CHAPTER 3

REFLECTION OF NEW WOMANHOOD IN SHORT STORIES OF DESHPANDE

3.1 Shashi Deshpande: Life and Works

Indian women writers in English constitute a crucial gathering today. They, eagerly or unwillingly, are drawn into an investigation of the strengths which shape the knowledge of women. The progress of reality for Indian women has been stretched and changed because of extensive changes in social, cultural and financial examples in India in the most recent three decades. It is inexorable that the progressions in the status of woman in India are reflected in women’s ' written work of the period. Women writers attempt to follow in their compositions the female sense and sensibilities, reactions and responses in the Indian social milieu. Deshpande possesses an appealing position among contemporary Indian authors in English. She manages the battles and changes of the working class Indian woman who speaks of the mind of a lion’s share of Indian women. Skilled with an uncommon learned bent of brain, Deshpande has made a place for herself among Indian English writers.

Deshpande was born and brought up in 1938 in Dharwad in Karnataka, South India. She is the second child of the eminent Kannada screenwriter and Sanskrit researcher Sri Adya Rangcharya (otherwise called "Sriranga") who is portrayed as a
Bernard Shaw of Kannada theatre. Deshpande took writing as a legacy from her father. He was a brainy man who composed dramas. Writing was a typical admission at her initial youth. She grew up encompassed by books and scholarly identities.

The number and variety of books at home and their availability.
To read soon became as necessary as to breathe or eat...and there was the atmosphere in our house, the company my father kept, the kind of friends he had, the conversation and discussion that went on over endless cups of tea, the play-reading and rehearsals that took place at home—all this created a world of words and ideas I was happily submerged in. (Deshpande IL 174)

Consequently, her father's plans and convictions, the scholarly opportunity he gave, his objective coherent considering, his affection for Gandhism – all shaped her adolescence. From her father Deshpande must have procured a savvy twist of brain and affection for reading and grant, which have won for her degrees in Economics, Law and English and a certificate in journalism.

Deshpande studied in English medium at a protestant mission school in Karnataka. As a schoolgirl, she read the extraordinary British traditional books in English, and especially enjoyed the works of Jane Austen. She completed her graduation in Economics from Elphinstone College, Bombay and in Law from the Government Law College, Bangalore. Much later, she took a post-graduate degree in English from the Mysore University. She married Dr. Deshpande, a neuro-pathologist (now Professor of Pathology) in 1962. The starting years of her marriage were generally spent in raising her two children. After marriage, she acquired Diploma in Journalism from Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and worked for several months as a writer for the magazine "Onlooker".

In a meeting to Vanamala Vishwanath, Deshpande says that she began writing most casually and without any intention of settling down to a career of writing. She had gone with her husband, a commonwealth scholar, to England and was there for a year. Her husband urged her to put her encounters down on paper. To avoid forgetting, she started putting them in words. Her father sent this to the Deccan
Herald, a southern Indian daily paper. Much amazingly, her articles were discovered praiseworthy of being published. This swayed her to attempt a profession in writing. The charm of Onlooker further urged her to attempt her hand at short stories and in a sudden blast of inventiveness; she composed a few short stories which were distributed in presumed magazines.

Deshpande has been writing for more than thirty years. Short stories and books being Deshpande's strong point, her most important works incorporate seven collections of short stories, and 10 novels spaced out from the children's books and a few articles. In this way her yield is in no way, inconsiderable.

3.1.1 Short Story Collection & Books

Deshpande started writing in 1970, with the production of a collection of short stories. She has published almost about eighty stories. Her first collection of short stories, published in 1978, was known as The Legacy and Other Stories. The title story "The Legacy" has been recommended by Columbia University in its syllabus. In his Preface to this volume, G.S. Amur appropriately comments:

"Women’s struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society, to find and preserve her identity as wife, mother and most important of all, as human being is Shashi Deshpande’s major concern as a creative writer, and this appears in all her important stories." (Amur 10)

Her different collections of short stories are : It was Dark (1986), The Miracle (1986), It was the Nightingale(1986), The Intrusion and Other Stories (1993), The Stone Women (2001),Collected Stories- Vol. 1(2003) and Collected Stories Vol. 2( 2004) Some of these stories were later formed into books, and offer different concerns. In admiration of method likewise these stories hold the seeds of a large portion of the individualities of her books.

Deshpande, in her books, manages certain recurring subjects, in the same way as – inner clash and identity crisis, parent-child relationship particularly mother-daughter relationship, and the idea of marriage and sex. Most importantly, the theme of silence present in the complex relationship of man and woman holds an unbelievable concern for Deshpande.

All the characters in Deshpande’s novels are married women. Deshpande briefly displays the disparities and unfairness piled on the woman as a result of her subordinate position as a wife. The substandard position of wife in any marriage is made evident through flashes into the relational unions of Indu’s aunts and uncles (Roots and Shadows). In The Dark Holds No Terrors Sarita turns into the target of her husband's cruel torment through physical and sexual roughness. While That Long Silence presents a commonplace Indian husband who underestimates his wife's undaunted backing. In Binding Vine, Deshpande makes a striking endeavor to handle the subject of assault in marriage - man forcing himself on a wife. Besides, the heroines of all her books are working class educated women. Indu (Roots and Shadows) is a columnist, Jaya (That Long Silence) a housewife and an innovative author, Saru (The Dark Holds No Terrors) a specialist, Urmii (The Binding Vine) a school instructor, Sumi (DHT) however educated, consumes work just later, while Savitribai and Leela (Small Remedies) are an artist and a social worker separately. Madhu, the storyteller (Small Remedies), is a writer as well as a journalist.

Deshpande thus seems to believe that it is the creative woman who will liberate herself and contribute to women’s liberation both actively as well as through her exemplary behavior. (Joshi 178)

All the female characters of Deshpande's novels are in quest for their own identity. In any case to advance their character they must battle patriarchy. The focal characters of some of her books face problem of satisfying their obligations and need to pick between their personal and professional lives. Throughout the course of their lives, they endure numerous trials and tribulations yet in the last run they grapple with themselves by reshaping their relationship and rise as completely shaped persons who can justify their proficient and additionally individual lives.
As such, practically in all her books, the heroes undergo a crisis, segregate themselves from the regular surroundings and routine life, consider themselves as well as other people, continue moving between the past and the present, and at the end they return as converted persons. Their return home is not defeatism however the triumph of the autonomy of ladies.

As per Sunita Reddy, ".... each of her novels ends on a note of determination by its protagonist who resolves to take the reins of her life into her hands."(Reddy 156)

Deshpande's heroes are, most likely, casualties of unequal force structure in marriage, however in all her novels she demonstrates how one can ascend better than foul play and lead a genuine presence. At last, her heroes very nearly dependably strive to make their relational unions work.

Deshpande may not be a formal feminist in the strict feeling of the saying; however she has doubtlessly carved a niche for herself in voicing the musings and emotions of the informed, urban working class woman in the patriarchal Indian culture.

3.1.2 Shashi Deshpande as a Writer

Shashi Deshpande holds a special position among the contemporary, budding Indian writers in English. She is endowed with an unborn artistic brain which developed with her encounters in life.

Three variables in her initial life formed Deshpande as a writer:
her father, Adya Rangacharya, was one of the most well known Kannada writers of his time; she was educated exclusively in English; and she was a woman. (Deshpande IL 104)

Deshpande does not compose for exposure. She reflects the general public as she watches it. She is indifferent about name and popularity. That is the motivation behind why despite the way that she had been composing for very much a long period, she still was difficult to understand to many people until her novel That Long Silence
got published by Virago Feminist press, London. She wants her books to grab the attention rather than herself.

