all aspirations, he becomes perplexed and suffers mental uneasiness. Somehow, he wishes to come out from this mental crisis. How a human being copes with the calamities of the life

forms his entire personality. The objective of the present study is to explore human psyche in Deshpande's novels. In the present study I have discussed all the modern practices, theories and tendencies which influence modern Indian Psyche.

Literature is the presentation of human lives in its various manifestations on wider scale through the medium of language. If we talk about the twentieth century literature of the countries like America, England, the continent, Africa, Australia, India and all commonwealth literature we find a similarity in the content, style, concerns, form of writing, despite of the cultural, sociological, political and geographical barriers. It seems the whole world has been turned into a global village. All the practices and tendencies are common in global literature.

Indian writers have written and are writing to communicate to world through the English language. English literature bears an indelible stamp of Indianness which implies "life attitudes", "modes of perception", "life patterns", "behavior of the people" and "traditions" that have emerged over the years in India. Indian experiences of life cannot be restricted to rigid definitions, as its expression varies from person to person, writer to writer, poet to poet and novelist to novelist. It is this richness and variety of experience which imparts colour and beauty to Indian English literature. It embodies the Indian sensibility which has come down to us through the Vedic period.

Indian English literature reflects the new challenges and changes than its sister literatures in India, because of the simple fact that its vehicle

itself is globalised language. The leaders of the new fiction have mostly been a part of the Indian Diaspora. Living (for brief or long periods) in the west, and using English almost like a mother tongue, they have been thoroughly exposed to significant modern western literary movements like post- modernism and magic realism. This has enabled them to give a fresh orientation to fiction. At the same time, the best of them continue to have strong roots in India, so that they remain true to the kindred points of India and the west.

Shashi Deshpande, one of the great academic intellectuals in Indian English Literature, was born in Dharwad in Karnataka in 1938 as the second daughter of renowned Kannada dramatist and great Sanskrit scholar Shriranga. She pursued her education in Dharwad, Mumbai, and Bangalore. She received degrees in Economics and Law and earned a gold medal. After getting married, she shifted to Bombay. Here, she studied journalism at the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan and worked for a couple of months as a journalist for the magazine 'Onlooker'. While working with the magazine, she began writing and her first short story got published in 1970.

Her short stories headed their way in popular magazines like Femina, Eve's weekly. Her maiden collection of short stories was published in 1978 under the title *Legacy*, *It was Dark* in 1986, *It was the Nightingale* in 1986, *The Miracle* in 1986, *The Intrusion* in 1993 and *The Stone Women* in 2000. Deshpande has written four books for children, a number of short stories, and nine novels, besides several perceptive essays, now available in a volume entitled *Writing from the Margin and Other Essays*. Her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* was published in 1980,

after that, *If I Die Today* in 1982 followed by *Come up and Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadow* (1983) and *That Long Silence* (1989). She wrote *A Matter of Time* in 1996, *Small Remedies* in 2000, *The Binding Vine* in 2002, *Moving On* in 2004, *In the Country of Deceit* in 2008 and *Shadow Play, Aleph* in 2013. She has written children's books *A Summer Adventure* (1978), *The Hidden Treasure* (1980), *The only witness* (1980) and *The Narayanpur Incident* (1982). She has written a play *Driste* in 1990.

That Long Silence (1989) for which she received ShahityaAkademi Award in 1990 and has been translated into several foreign languages, like: German, Finnish, Dutch and Danish. *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1982) won the Nanjangud Thirurnalamba Award in 1990. It has been translated into German and Russian. Her first novel *Roots and Shadows* (1980) which earned the Thirumate Rangammal Prize in 1984 was selected for the coveted prize for the Indian Novel of 1982- 83. *Shadow Play* (2013) was shortlisted for The Hindu Literary Prize in 2014. Her collection of short stories, *The Legacy*, has had the single distinction of being used as textbook in Columbia University for a course in Modern Literature. While staying in England, she wrote a piece of work which her father got published in three parts in the Deccan Herald- the local newspaper in three parts, with the title *Innocents Abroad*. This was her first attempt as a writer. The publication of *Innocents Abroad* directs her confidence and she started writing which later became a passion for her.