Deshpande is a voracious reader. She read immensely as a child. Her enthusiasm for words throughout adolescence established the framework for her future compositions. A portion of the journalists like Somerset Maugham and much more Jane Austen had enduring impact. Anyway it was so when she was untrained as the author. The characteristic of a writer began shaping in her when she composed the short story, 'Intrusion', which was totally her own. After that she discovered her voice. In any case it could be said here that her compositions were invigorated by the writers like Bronte sisters, Jane Austen, Margaret Drabble, Daris Lessing, Erica Jong, Simone de Beauvoir and Germaine Green. Speaking to Vanamala Vishwanath in an interview Deshpande says,

"I still read her (Jane Austen) regularly. But I don’t think there have been any conscious influences on my writings as such."

(Interview to Vishwanath in Pathak 233)

Moreover, Deshpande has never distinguished herself with any specific gathering of journalists, whether of India or abroad. She read writers like Beauvoir and Green late, much after she began composing.

In her inventive compositions, Deshpande mirrors the society as it is a society in which we breathe and belong; a real picture portrayed by Deshpande a realist at heart. She writes on authentic characters not obscure ones. She portrays the India of the eighties and due to this her writings have a universal appeal which shows how firmly she is rooted to her country. Much of her written work is absolutely related to women, yet that doesn't make her a woman writer or a feminist writer. She doesn't prefer to be named as feminist. She doesn't compose with a reason to lecture. The inspiration driving her composition is only surged toward oneself. She says, "I write because it comes to me". (In Conversation Sue Dickman)

While it might not have been Deshpande's expectation to offer any specific hypothesis, even a careless reading of her novel shows an enormous measure
of sensitivity for women. In addition, the mentality and response of her heroes to
different issues identified with women who are stuck between custom and innovation
excessively give adequate material to feminist treatment from a feminist angle. She,
then again, keeps up that her books are not planned to be read as feminist writings.
This is obvious from what she says:

"A woman who writes of women’s experiences often bring in some
aspects of those experiences that have angered her, roused her
strong feelings. I don’t see why this has to be labeled feminist
fiction." (Deshpande LC 33)

elsewhere she expounds this point further when she says,

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." (Cited in Pathak 19)

Whether she is a feminist or not, Deshpande has unquestionably carved a
niche for herself in voicing the contemplations and emotions of the literate, urban
working class woman. She has effectively given her followers a viewpoint which is at
the same time, genuinely individualistic and feminine.
3.2 Woman Characters in Short Stories of Deshpande

The crucial centre of concern in the short stories of Deshpande is woman – her travails and privations, strains and aggravations, torments and anguishes. Her stories depict the social and good confinements which Indian women need to battle with in life. Most of her characters are women and the story is based on their narration.

Deshpande illuminates that she has decided to have a woman as a focal character not with a specific end goal to extend or help some women's activist position but since she feels that she can expand her thoughts on a female with conviction and some internal information. She says:

"I know women better than I know man, so perhaps my books are more about women, and that’s about it." (Interview to Dickman 32)

The heroines in the short stories of Deshpande are working class women. Really, she demonstrates that she is a unique writer regarding the matter of depicting white collar class lives. In a late survey Shama Futehally compliments her for her reasonable depiction and rightly watches:

"Those who have read and reread Deshpande over the years are united in describing her as a ‘middle-class’ writer. In this they are paying her a great compliment; they are saying with truth- that her writing is inseparable from the milieu she describes, or indeed from the relationship she writes for. She writes as an insider, not as a viewer: that bane of post-independent writing which was so much more of a bane when Deshpande began her career." (Futehally 111)

The heroines in Deshpande's stories awaken through an emergency. They experience the change of awareness by the end. Subsequently, she takes after the liberal-feminist ideal which treats development in awareness as the end. This
awareness brings out the strength of the characters where they can assert themselves. They have understood that not by "destroying" themselves yet by making themselves 'felt', they can recover the lost ground. Deshpande imparts verifiably through her heroes, the system of building a genuine life amidst disarray and possibilities furnished with feeling and keenness. As opposed to battling against the patriarchal pop culture and male command, they take an adjusted perspective of life from a lady's perspective. They have a quality of their own, and notwithstanding difficulties and threats, stay uncrushed. As indicated by Adele King,

"Deshpande's strength lies in portraying uncertainties and doubts of women, who cannot see themselves as heroic but who want to make life possible." (King in Kirpal 167)

The resigned acknowledgement of life, or the taking asylum in one self by women, proposes a "resignation" that spells enduring and dissatisfaction and even the cracking of one's identity. Shashi Deshpande herself clarifies:

I have been able to feel more a housewife, who is most, devoted ...

Women who do not go out to work, who are literally trapped, and who are scared to get out of family relationships. Without that, she feels she has no claim to whatever. Most women are still emotionally dependent on the family—they want to be good daughters/wives/mothers always. (Interview to Vishwanath 235)

Deshpande's women are generally touchy and perceptive creatures, who ruminate over their destiny and position in traditionalist society. They try to recognize what they are, the way men act with them, why they drop into madness and impatience and why they feel distanced and truncated. Their persevering quest for "self" demonstrates that Deshpande has to a great extent kept herself to the issues and torments of the female world. As a feminist writer, she has put on blinders. There are families and circumstances where a woman assumes a vital part. She overlooks all of them and decides to bring under her centre the feeble, sad woman. What's more she does this with admirable achievement and empathy. In an interview she told:
My characters take their own ways. I've heard people saying we should have strong women characters. But my writing has to do with women as they are. (Interview to Vishwanath 235)

In Deshpande's stories, patriarchy and the qualities it infers are censured unequivocally and also verifiably. In any case, the male characters develop not as scallywags or as objects of scorn. The writer condemns the social structure, not people.

In an interview given to Vanamala, Deshpande was asked why it was not possible for women writers to create a ‘rounded’ character of the opposite sex like Tolstoy’s Anna, Deshpande replied that Tolstoy had ‘years of male writing’ behind him and that the “Female Tolstoy” is yet to come. This underlines her being aware of her limitation as a restricted writer of the feminine world and her attempt to turn it into an advantage as Jane Austen does. However, she acknowledges the feeling of being “trapped in this woman’s world” from which she hopes to emerge, so as to be able to write about “human beings and not about women and men.” (Interview to Vishwanath 237)

Deshpande, being mindful of the way that the short story has a well restricted structure to permit the utilization of various characters, once in a while presents a character that appears unnecessary or immaterial. In spite of the fact that her cast of characters is fairly little, she can attain such power and legitimacy as is rarely measured up to by her counterparts. By concentrating on the social quandary of working class women, Deshpande presents significant vignettes highlighting the diverse appearances of it.
3.3 Characteristics of New Woman in Collected Short Stories Vol. 1 & 2

The stories in this collection give a perspective on women in their real and complex relationships. The stories are about mothers and daughters, grandmothers & wives, working women & house wives who strive hard to strike a balance between tradition & modernity by analyzing themselves and by expressing their insecurities, fears and desires. The characteristics of New Woman found in the stories are as follows:

1) A New Woman seeks a companionship based on respect and mutual understanding.

A relationship based on respect and mutual understanding is a basic requirement for a New Woman. She does not want a husband / lover who does not understand her or respect her. There should be companionship based on trust and love. The companionship where she can express her views freely and is ever ready to listen to her partner also. In some of the stories we find women characters stuck in a marriage without companionship, without respect and understanding. The way they handle the situation is really worth appreciating in some cases.

“The Intrusion” is a story in which the burning topic of marriage in our society has been focused upon. The girls are squashed under a load of a society governed by males and its traditions. The writer justly describes the sufferings, dissatisfactions and disappointments in her short stories. The eligible young women here are indicated working inside the structure of a society ruled by men and its vicious traditions. Deshpande highlights the issues on the types of marriage-arranged or love, lack of companionship in the relations which has been given to the partners through the nuptial vows. Deshpande never gives explanations or justification on any of the issues without predetermined thoughts. The hypocritical attitude and dual morals prevalent in society are highlighted. The heroines in these stories do not have the courage to challenge the social traditions and look for alternatives to come out of the dilemma they face.
Rape is a humiliation which a woman has to suffer. It makes no difference to the males about what the women feel after it. They pounce on the woman like beasts by showing their masochist force. It is more terrible when it happens inside the piety of a marriage. Also this is the thing that happens with the heroine of these stories. Deshpande writes about the screams of the brutal act and captures the tortures of the wife and her abhorrence for the act of her husband. This violent behavior is like a shock for the wife from a man who is her life partner. It clearly shows that their relation is a constrained one rather than being natural. This agony of women since ages has been smothered in the prison of their marriage. But of late they have gained their spirit to fight against it. Indrani Jaisingh, a prominent legal advisor for women writes:

“It is assumed that by marrying a man, a woman has given her consent to sexual intercourse with her husband at anytime. Thus, even if he forces himself on her, he is not committing an offense [of rape] as her consent is assumed. In this respect, the women’s movement has consistently demanded that the law of rape be changed. A recent judgment of court indicated that rape within marriage can be an offence. Several states in the U.S. have specially amended their original law to make it an offence.”

(Jaisingh in Singh and De 65)

Indian women are still undergoing through the forcible act of being brutally raped. The society of India has a rule that the moment a girl gets married to a boy, through a love marriage or through an arranged marriage she is bound to follow her husband and give up completely to his orders and desires. In literature we come across stories which depict sex as a feeling of men, but the stress of women due to sex is never conveyed powerfully. The stories of Deshpande sensibly display the decrease of sacred component in sex and develop disarray in regards to sex in marriage "The Intrusion" focuses on the conflict between a couple who has gone for their honeymoon trip in a hotel close to the sea. The repulsiveness of a newly married woman whose husband is unaware and heartless to her sentiments is presented here. The touchy issue of "legalized rape" has been dealt with by Deshpande. The wife is not mentally
prepared for a sexual relation but the husband takes advantage of the bitter fact that they are married as a license to violate her body.

The woman is interested in knowing the man who is her husband. She wants to sit with him for the night and have a chat like old friends before revealing the secrets of her body. As they are unknown to each other there is an irritating silence. They have nothing to talk. The heroine thinks that what can they talk? They are strangers who are totally unknown to each other. The silence between them carries an uneasiness which makes her feel nervous. And the man stands unaware of it. She feels that “They were not friends, not acquaintance even but only a husband and wife.” (CS-1: 204)

The honeymoon is for getting close to each other and building a friendly relationship instead of hurting one another. There is no mutual understanding and this has resulted in futile attempts as both have something different in their minds. The man is very eager to have a sexual encounter whereas the woman is interested in knowing him. She is frightfully mindful of "a secret smile, a smirk on his face." (CS-1: 202) She is aware of a ridiculous anger for him. The woman feels distressed because the tone of the man hints to the fact that he is looking forward for something exciting. There is eagerness in his voice. She becomes low as she knows the reason behind it. His whispers arouse a strange dislike in her. The man is totally unaware of her fear, alarm and her emotions. The woman thinks of the “glazed look in his eyes,” it spoke of how much unaware he was of all this tumult in her mind. He was just thinking of sex.

She has broken with her past by getting married to the man. She wishes to know him as an individual to allow him an entry into her life. She has different aspirations like talking to him as a friend through the night and then smiling at each other like old friends in the morning. And the irony is that the man is all set up for something different and all the other things don’t matter to him at all. But for the woman he is a total stranger in a strange place with her. He calls her with her name as if he owns her.
Every touch initiated by the man makes her withdraw herself in her cocoon despite of reading the wedlock guide unabashedly before her mother. The sensual pictures which arise in her mind do not prepare her for the sexual beginning with the husband. The husband feels annoyed as he feels he is avoided by his wife. Inquiring about this all she could say was that they scarcely know each other. This hits him like a bolt from the blue as he dint expect such an answer.

“Know each other? What has that to do with it? Aren’t we married now? And how will we start getting to know each other if you put on such a touch me-notish air?” (CS-1: 207)

The air in the room turned silent; she stood there quiet, irate and sad. She felt like a culprit in his eyes. She wishes to tell the man how frightened and shy she is in revealing herself in front of him. But the thoughts didn’t take the form of words. She is afraid. She stammers as she tries to clarify, she begins sobbing uncontrollably on seeing that he is angry all of a sudden she feels choked up. She wanted to go back to her world among the people she knew. Furiously she reflects,

"How can I, with a man I scarcely know? It’s not fair. It’s indecent. He should have given me some time. ”(CS-1: 208)

She falls asleep with turmoil within. And all of a sudden she feels something heavy on her. She wakes up to find that her husband is forcing himself over her. It happened suddenly and she was unable to realize her own voice. The wife is so alarmed and shocked, she cannot even speak nor resist. Deshpande has penned down the agonizing circumstances of a woman poignantly. The society may call it a marital bliss but to her it was a rape in the sleep and all she could do was submit.

“There was no talk, no word between us just this relentless pounding. His movements had the same rhythm, the same violence as the movements of the sea; yet, I could have borne the battering of the sea better, for that would hurt but not humiliate like this.” (CS-1: 208)
When he was done, she gave a cry, "gave a cry not for the physical pain but for the intrusion into my privacy, the violation of my right to myself." (CS-1:209). He has forced his desires over her though she is emotionally unprepared for it. This is in no way bliss but a legalized rape. She screams within and outside she feels defenseless, her faith and soul shattered as it is authorized by societal norms. She is hurt and embarrassed and feels her individuality as lost. She could not protest against this; whom could she protest?

Whatever it may be, a sensitive wife or a rigid man, the ultimate foundation of the relationship has already been weakened in the first night of their journey together. The narration reflects on how a few options a wife has to choose from in her life? She neither had a choice in the marriage nor her individuality after the marriage. It has been duly portrayed by Deshpande how limited is a girl’s position in the society. Deshpande’s so-called self aware protagonist depicts her circumstances and we as readers evaluate her life. Among the worst circumstances a woman can liberate herself if she is really aware of her pertaining conditions, of things that give her individuality. Here we find a New Woman who considers herself as an individual and not a toy to be played with. She is keen on knowing the person and exploring his world before allowing him to enter into her privacy. But despite of an awakened thinking towards her own desires she is helpless before the man.

Many a time’s marriages don’t turn out to be as fulfilling as we think. Their initial cheerfulness takes the form of monotony, the relations lose their essence. “An Antidote to Boredom” is one such story wherein the protagonist finds her life to be too monotonous and meaningless after nearly twelve years of their marriage. She finds her fulfillment in a widower who makes her feel alive, admires her and talks to her unlike her husband who never noticed her. The routine nature of the prevailing life has taken toll over their relationships. There is nothing that her husband does to please her. He never cared for how she dressed, never noticed what she wore,

“No one had cared what I wore, how I dressed. My husband denied me nothing; but there was not one sari with association. Not one sari that was special to me because of something we had done together, something he had said to me.” (CS-1: 56)
He was a dull man who never demonstrated his love towards his wife. She though he was ignorant of her. Though he denied her nothing, he never admired her. The admirations and attention was all that she longed for. She felt isolated from her husband. He was always inexpressive and practiced a rigid schedule which had no time for her.