Shashi Deshpande is well-aware of the Indian sensibilities and portrays her characters' lives amid them. After being familiar with each of

her characters, we start to think that they are the part of our own surrounding; and the circumstances she weaves, seem to be taken from our own life. While living in India, she is deep attached with the issues which progressing India faces in recent scenario. Her novels are the clear pictures of an average metamorphosing Indian psyche. Through her novels, she brings forth such issues which in reality are not easily acceptable and digested in Indian society.

While building up a plot in a coherent way, she projects several aspects of Indian culture in an artistic way. At one place, we find the characters who believe in old traditions and superstitions, on the other hand they inhibit in modern world by acquiring rational approach towards life. Her novels are the journey of the characters' mind who wish to survive at any cost, show deep interest in material possessions instead of the spiritual aspect of life and suffer loneliness, corruption and moral degradation on their part. Sense of nothingness and loneliness is rampant in her novels. The characters are drawn from middle class family, most of the protagonists are writers and doctors, obviously, these professions are the part of author's own life and issues she has discussed are from day to day activities of human life.

In fact, her novels are all about the Indian society in which one is learnt to suppress one's will for the betterment of the rest but her characters seem to be rebel in this concern. They crave to choose their path of life in accordance with their will and take responsibilities of their actions which bring catastrophe in their lives. We don't find any tinge of

religion even no character shows high faith in God. Some of her protagonists keep secular and intellectual approach towards life.

Although, the protagonists of her novels are female characters and male acquires only a namely figure but she puts forth the issues of human beings whether they are of male or female. She does not present her male characters as an antagonist; they are human beings like woman having weaknesses to conquer. Some of her male characters show great support to establish woman as an owner of her life. Not only her female characters but male characters also suffer and strive hard to make balance and to keep pace with the society.

In making her characters real, Deshpande places them amid the circumstances and situations in which an average Indian lives his life. The study of her novels shows that fascination of an individual towards movie is common as it happens in real life. One or two characters are easily seen to be drawn to cinema in each of her novels. It shows how much people are fascinated by the imaginary world which does not exist in reality. A person, who does not have something in real life, wants to satisfy his inner selves by watching movies.

In her novels, Deshpande signifies the utility of dream to portray the actual condition of human mind. Her psychological insight peers into the mind of characters through dream which has a symbolic significance to provide the glimpse of upcoming happening. An utter change in the way of living is sensed through her novels. Her protagonists amid all the negative forces of life know the value of survival by searching and finding their

own truth. Hopelessness, loneliness and alienation seem common and natural factors which modern reader senses and attaches with the story.

Her protagonists do not follow any dogma and principle but search and see the actual version of happening by their keen insight like a seer. The progressing psyche of human in post modern era is much attached with the new theories and discoveries and their awareness lead them to the fresh orientation of the facts. We find dynamic interpretation of Epic like Mahabharata, Ramayana, allusions from the Upanishada along with the writings of Camus and Kierkgaard. With this new fresh orientation we find her characters facing challenges in the modern era.

All of her novels doom with the horror of death but the ambience is charged with such positivity that characters search and find the meaning of life at the end. Life is a continuous process in which happenings occur even after death. So, there is no definite end but all mysteries are resolved in a logical way in her novels as it happens in real life. Thus to my view point is to see and read her novels on the themes of materialism, existentialism, rootlessness, nothingness, decay in moral values, corruption, absurdism, pragmatism, humanism, pursuit of happiness, fear of death, love and marriage etc. The setting of almost all of her novels is southern India, specially Bombay and Bangalore- the highly developed city of India with which she is deeply attached.

Deshpande's novels are surcharged with the towering presence of woman and the issues concerning woman on upper surfaces this is the reason that she is often labeled as a feminist writer but she refuses to be

confined within the circle and whatever she writes are the dilemmas of human being and choices they make in the lives. Her protagonists are female characters so this is quite obvious the novels are concerned with the problems of women but through these women characters, she raises the issues which prevail in modern Indian society and which are worth to discuss.

A thorough study of her novels shows that she presents the issues which modern Indian human being is confronting. She presents women characters because with this world she is more familiar. She has observed the plight of an average Indian who is paying relationship on the threshold of ongoing deep buried thought of tradition and inclination towards the upcoming new theories. So the novels are the stories of tangible human relationships while facing modern challenges and how they are caught in the web.