“I had felt in him incapacity to receive and for that I hated him at times, though I knew I wronged him by that. For he was not a wicked man, not harsh nor cruel. Only unperceptive. And dull. And dullness is to me an unforgivable crime.” (CS-1: 58)

He was an unreceptive man unable to receive her love and longings. Dullness to her was an unforgivable crime. She was hungry for love and affection and it came from the new man, whom she met at her son Rahul’s school. He was a man who was interested in her. He made her talk, laugh, admired her and expressed his feelings for her. She always yearned for companionship, a trait of a New Woman, and the man provided it. Her dull life was replaced with a more rejuvenating one. She had found a person who was not bound by schedule like her husband.

Many Indian women are subjected to a dull and monotonous married life. Their life is dominated by tight schedule and there is no time for love. They are taken for granted and are supposed to fulfill the duties for a wife. But the man forgot that his wife too needs a companion and if they fail to be one, she finds another for herself. It is nothing related to being characterless which is always related with a woman. It is a tool of self-fulfillment as a woman, another trait of a New Woman. But our rigid and orthodox society fails to understand such simple human psychology. The woman can never be blamed for such deviations alone. The fault is to some extent her husband’s too who failed to make her feel adorable and lovable. All they do is treat her like a slave in the house, and a commodity to be used.

She thought that there was no affection between her and her husband. Their habit and child kept them together. She always thought that she had not wronged her husband by getting into a relationship with another man as she had deprived him of nothing that he wanted.
“No, there's no guilt. Why should there be? As long as his world isn't disturbed, at least obviously, he doesn’t care. I felt no guilt towards my husband, because I would be depriving him of nothing, nothing he wanted.” (CS-1: 57)

Her involvement with the other man gave her excitement and brought joy to her colorless and monotonous life. She felt no guilt towards her husband, it was his fault.

The protagonist in “The First Lady” though she was eminent, she was not happy. She didn’t want to live this fake life but had to because her husband wanted it only that way. She dives back into her past and remembers that her father was against their marriage. But his “khadi clothes and the burning patriotism” (CS-1: 14) had attracted her towards him. She had to adjust to her new married life with him. She put away her silk saris and wore khadi. She put off drinking tea as “even to talk of tea in her husband’s home would have been blasphemy” (CS-1: 14) There is another aspect of Indian marriage institution wherein it is always the woman who is subjected to adjustments. It is always the “She” who gives away her habits to please the “He”. She soon discovered that the dedicated and passionate man she had loved was incapable of loving her. He had no time for love. Her husband most of the time remained in jail and she shouldered responsibilities outside.

She went against her father and married the man she loved. She took her own decisions. Even when her husband was in jail, she does not feel helpless; she attends to her responsibilities and justifies them. She is an independent individual. The story brings about another aspect of the society wherein the rights of having sex rest with the men. It is he who decides of an activity that is mutual. The protagonist of the story was shocked when her husband told her of celibacy. According to him,

“The purpose of sex is procreation. And since we don’t intend to have any more children.” (CS-1: 15)

She felt as if she were a breeding machine. She silently agreed to it as she thought that,
“there had been in those days, a kind of perverse satisfaction in denying oneself pleasure” (CS-1: 15)

But she could not suppress her feelings and longings for pleasure. She was never satisfied in her marriage though it was she who chose it. She during her hardships developed a yearning for one of her husband’s followers. Though she was ashamed of her thoughts, she could never forget him.

“And now he lived on in her mind, eternally young, eternally loving and admiring her.”(CS-1: 16)

The woman had been devoid of her husband’s love. She found it in another man. He was eternal to her. She thought though she was the first lady, a very important figure, she was incomplete, dissatisfied by her life which did not project her real self.

The protagonist in “The Valley in the Shadow” has an intense turmoil. The word ‘crippled’ distinguishes her from all the common people around the world. These feelings of confinement, non-belonging have become the part of her existence. She thinks people outside didn’t actually see; they focused their thoughts on her polio-stricken leg with sympathy, disdain or just ignored her lest she feels bad. The thought that she was a burden to her parents, that they wanted to get rid of her, hurt her. The news that her proposal had been accepted gave her relief. She thought she had finally found someone who would understand her and not pity her for her disability. In the stereotypically labeled “crippled woman” we find the face of a New Woman who can rise to question her husband. She does not seek sympathy but acceptance from the society. Except her being a cripple she is capable of loving, taking care of her family and doing her household chores. But she is neglected and thus she rebels by being firm over her thoughts and being positive despite of the negative situations in her life. She never went back to him. He was no more the man she imagined to be with.

"That night I had shut out forever all human hopes of any human contact.” (CS-1: 195)
The relationship between the protagonist and her husband in “Why a Robin?” was also not sound. They always had a silence between, silences that represented lack of understanding between them. He never talked to her and she was ignored equally by his family. She would do everything to please them yet they could not forget that he had married a girl, “beneath him.” (CS-1: 48) Her only fault was that she did not belong to the modern world. She had been brought up in the traditional way and knows no other method of living. She feels that she has locked herself as she is failing to be part of their life. She has become an outsider in her own house. She has no control over her husband or daughter; she is helpless to both of them. She wanted to talk to both of them. She wanted to talk to her husband, sit with him and share his enjoyment but she was afraid. She was afraid that he may ask, “What do you want?” (CS-1: 50)

In the story “My Beloved Charioteer” we find how the norms of a married life can batter a woman’s life. She is devoid of her own aspirations. How she suffers in a relationship that was meant to complete her as a woman. The mother exposes the truth to her daughter and all that she had undergone in her married life. She had no choice, no opinion; all she had to do was be available when needed by the husband.

“Saris; always colours that I hated. But he never asked me and I never told him. And at night, I scarcely dared to breathe; I was so terrified of disturbing him.” (CS-1: 188-189)

The mother was afraid of her husband. So afraid of expressing herself that she felt it was easier for her to suffer then to question. Though she is afraid of the tyrannous man she gathers courage to express her desire to sleep alone before her tyrannous husband. This brings about a trait of a New Woman in her who could in between all her fears dare to bring out her aspirations. The most difficult thing is to ask for what you want. She crossed that barrier and heard herself express herself, though her wish was murdered the very next day by her mother-in-law, who reminded her duties of a wife. She was taught to be available when her man needed her to be. It didn’t matter if she wanted it to happen or not. Eventually, she went to him when he said, "come here and when he finished, if I didn’t get out of his bed fast enough, he said, you can go.” (CS-1: 189)
It was evident to her that her position in the new life was no different than that of the slave; Both had to satisfy their masters command. After his death, she remembers him for what he murdered in her; her aspirations, longings and expression. He was no more than an oppressor to her, who had silenced her by force. For all the twenty five years of their married life she had fulfilled her duties as a wife; rather a slave and cared for everything that he liked, restrained herself from doing anything that he didn’t like and yet received no credit and was tyrannized by him.

In “I Want” we find Alka a modern woman with a new awareness; she gets aggravated and determines to declare herself before all. She is a thoughtful woman with her own aspirations. Being a reasoning lady, she has her own particular yearning to satisfy. Despite the fact that she doesn't need a spouse having a huge income or a luxury car, regardless she yearns for someone who

"hears my voice when I speak. Who understands me even when I don't?" (CS-1: 149).

The thought of asserting herself before all leaves her restless. Thus the New Woman seeks companionship, respect and mutual understanding in marriage. Through this she feels being wanted and not neglected.

2) A New Woman takes the decisions of her life – be it education, marriage or pregnancy and even takes the responsibility of her own decisions and stays committed to them.