Deshpande uses elliptical and minimal words instead of long sentences to convey her concerns. Her language is simple, direct and terse. Her use of words is constituted and designed in such a manner that it produces a rhythm which seems to originate from her soul. Her idiomatic language is enough to enhance the beauty of her writings. She uses far-fetched striking metaphor, simile and phrase to describe the actual condition of the characters. Natural images become the tool of imparting hints of next event and enhancing the desired effects in the novel and one of the means of symbolism. She uses symbolism to justify her narration and makes it a platform of upcoming events. Her use of situational, attitudinal and verbal irony is the perfect medium to express human

behavior of having satisfactory possessions craves and desires more for worldly matter.

Deshpande uses stream of consciousness technique to disclose the inner working of characters' mind. Her characters, whether male or female, don't speak much but think and express their thoughts by the medium of writing and other ways. With this process of thinking, we come to know the actual mental condition of modern humans. Her psychological insight gives us a chance to peep into the inner recesses of her characters' mind. Mentally troubled her characters feel isolated and in this isolation they find enough space to introspect and contemplate over the action. This small pause, her characters suffer and change from self-alienation to self-identification.

In the beginning, her characters seem fragmented but as the story advances they catch the pace, make balance and become more sound and strong than before. They learn to make balance between destructive and constructive aspects of life. Reading of each of her novel shows us that her portrayal of the characters and presentation of the story does not belong to a reformist or a moralist side but she presents things as they are. She analyses male-female relationship with new dimension with which a common reader is hardly aware. Like Jane Austen, she measures her journey within the reach.

My exploration of human psyche goes in thematic concerns of her novels as it is said that novel is the most dynamic way of presenting human life. I go through all her novels and find that her novels breathe in spirit of Indian sensibility that we hardly find any material for the interest of

foreign readers. Her novels are only for those who are keenly interested in knowing Indian culture, tradition; and also for those readers who wish to see how it is going to be changed in some decades.

The close scrutiny of the facts in her novels makes it clear to us that the change in recent Indian fiction which is highly concerned with Indian people is in need to discuss these issues and their effects on wider scale. Deshpande's fiction is not confined within the limits of household but the theories she discusses have universal appeal. She presents her characters in those decades which are the hallmark of the progress of Indian economy. Globalization was not an unknown concept for us till then. So, what changes occur in a common human's psyche have been easily demonstrated by her.

In the chapter entitled *Demonic Human World* I choose four novels- *Moving On*, *Small Remedies*, *If I Die Today* and *The Binding Vine*. The chapter comprises of the modern tendencies which are responsible for human's dilemma in each sphere of life. In the novel *Moving On* my point of view is to discuss how her characters in capture of their will, choice, action and passion make decisions which lead them to alienation, loneliness, subjugation of moral values, corrosion of faith in God and spiritual sterility and how with this they dwell in inferno. In *Small Remedies* I analyse the issues which need to be contemplated. I discuss the novel with the issues of fear of loss, alienation, nothingness, materialism, and decline in moral values, agnosticism and carnage. My emphasis in the novel *If I Die Today* is to discuss the lives of doctors as how they are in the grip of utilitarianism, materialism and rootlessness. In *The Binding Vine* I

show how from the beginning of their life, woman learn to be dependent on other half of the species but when catastrophe and calamity occur they find nobody to shelter.

In the novel *Moving On* I found the Characters making choices by their will and the result is in chaos. In all her characters I picked Manjari, Badrinarayan's father and Gayatri. Badrinarayan's father is rebel in his home while rejecting old traditions and superstitions and is attached with scientific practices. In his life he never let his children to be bound and has sound vision. He never imposed any restrictions on her daughter Gayatri. Shashi Deshpande portrays the character of Gayatri with great skill. Gayatri symbolizes the change in woman's condition. She has never been confined in her life. She enjoys greater freedom and her life by her own way. The demonic force in Gayatri's life is only the loneliness which she suffers after the death of her husband.

Besides these two characters, Manjari is one who suffers a lot because of her will, her choice of getting married with Shyam leaves her life devastated. It is found how she faces the consequences of her choice and her existentialist self travels the harsh journey which is the very embodiment of modern man's life. Egoist self in human-relationship demolishes the structure of family. Deshpande shows the incompetence in relationships as Manjari is destined and the death of dear one leaves her devastated and isolated. While spending life isolated, Manjari faces threat to her existence of being a woman.

Irreligious ambience and agnostic vision of characters are noticed. No character is seen having high faith in religion but they are aware of some driving forces which govern their life. The character of Badrinarayan has been portrayed by Deshpande to show the scientific vision of human. Throughout his life he remains rational, realistic and agnostic. He moves in his life according to his will but he also feels interference of other spirit which he does not identify God. The agnostic vision of modern humans leads them towards alienation and loneliness. Both these factors are enough to convert human's sound psyche into fractured one. In fulfilling of his will man unlocks all boundaries of relationships and feels alone.

We see her characters dwelling in delusion of having both traditional and modern notions. Desolated they feel uprooted and suffer alienation and loneliness. Manjari's journey in which she makes choices leads her in utter desolation that she alienated herself and her children from past. This alienation creates the ditch between Manjari and her daughter Sanchi. Both suffer loneliness. Vasu alienates herself from the reality and writing becomes the tool of escaping from the reality and encountering loneliness. Badrinarayan is found to introspect and write in the hour of loneliness. Gayatri starts reading and Manjari takes long rides in bus to kill the demon of loneliness. All the characters feel aloofness and adopt different ways of encountering them. Humans wish to satisfy their desires by breaking social laws while living in the society, which truly demonstrate the pathetic conditions of human soul.

On one side man asserts on his existence, on other side he claims on having love for other one. Love demands complete collapse of personality

which is not possible if we deeply think about the existence. Several characters have been discussed in the novel. Bardrinarayan, a progressive man fails to understand his wife's vision of platonic love and his wife too could not understand her husband's vision; she becomes isolated and suffers loneliness. For Manjari, love is only a treachery, destroying her life. Deshpande's characters lack mutual understanding and love.

It has been observed in the study that how passion governs man and leaves the life miserable and how love has lost its beauty and meaningless physical relationship has assumed the place in the society. The governance of passions makes characters life hell. It has been noticed through different characters in the novel. Ratna takes resort in Manjari's home to get away from her husband's reach. Vasu explores herself in writing. Manjari and Raman; Malu and Shyam being slave of passions become the object of subjugation in moral values. Human's search for freedom has been seen through many characters as Mai wants to achieve in *Moving On Manju* in *if I Die Today* and Jaya in *That long silence*, Sarita in *The Dark Holds no Terrors*.

In *Small Remedies* the character of Savitri Bai Indorkar, Madhu and Leela have been analysed. By analyzing Bai's character, I found her a complete existentialist who does not follow any social code and authority of religion. In her inborn zeal for music, she asserts her existence in the world. In her Journey, her practical vision crosses the boundaries by leaving her children, denouncing Ghulam Saab who played vital role in her singing career and treachery to her grandfather. In her old age she is in grip of loneliness. She is the symbol of hollowness of modern soul.

Through Leela's character the plight of modern Indian woman is seen who wants to prove her existence in the society while maintaining homely responsibility. In Madhu, the seeds of materialism in Indian society are discerned. Her attachment with son leads her utter desolation, hopelessness, nothingness, rootlessness, alienation and loneliness, when he dies in carnage. How she restores and returns to a normal pattern is the sojourn of modern man. It is also found that motherhood is a demonic side on Madhu's identity when she collapses one's inner self entirely and makes no contemplation over the fact.

The ambience of subjugation of moral values is made visible through Madhu's father, Bai and Madhu. The declining value of religion becomes visible by carnage of Babri Masjid demolition and up to how much extent it affects Madhu's life has been discussed. Through the carnage which occurred during the communal riots we see the human unkindness, atrocities, demonic barbarism, dichotomy of human conduct and exoticism on the barren land of India. It is noticed that Deshpande presents fractured psyche of befuddled soul who could neither entirely accept and nor reject the idea of God. It is found that she also satirizes humans who believe in rituals only for getting happiness and to avoid misfortunes. The dichotomy of human conduct is seen when Muslim singer Hasina is threatened for singing in a temple.