The protagonist in the story ‘The First Lady’ brings out the New Woman in the story. She went against her father and married the man she loved. She took her own decisions. Even when her husband was in jail, she does not feel helpless; she attends to her responsibilities and justifies them.

In ‘A Liberated Woman’ the plight of a successful woman who is a celebrity doctor is portrayed. Her husband is a teacher at a college. Their marriage started as a love marriage wherein they fled away from their homes and got married. She is called as a “liberated woman”. She is educated and financially independent
woman yet she has trapped her intentionally in her unhappening married life. She herself is responsible for her conditions because it is when a woman accepts to get suppressed, she is suppressed. She had the courage to run away from her family to marry the man she loved, she made herself successful. These are the traits of a New Woman. She is a New Woman; a liberated woman socially. But at personal level she was helpless about her husband and this helplessness was created by herself in her mind. So to really be liberated, a woman of the present society should have the strength to fight her personal life and make all the corrections which are needed even if it is her husband who is wrong.

The story title is unexpected because she doesn't split far from her unendurable married life. This can be viewed as a characteristic of a New Woman wherein she sticks to her commitment to her husband despite a disastrous relationship with him. A New Woman always fulfils her commitments and tries to let go many things for fulfilling it. The narrator remarks:

“But what really astonishes me is her feebleness, her attitude of despairing indifference. Surely she, an educated, earning, competent woman, has no right to behave this way, to plug all her escape routes herself and act like a rat in a trap.” (CS-1: 44)

Another story is “The Homecoming”, where Anju a daughter of a maid wants to get rid of the congested space of her big family and for doing this she rebels against her mother by marrying a boy whom she met only once. Anju displays the boldness of eloping from the house for getting married and feels a sense of freedom in it. She makes her own decision of getting married as per her choice.

In the story "Death of a Child" we come across a woman who is expecting a child. But the irony is that she doesn’t want the child. She wants to abort it. For her it’s a burden now as she already has 2 children. This third pregnancy in the last four years leaves her frustrated, "I feel trapped. I feel like an animal, it isn't fair.” (CS-2: 61) Her husband is not at all moved by her state. Instead he tells her to continue with it by saying, “will-manage—somehow” mentality. But the woman knows that they are not well off financially, and this pregnancy will worsen the matters for them. Their
life is already in so many constraints as they are 4 members in the family, the couple and their two children. She is distressed when discussing it with her husband, "I love my two children, but I have never had any milk for them." (CS-2: 62) Just because they are living in a life of deprivations, the woman thinks of getting the child aborted. Her husband doesn’t like the idea and tells her it is simple and she need not worry, "It's quite simple really—having a child." (CS-2: 62) The woman yells angrily and says, "Simple? Yes, any cow, any bitch can breed." (CS-2: 62)

We note that the woman in the story is very much keen of herself and her life. She firmly believes that, "Marriage, child-birth destroys something in a woman. A reserve . A Secretiveness. An Innocence." (CS-2: 63) She feels that the children smother the identity of a woman. “You become just a mother – nothing more.” (CS-2: 62) The woman craves for a life of her own wherein she can do whatever she wants. She has made up her mind that she will abort the child and not pass through this ordeal again for the third time. She reflects,

“Years before I can go back to doing anything else. Years when my actions are dedicated to, not by my will, not by my desires, but by the sheer animal needs of the children.” (CS-2: 63)

Thus she fixes everything with a gynecologist and goes for abortion. The husband cannot understand the state of her mind. He even tells her that she will be responsible for every action of hers. He is not involved in this. Such an irony, the marriage has made them together and today only one person has to bear the consequences of a mutual relation. The wife does not just want to be a breeding machine so she takes this decision. But he neither wants to understand her. She is made to feel guilty for what she is going to do. She is insensitive for him, "When I kiss and fondle the children, I can feel him wonder – how can she?" (CS-2: 65) Thus the husband cannot understand her nor can she explain her state to him. She undergoes the treatment and aborts the child. She being a woman even grieves over the dead child and is guilty for doing this being a mother. Tears well up and she feels,
“I feel heaviness in my breasts. There is a hollow feeling within me...I am conscious of a piercing pain in the place he had filled. I feel that the ghost of my dead child walks with me.” (CS-2: 68-69)

It is evident that the mother even loved this unborn child of hers. But the thing was she did not want to sacrifice her life in child rearing only. She portrays a New Woman in the light of the fact that despite of all odds she decides what she wants. She is able to stand up and declare her identity by deciding about the baby. Women are not only destined to be mothers, they even have a career which they want to advance. She knows that her life is short of many things. This child would add to her responsibilities as a mother again. She denies to be put into the same cycle after her two children.

3) A New Woman courageously voices her opinions.

The protagonist in “The Valley in the Shadow” works in an administration office. She earns more than her husband. This fact does not annoy the man because he thinks this is balanced by the fact that she is ‘crippled’. She can never be his equal. In the stereotypically labeled “crippled woman” we find the face of a New Woman who can rise to question her husband. She does not seek sympathy but acceptance from the society. Except her being a cripple she is capable of loving, taking care of her family and doing her household chores. But she is neglected and thus she rebels by being firm over her thoughts and being positive despite of the negative situations in her life. She never went back to him. He was no more the man she imagined to be with.

4) A New Woman is self aware of herself, her wants, her strong likes and dislikes and the moral conduct within the society.

The story “The Valley in the Shadow” comes to an end with an idealistic note. After a long time she demanded something from her husband. She wanted to go away from the valley. She felt strength flow in her; she had compassion for her husband. She felt it was really she who was more ashamed of her body than anybody else. The feeling of detachment was retreating progressively. She was leaving the shadow. She decided with strength to get rid of her fear of being judged over her
crippled body. It no more bothered her how she looked; it was more important what she was inside and not outside.

“And now, I had a feeling that if the valley was in shadow no longer, if the sunshine fell on it, perhaps even the bitterness and aridity would look beautiful.” (CS-1: 199)

We observe that each of Deshpande’s narrative closes on a firm and positive change perceived by the heroine who determines to take the control of her life into her own hands. It is within what distinguishes people, the determination to lead a more fulfilling life. Thus she despite of being a New Woman does not break the morality codes of the society and stays attached to her husband and child. We can note that a New Woman is very much aware of the morality conduct within the society. Being new or modern in her thinking does not lead her to infidelity.

“The Shadow” is a story about a little girl who yearns for her father’s love and affection. Her father always ignored her as if she didn’t exist. Her innocent and young mind is not able to gauge the reasons of her father’s ignorance. Her mind was getting curious of his strange behavior. She questioned everybody about it but could not dare to ask her father. She couldn’t understand what her crime was. She wanted to find what was wrong and get it fixed so that she could absorb her father’s love. She was being punished for a crime she never committed. She even didn’t know what she was being ignored and punished for. All she does is keep trying to please her father which she could never do. The little girl could not understand how it was wrong if she were born. How could she put it right? Once the girl heard her father speak to her brother that he would be pleased if he scored better in his exams. She thought she could also please her father by scoring well in her exams. She worked very hard for the exam; she had an unending desire to win. She thought it was an opportunity to grab her father’s love. She secured third rank in her class and thought that this would please her father. But that huge man was not moved a bit by the little girl’s emotions and hard work. She joyfully runs to him with the report card. But as she approaches him, she finds him as stiff as a stone, completely expressionless. He puts an end to her joy by saying, “Do you have to run wild because of that? And look at your hands filthy. Third?” (CS-1: 150) The girl even at the tender age had the sense of her
individuality. She accepts herself the way as she is. She says, "Whatever they say, I was born. And I am, I am". (CS-1: 150) The words ‘I am’ distinguishes her as an individual. It was a voice of a New Woman who is aware of herself from within that made her feel triumphant. ‘I am’ symbolizes her determination to live without any fear. The mother however is portrayed as a miserable character as she could do nothing to help her daughter.