The utilitarian vision of modern man is found in *If I Die Today*. In chasing happiness man has laid aside all moral codes. It is seen that the doctors committed mistake which causes the death of innocent one. For their benefit, they hide the fact for a long time but when Guru provoked

their soul by making realize their mistakes they kill the utilitarian views. In discussing the lives of doctors, Deshpande's emphasis has been on the fact that doctors are not god they are human beings having weakness and if they cause harm to somebody, they should be punished. By discussing Guru's character, the vision of writer is noticed as a single man with good instincts is enough to remove the ills from the society for it we need not any incarnation.

In addition to it, the impact of materialism is seen when man is caught in the world of sexual vulgarization, hollowness, discrimination, disillusionment and attachment with worldly matters. Child discrimination is seen through the character of Dr. Kulkarni, meaningless physical relationships have been noticed through the characters like Dr. Kulkarni, Rani Agarwal, Ashok, Leena and Guru. The hollowness of human soul has been noticed by Tony and Cynthia. Through Vidya, we see how the feeling of attachment destroys others life. Vidya, in her attachment with her brothers kills Guru and Tony; and tries to kill Manju and her inborn child.

Shashi Deshpande's very vision to write the novel is to show man's return to God's ways. Everybody is punished in the novel by one way or other and there is a change in all of them. Murder is the most heinous crime and a criminal should be punished and there is no compensation for the crime. For the ages human has learnt a great deal of things. Man is a social animal because he has armed himself with various virtues and this mechanical and materialistic world he has to learn so many skills to cope with the odds of the life. Somehow he becomes habitual of all those skills

and careless towards others which bring chaos and disorder in life. We can make life meaningful and beautiful if we learn to be human again.

In *The Binding vine*, the characters like Urmila, Meera, Shakutaj, Kalpana and Sulu have been studied on the issues of love, marriage childlessness, death and rape. I found Urmila's character in attachment with worldly matters especially with her daughter Anu. Urmila faces the demons of death while she is highly attached with her daughter like Madhu in *Small Remedies*. I found her struggling with the demon of death. Through Meera we come to know about woman's loneliness, craving for love, agony, suppression of will, demand of freedom and her human's right.

Different evils as they are identified love by characters have been observed. Meera's husband's love towards her is his fixation which she suffers throughout her life. Akka suffers the same agony as Meera from her husband. Inni faces brutality in love and Shakutai too is burdened with such brutality. Urmila's love towards her daughter is her attachment more than love and Kalpana's uncle's love is lust. Apart from these characters, Urmila's love for her husband is pure. Motherhood as a demonic force has been found by discussing the characters of Meera, Bhaskar's mother, Sulu and Urmila. Change in woman's condition has been noticed through Urmila's and Shakutai's characters who stand firm in difficult situation by killing the demon inside them. Kalpana's rape in the novel highlights the present scenario where a human's lust causes enormous tortures, twinges of pain, humiliation and shame to other beings. Urmi's feelings and

concerns for Shakutai's family remind us that as a human we still have some values by which we can save the entire humanity.

Deshpande's vision of life which she presents through several characters is human's survival at any cost is observed. We all go through the procedure or urge of survival while creating innumerable odds and difficulties in life but the binding vine of compassion, warmth, belief, love, friendship, sympathy, and humanity makes life worth living. If we spiritualize ourselves the pain of human heart can be minimized. The study of different issues shows how a modern Indian lies in grip of existentialism, materialism, rootlessness, urbanization, loneliness, corruption, moral degradation and agnosticism which make world human world demonic. Surrounded by all the forces which are surfacing in Indian psyche the feeling of absurdity is noticed in the novels.

The chapter *The Concept of Absurdity* deals with the elements of absurdity in Shashi Deshpande's novels. Deshpande introduces the elements of absurdity in some of her novels in a very subtle manner but the novel *A Matter of Time* is completely constructed on the theme of absurdity. I analyze three novels *If I Die Today*, *Small Remedies* and *A Matter of Time* concerning the concept of absurdity through literary elements like plot, characterization, theme and setting. I also uncover which element is more visible in her novels and in what extent it has been implied. To avoid vagueness and subjectivity I limit my study so that objective result could be acquired. I use extrinsic approach and descriptive analytical method to analyze novels. I support my statements, interpretations and finding by Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*,

Stranger, Plague; Kafka's Metamorphosis; Esslin's The Theatre of Absurd and Samuel Backet's Waiting for Godot.

Existentialism which refers that human being has his own responsibility to give meaning of his life, henceforth, is free to make decisions and choice and asserts on nihilism. While existentialism asserts on providing a purpose to life, absurdism deals with meaninglessness of life. To follow or to crave for a particular object or goal in life has no meaning, so it is meaningless to give meaning to life. An absurd discards the reason and logic and one of the perfect examples of 'Deconstruction'.

This phenomenon of absurdity or meaninglessness, a layman confronts several times; some struck with it and lost touch with the world and believe living as futile process. Keeping aside religious, aesthetic and spiritual views an absurd tries to make himself happy with present having no future and no any past. In the eye of absurd one each moment has its own worth to live; indirectly an absurd automatically connects with the purpose: purpose of living the moment. Man is still ignorant of his beginning and this ignorance creates hurdles. The delusion leads him towards absurdism. Absurdism is a way of living with new interpretations and completely detached with old ways of living.

In *A Matter of Time* Gopal is one who completely possesses an absurd mind. His speeches and actions familiarize us about his absurd thoughts. He is the man who perfectly resemblances with the Camus' ideas of absurd. In the starting he leaves Shivpur without explaining any reason after that quitting his university job and at last abandoning his family. His

sojourn is the sojourn of an absurd. Other characters show some of the traits but they are ignorant about the state in which they are damned. The male characters apart from Gopal, Shripathi and Kalyani's father have absurd seeds in their minds. Loss is a force which turns Shripathi into an absurd one that he discards his wife after the loss of his son. He too does not return and remains recluse throughout his life.

Both Kalyani and Sumitra have different perspectives to face absurd minds of their husbands. It is seen that Kalyani is completely unaware of absurd concept. Her ways are traditional but Sumitra comprehends her husband Gopal's absurd vision. They both have brought up their daughter Seema in a same way as their relationship is built up. Sumitra's speeches realize us her absurd thoughts in several incidents; though she is ignorant. Her interpretation of Epic Mahabharata in absurd term has also been a matter of study. The character of Sudha is also seen possessing absurd mind. Along with characters the absurd strain runs through the speeches, plot and in the natural description.

In *If I Die Today*, no theory of absurdity is followed but it is simply the concepts and happenings of day- today activity to show creeping absurd element in characters' psyche. Incidents and speeches of characters are enough to project the vision of a modern Indian psyche. Manju seems to be trapped in the case of motherhood which brings absurd thoughts in her mind which is a change in the vision of an Indian mother.

To show absurd in Manju I analysed her character with Meursalt. Her experiences of pregnancy are like Meursalt's encounters in prison.

Death, disease and hunger are found in absurd sense as it happens with Guru. His acceptance of death is found in absurd term. For Tony and Cynthia childlessness brings the absurd thoughts and Ashok and Leena's relationship has been kept in absurd term. The operation of Prabhakar Tambe by Shyam has been seen in absurd sense. Symbolic images of nature and temple enhance the absurd effect in the novel. Deshpande's characters and their comparison with Camus' writing show the germinating seeds of absurd concept in Indian society which is the main purpose of the writer to show Indian psyche beyond limitations in which they were dwelling. All the characters conquer the feeling of absurdity at the end.

In *Small Remedies* it is seen on various points of view how characters' feel absurd. Moreover we notice the picture of Indian mother in absurd sense, which devotes her life in looking after her child but the demonic forces cause the death of her child which bring disastrous effect and she senses her existence meaningless without her son. It is observed how she encounters the absurdity and faces the truth. The novel is also a glimpse of unnatural relationship developing in the Indian society. Deshpande's portrayal of Madhu in the circumstances in which she develops illegal relationship with her uncle is an absurd phenomenon. Madhu's writing and Bai's inherent fascination of music as a work of art have been demonstrated in absurd sense. Hence, different characters exhibit different aspects of life and projects absurd notions.