In India, in the traditionalist family, a girl is thought to be big responsibility until she is married. In “I Want” Alka’s parents are always anxious to shed off the burden of Alka by getting her married as soon as possible. She is guilty always as she feels that she is the root cause of her parents’ trouble. There is no connection between Alka and her parents; their relationship is "fragile, explosive and delicate as if labeled Handle with care. They were nervous and uneasy with me." (CS-2: 144) she has the guilt of being a problem for her parents. Just because she is unmarried she has to suffer this ill treatment. There is a silence between Alka and her parents. They do not even think it necessary to inform her of a prospective suitor who is going to come and visit them. Everything is hidden from her. Alka is uneasy, alarmed and sadness. She ponders: "The woman in me was outraged and protested. I crushed her. She had no place there. None at all." (CS-2: 145)

Alka is different from other women by her strong awareness of her individuality. She protects her ‘self’ under any circumstances. The instructions given by her mother to gain the consent of the boy’s family shatters her from within.

“I suddenly felt fluid, as if I had no shape of my own. As if I was capable of taking any shape. But I was 27. I had a shape and form I had to preserve. A self I had to treasure.” (CS-2: 145)

Alka is portrayed as a woman with awareness about her own identity. This is the quality of a New Woman projected by Alka, a modern woman with a new awareness; she gets aggrivated and determines to declare herself before all. She is a thoughtful woman with her own aspirations. Being a reasoning lady, she has her own particular yearning to satisfy. Despite the fact that she doesn't need a spouse having a huge income or a luxury car, regardless she yearns for someone who "hears my voice
when I speak. Who understands me even when I don't?" (CS-2: 149). The thought of asserting herself before all leaves her restless. She is anxious to put forward her desires. But when she goes to her father, she is shocked to know that he has already fixed up everything.

5) A New Woman accepts her past and let goes of all the hurts by moving ahead in life.

In “My Beloved Charioteer” in spite of the sexual and emotional oppression that the mother had to go through because of her husband, she is not broken. She does not surrender herself to the life unlike her daughter who went about smoking and puffing bitterness from her heart. The mother gives herself a profound reason to flourish on – her granddaughter Priti. This little girl filled the voids in her life and made her life more fulfilling. The New Woman is the one who accepts her past and let it go; the mother in the story is a New Woman. She didn’t let her past dominate her present. She replaced the pain caused to her in her past with love for the little grand-daughter, this made her life fulfilling.

Though the protagonist of the story overcame her past, her daughter had tightly held her past close to her. This not only caused pain to her but to her mother and daughter too. She is a complete stranger to her mother. The mother tries to make her daughter face the reality that her dead husband could not be brought back. The dead man could not be affected by the pain she was causing to herself, but her daughter Priti was being deprived of her share of love. In any case the mother is unable to lift up her distress which she always hid from her mother.

“Also I had been full of pity, not for her, but for Aarti, who could turn happiness into a wrong. But I can say nothing to her. She has never shared anything with me and now she hides her sorrow like a dog its one. She guards it jealously and will not let me approach. And I have kept my distance.” (CS-1: 186)
6) A New Woman always tries to overcome her limitations.

“Why a Robin?” is a story that portrays the delicate relationship between a mother and her growing daughter. Both of them have a lack of understanding between them. The mother longs to feel her daughter but she cannot. The mother is unable to answer her questions being less educated. This annoys the daughter and she moves away to her father for help. She expects nothing out of her mother. The story also brings out the effects of a dominating husband on a growing daughter. She like her father is ignorant of her mother as if she was inferior to them and did not belong to her methods of life.

The protagonist of the story who earlier was a silent and a relegated member of the family blooms out as a brave character in the end. She realizes within with firm determination that the voids between her and her family need to be filled. She has to accept their methods and show them the glorious side of her living. She now wanted to develop a mutual understanding. She has convinced her daughter of her presence, has accepted her daughter’s modernity. She, who had always loved a peacock, accepted the robin too. She says, “Why, not a Robin?” (CS-1: 52) She is a New Woman in her thoughts and action. She has accepted differences with gratitude and would no more let her to be taken for granted. It is a new beginning for her. She reflects,

“The conviction grows within me that bridges have to be built. They do not come out of nothing, they have to be created.” (CS-1: 50)

7) A New Woman is real and never likes to fake in any situation.

The protagonist in “The First Lady” is tired of putting up a fake personality in front of everyone. She thinks it is a performance. Everyone around her is fake, even her husband. She remembers him saying that he wants to serve people as long as he could. But she knew in her heart all that mattered to him was the feeling of being important. All this was meaningless to her; it was just a place where she didn’t belong. When she came to know that the reception was held on account of Independence Day, she thought it really didn’t matter. Because she knew that
everyone there had not gathered to celebrate the day but to project their positions to each other. She feels, “we have betrayed all those who died.” (CS-1: 16)

The story truly depicts the present situation of living wherein everyone is hungry for power. Everyone wants to be important and recognized. Everybody performs and nobody expresses. She reflected back to the first Independence Day. It was a time where words like sacrifice and self-denial dominated people's thoughts. People then had a sense of what they are doing. Their actions had meanings and they were real. That was the time when she went on the dais to share the platform with her elevated husband. She thought it was the “beginning of glory” (CS-1: 13) in their life but now after so many years in limelight she feels “it had not been the beginning but the end of glory.” (CS-1: 13)

Though she was eminent, she was not happy. She didn’t want to live this fake life but had to because her husband wanted it only that way.

In “Hear me Sanjaya” we see Kunti portrayed in Deshpande’s story as a person who is real. She complains to him that just because her father gave her away she was angry and hurt. She thought that it was due to displeasing her father, he gave her away and so she always kept it in her mind and never ever dared to displease Pandu, her husband. Kunti even tells Sanjaya about her first born child, Karna. She conceives him through the grace of God and then as she is a spinster she has to desert him in a basket by making him flow with the river. After many years of his birth, Karna an adult now comes before her. She wants to go to him and shower her love and blessings but Karna does not talk to her. She is craving to hear the word ‘mother’ from his mouth. But Karna leaves her in a tormenting agony and never utters the word ‘mother’. Karna is angry with her for having deserted her, but Kunti cannot tell him the reality of her miserable life. During those days it was acceptable for the kings to have more than one queen. Pandu had married Madri. Kunti tell Sanjaya, ”Do you know how unfair life is to a woman who does not have beauty?” (CS-2: 84) Kunti is angered as Pandu married Madri and brought her in the palace as his second wife. Madri was beautiful compared to Kunti, and this humiliated her always. But still she had accepted Madri and showered her love and affection on her as if she were her younger sister. Just because Madri is a favorite of Pandu, he takes her with him in the
jungle. Kunti is angry. Madri tells her to even look after Nakul and Sahadev. Kunti feels that how selfish of her to go and live with her husband and leave all the drudgery on me. It is not an easy task to raise five children single-handedly. And that too when you know that the other two are not your children but of the woman who took away your right of a wife. Madri escaped from all these responsibilities and was glorified in history.