Absurdity asserts on senselessness. Human beings need a rational basis for their life; if he feels unable to acquire, he thinks his life a futile passion. Throughout our life we search, pursue a goal for achieving higher

level in the society by giving more value to our existence but soon the thoughts of loss and temporariness start to room in the mind. At this stage we encounter the absurd in our life. But we should not sustain the thoughts in mind and should live life continuously despite the meaninglessness.

Deshpande shows her characters out of traditional boundaries and at certain moment of their life they realize the absurdity of their actions while adopting nihilistic approach but soon accept the deep rooted Indian traditional vision. Some of her characters return to old traditional way while some continue to live with the modern vision which they set in their mind. In a matter of time Gopal faces the absurd but does not return on normal pattern. But the characters of novels *If I Die Today* and *Small Remedies* confront absurd for a while and embrace normal code of living.

The fourth Chapter *Pragmatic Humanly Self* contains the study of two novels. In both novels the pragmatic decisions of the characters which they make in the course of the action while seeking their own truth is shown. Deshpande's characters are drawn from the Age in which both man and woman are cautious to their duties and their role in the society. Through this we find a change in social structure of Indian society. The time she presents is when Indian women are quite familiar with the modern feministic theories and how these theories are enough to support them to realize their existence in the universe and about their self which they have been suppressing for years. Deshpande's characters think search and try to find the cause of each happening. Almost all her protagonists do not adhere and follow the fact blindly; they think and make their own interpretations of each fact and symbolize progressing modern man's vision.

In two of her novels *That Long Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors* Shashi Deshpande weaves the plot on the theme of pragmatic humanly self. Her characters are not male and female but human and as a human being they both have to face similar circumstances. She presents her characters in dilemma of modern human society in which each human being is turning into a pragmatic one for self benefit. After independence there are multitudes changes in Indian society and one of the revolutionary changes occur with the pragmatic views of humans. I analyse how in grip of pragmatic views the characters convert from flat to round characters and achieve different roles in the society. I discuss how pragmatic views create and remove hurdles in the way of characters and how they lose their mental peace.

To William James pragmatism is connected with the thought that knowledge is derived from experience instead of following theories and principles. A pragmatist purposefully drives away from whatever exists prior. James' pragmatist is one who turns down from generalization, incompetence, hypothetical or theoretical reasons, fixed principles, closed system and pretended absolutes and origins but one who is towards concreteness and adequacy, facts, action and power. So in this reference, modern man is pragmatic who does not follow any dogma and particular principle in life but he chooses some objects to have belief and on that belief he searches the truth and acquires knowledge and by this process, he makes decisions on the basis of the experiences of his life. In the beginning of the twentieth century, this concept as developed by James is vividly seen in the novels of Deshpande.

In *That Long Silence* Jaya and Mohan put up different visions. The contrast between the two is that while Mohan is tradition bound modern man on the other hand Jaya is modern English educated woman. Both deal matters pragmatically. Mohan who makes pragmatic choices could never reach the soul of his wife. He never wants to know her choice while Jaya who doggedly follows her traditional vision of her husband suppressing her inner self emerges with new perception which is deep buried in her consciousness. The novel is the journey of Jaya who learns to deal matter pragmatically. Along with Jaya, Mohan and other characters Deenu and Jeeja also show the sign of pragmatic vision. Parents -children relationship in pragmatic way is also noticed.

The Dark Holds No Terrors vividly shows pragmatism in relationship between man and woman. The novel shows the travels of Sarita's pragmatic humanly self. Through Sarita, Deshpande represents woman as a human being has more transformation on her side than male. Saru, in the novel, seems a rebellion to all those norms and customs which constrain a woman's potential as a human being. The gender discrimination, opposition in love marriage and egoistical self of a husband who suffers inferiority complex with his wife is lucidly presented by Deshpande have been noticed. The factors which enable Saru to seek her own truth and to work on those beliefs which she acquires by contemplation are also visible. Saru represents modern woman's aspirations, her potential to establish herself in the society, while Manohar her husband represents modern man who faces the harmful affects of modernism much against the antiquity.