“Take my sons, look after them, she said. And I was angry. She is escaping, I thought, she is taking away all the glory, leaving the struggle, the drudgery for me.” (CS-2: 84)

Kunti is even conscious of hurting Draupadi. Arjuna brought her home. Kunti tells him to share whatever it is with his five brothers. And thus Draupadi gets married to all the five. But her only aim was to keep their unity intact to win their kingdom Hastinapur. This way she feels guilty of having deprived Draupadi from her joyful bliss in marriage with Arjuna whom she loved. She showed everyone that she is strong and solid. But had she not been that, it would have been difficult for her to survive. Kunti is also angered at Gandhari because of her "futile vows." Gandhari had vowed to remain blind as the king Dhridrashtra her husband was blind. But this was a wrong decision of hers according to Kunti. She feels that instead Gandhari could have kept her eyes open and been the eyes for her husband. Had she done that it would have been altogether a different story. She criticizes the pitamaha Bhishma for his celibacy vows. She feels that history may hold him in a high position but he was a person who was a terror for her mother-in-law. These women Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika never held any importance in the family. Bhishma’s had mistreated Amba due to which she had killed herself vowing to take revenge in her next birth. The Kunti of Deshpande has spoken of their suffering,

“They rarely spoke, except to each other---and that only in whispers—and moved about so little and so silently it was hard to remember they were there.” (CS-2: 81)

The Kunti of Deshpande is a woman who is genuine and has revealed her sorrow and agony for every decision which she had taken in her life. She proves
herself as a strong woman despite of every weakness in her. She remarks that women are not the weaker ones. They are the strong pillars that hold the family together despite all the pain and troubles given to them by their family and their destiny. Kunti gets genuine and touches the deepest chords of our hearts.

"And what has been decided?" is the reconstructed story of Draupadi. It tells us of her agony and highlights her pain as she was cheated and treated like a pawn by the Pandavas who were her husbands. The story which we know as per the Mahabharata is that it is only because of Draupadi that the Pandavas waged a war against the Kauravas. But Deshpande has an altogether different outlook towards it. As per Deshpande the Pandavas had already decided to wage war, but they did not want all to feel that they were the ones responsible for the death of millions of soldiers. So they hatched this plan and let the words come out from Draupadi’s mouth. And the moment Draupadi said it Yudhisthir declared that as she wants war we will have it. The Pandavas played the game of words and made Draupadi a pawn to them. They all were too eager for the war but not at the cost of their dignity. Both the parties had different motives related to the war. Pandavas wanted war to get back Hastinapur and Draupadi to avenge her dishonor. They were successful in provoking the clever yet innocent Draupadi who could not read their motives.

The pain and anguish of Queen Draupadi as a wife is also touching. During the years of exile Draupadi had fallen for Arjuna who had disguised himself as a Brahmin. She was content marrying the Brahmin. But on going to Kunti, Arjuna gets the order to share her with his brothers and poor Draupadi thinks,

“It was a brahmin youth I had garlanded and followed out of the swayamvara corridor. I would have been satisfied to be the wife of that Brahmin boy; but that was not to be my destiny. I became the wife of five men, five princes, Kshatriyas.” (CS-2: 241)

The traditional picture of Draupadi is shattered and we find here a genuine Draupadi who cries her heart out to every injustice done to her. Deshpande’s Draupadi has many questions to Yudhisthir and Arjuna specially. She had loved Arjuna like anything but never got his company. To get him for a few moments she
had to bear with the other four also. In the bed she was never alone with Arjuna. It was always together with all five. As she was a woman and could not be cut like a fruit and shared with all others, Arjuna never came to her. She longed for him, for his love, but feels, "Hungers that for me are never satisfied." (CS-2: 243) She says that she was very jealous of Subhadra. She had the privilege to be alone in the bed with Arjuna. She even thinks of asking Subhadra that,

“how is it with him alone? How does it feel to have Arjuna alone in your bed? How is it to know his desire for you is a friend not an enemy?” (CS-2: 244)

Thus we see in the story Draupadi who has crossed all barriers and raised all questions to all around her. Despite of having the Pandavas as her husband’s she has no chemistry with anyone because she feels,

“I am Yudhisthir's Queen, not his beloved. He keeps a distance between us. And Bhima treats me like a fragile, precious flower he is afraid to pluck. He cannot see the woman in me, the woman hungry for love, for passion. And Nakul and Sahadev are only boys. But Arjuna.” (CS-2: 243)

She longed for Arjuna but he was always away from her. She feels being mistreated by him and even blames him for cheating her. She married him to be his beloved but remained lonely forever. Draupadi of Deshpande’s story has raised questions to all in the assembly and given a meaning to the mythological character. She has raised a doubt about the position of women in India. She questions Dharmraj about the rule book and asks if it is the same for the men also? Thus she is genuine to herself and not just a myth.

8) A New Woman wants her own space and privacy.

“The Awakening” is the story of a young girl Alka who wishes to live a fulfilling life and a free life. She is very upset or rather bitter towards a present life. She lives in a chawl with many people in a house which is composed of just a room.
She called it a zoo. “And why must we have so much noise? It’s like a zoo. But even the animals live one in cage.” (CS-1:114) She had build up her own dreams; dreams that were more satisfying than her haphazard reality. She was about to complete her SSC and dreamt of going to a college. She wanted to go abroad for further studies. She longed of modernizing herself, and a room of her own. She feels, “surely there is something more to life than this? Something beyond and above this shoddy way of living?” (CS-1: 117) This is the trait of a New Woman in her wherein she wants to rise above her diluting conditions & sub standard methods of living. She very well knew what she wanted and where she wanted to go in life. She has decided all this on her own. She is ready for the entire struggle she would have to face. She is not demotivated by her present conditions of life and chooses education as a path to her fulfillment. She was confident, that the life ahead held promises to her.

9) A New Woman is flexible according to the situation.

Alka the heroine in ‘The Awakening’ discovers that she has to sacrifice her dream of living a comfortable life at the altar of duty towards her family. She is forced to work as a typist after her father’s death, and continue with her “shoddy way of life” which she hated from the beginning. The title of the story is truly justified by Deshpande. Her protagonist Alka has been awakened to the harsh yet true realities and methods of life. Alka is a New Woman. She dreamt of living a prosperous life. She boldly shouldered the burdens of her father. She didn’t run away from life even after all hardships. It takes courage of a soldier for what she did; devote herself and her dreams for her family. Women have always sacrificed in the society. But only a woman can sacrifice her dreams for her family and find a meaning in it. She would not die as her father died. She would be more fulfilled, satisfied. “Let me not die like that, achieved nothing, having been nothing.” (CS-1: 119)

Thus she becomes flexible and strong to shoulder the responsibilities but still aspires to make her life beautiful.

10) A New Woman is determined, courageous and never loses hope.

The story “My Beloved Charioteer” is a story of a mother and her daughter who are not just separated by a generation but also their thoughts and
attitudes towards life. Both of them widowed, have different outlook towards the life. The story brings about two different types of women. The first one is the mother, the protagonist of the story. She after her husband’s death has found a new reason to her life – her grand-daughter. She has always tried to make everyone happy. She is strong enough to let go her past and accept the present. The second one is her daughter, Aarti. She after her husband’s death has lost all the meaning of life. She has drowned herself in the past so deep that she is unable to face the reality. She is unable to let go that which cannot be brought back – her husband. She fails to be a good mother to her daughter Priti.

The daughter remains a kind of outsider in her house. The demise of her husband has made her bitter towards life. She is unable to rise up from her distress which she never reveals to anybody particularly her mother. The mother is filled with concern for her daughter who was hurting herself. The daughter always maintained a distance from her mother. The story proposes how an overwhelming and dominant father could affect the attitude of his growing daughter. The daughter is unaware of the real character of her father. She never knew of the pain her father had caused to her mother. She never wanted to be like her mother whom she considered weak and submissive. She always wanted to be like her father. She loved her father more than anyone in her childhood. She cannot bear the fact that both her loved ones, her father and husband, were dead. She thought life was unfair to her.

The noteworthy trait in the protagonist of the story is that even after all the harassments that she endured all her life silently, she never complained about her life. She constantly searched meaning in it. This is the most important trait of a New Woman; she didn’t give up unlike her daughter. Even by remaining silent she fought her war independently. She could never find love from her husband and this didn’t break her desire to live. She waited and love came to her in form of Priti – a gift from heaven as she considered her to be. Deshpande in this story not just projects the dark and painful experiences of a women’s life but also how the desire to live could fulfill her life. By tearing the shroud of misconception that the daughter held for her father both of them come to know and like one another. Deshpande focuses in a roundabout way that a woman cannot expect respect from her children without selfhood.
It Was Dark portrays the tragedy in the life of a small girl who is unmarried and has been raped. The man who raped her is a stranger. She is pregnant and has lost her dignity before the world for no fault of her. The incident has left her in a shock. All she does is stare blankly and lifeless. Her parents are in a traumatic state, unable to think or do anything for the child. This is the condition of many parents all over the world whose daughters gets raped.

“Silence” and “the inclination of detachment” have taken over them. The girl’s condition is critical as she has turned into a stone and simply “lies in bed and stares at the ceiling”. (CS-2: 125) She is not interested in meeting anyone nor wants to have a word out of her mouth. The incident has an effect of a solar eclipse on that girl. As looking at the eclipse with bare eyes harms us, in the same way the brutal incident has left her blank. Only the mother is worried for her child. She tries to make her talk and forces her to look at her. But the child savagely shakes away her head. With this her two plaits also waver. She does not say anything, except “It was dark” .(CS-2: 131)

Deshpande has focused here on the misery of the mother who is guilty as she thinks that she should have built a wall around the daughter. The girls in our Indian society live in borders. The mother recalls that even she was given a list of do’s and don’ts. As a mother she thought that she will not let this repeat with her daughter. She as a mother had guided her daughter regarding her body, but despite of that the daughter is raped. The mother recalls an incident at the age of 11 when she had to see a man reveal himself before her. She is afraid. Since then the “fear of invasion”.(CS-2: 130) had woven itself into her life. It stayed with her even after getting married. She learnt that only submission was the answer to this. Her face was dismissed in humiliation when her mother told her: "You must submit." (CS-2: 131)

A woman has always been suppressed, surpassed and subdued in the society. Women are taught over generations to be available and submit to their male counterparts. It is nothing more than murdering your individuality. But no more, she didn’t want her daughter to go through all that she went through. She very well knew that life would be miserable for her daughter as she had been raped. She wanted to prepare her daughter for her future. Else she would be raped again and again by the
society mentally if not physically. She would be punished for a crime in which she never performed. Going against the societal norms she teaches her daughter to stand for what she believes. To fight when she is wronged, and standing for it instead of submitting to her situation. This is the trait of a New Woman portrayed through the character of the mother. She thought her daughter remained for a long time in the dark, gazing blankly. The darkness was all she had to bear all her life. Her mother opens the curtains to let the light in the room. The light brightened the room as well as brightened the life of her daughter. The curtains had not only been placed over the window, her daughter’s innocence had been curtained, her laugh turned silent and she lay on the bed vulnerable. The mother’s act of pulling the curtains open symbolizes that she was not ready to allow her daughter to live a gloomy and painful life. She was not ready to accept her daughter’s condition. Through this act, the daughter is relieved that she is not alone in her war. That pain is not her destiny and she could punish the one who had hurt her. It gave her the power to go against the norms of society, to stand for what she believed. Her mother standing beside her provides her strength. This brings back hope in the daughter. When everybody else considered the daughter as a life-long disgrace, it was the mother who gave her daughter courage to fight against the misfortune. This is the trait of a New Woman, to rise up against the wrong; to have the courage to fight for what is right. Submission to the situation is not a solution, to face them brings them strength and self pride. The mother didn’t want her daughter to be a Savitri. She wanted to teach her daughter to resist the injustice and stand for her individuality. No man had the right to hurt a woman.

The Kunti of Deshpande in “Hear me Sanjaya” is a woman who is genuine and has revealed her sorrow and agony for every decision which she had taken in her life. She proves herself as a strong woman despite of every weakness in her. She remarks that women are not the weaker ones. They are the strong pillars that hold the family together despite all the pain and troubles given to them by their family and their destiny.

Similarly the pain and anguish of Queen Draupadi as a wife in “And what has been decided?” is also touching. During the years of exile Draupadi had fallen for Arjuna who had disguised himself as a Brahmin. She was content marrying the
Brahmin. But on going to Kunti, Arjuna gets the order to share her with his brothers and poor Draupadi thinks,

“It was a brahmin youth I had garlanded and followed out of the swayamvara corridor. I would have been satisfied to be the wife of that Brahmin boy; but that was not to be my destiny. I became the wife of five men, five princes, Kshatriyas.” (CS-2: 241)

The traditional picture of Draupadi is shattered and we find here a genuine Draupadi who cries her heart out to every injustice done to her. Deshpande’s Draupadi has many questions to Yudhisthir and Arjuna specially. She had loved Arjuna like anything but never got his company. To get him for a few moments she had to bear with the other four also. In the bed she was never alone with Arjuna. It was always together with all five. As she was a woman and could not be cut like a fruit and shared with all others, Arjuna never came to her. She longed for him, for his love, but feels, "Hungers that for me are never satisfied." (CS-2: 243) She says that she was very jealous of Subhadra. She had the privilege to be alone in the bed with Arjuna. She even thinks of asking Subhadra that,

“how is it with him alone? How does it feel to have Arjuna alone in your bed? How is it to know his desire for you is a friend not an enemy?” (CS-2: 244)

Thus we see in the story Draupadi who has crossed all barriers and raised all questions to all around her for getting her deserved right.

11) A New Woman is liberated in her own thinking; she seeks education, financial independence and freedom from all bondages around her.

“The Awakening” is the story of a young girl Alka who wishes to live a fulfilling life and a free life. She is very upset or rather bitter towards a present life. She lives in a chawl with many people in a house which is composed of just a room. She called it a zoo. “And why must we have so much noise? It’s like a zoo. But even the animals live one in cage.”(CS-1: 114) She had build up her own dreams; dreams
that were more satisfying than her haphazard reality. She was about to complete her
SSC and dreamt of going to a college. She wanted to go abroad for further studies.
She longed of modernizing herself, and a room of her own. Alka very well knew what
she wanted and where she wanted to go in life. She has decided all this on her own.
She is ready for the entire struggle she would have to face. She is not demotivated by
her present conditions of life and chooses education as a path to her fulfillment. She
was confident, that the life ahead held promises to her.

In the story “It Was the Nightingale” Deshpande brings about an
altogether different type of woman in picture. A woman who is liberated enough by
her own thoughts to lead an independent life. She chooses on her own, irrespective of
her husband’s choice. She knows that she has an individual existence even though she
loved her husband. She is well aware that it is her own responsibility to get herself
going. She is hungry for fulfillment, satisfaction of being a true individual,
independent and liberated woman. The protagonist of the story, Jayu reflects,

“To me, our lives are intertwined, yet they are two distinct strands.
They are like two lights that shine more brightly together, but to
keep my light burning is my responsibility and mine alone.” (CS-1:
66)

As part of her work, she has decided to go to abroad for two years. She
knows that her husband is not able to accept this decision, but she remains firm to
herself. She knows that she is hurting him as he doesn’t want her to go but her
priorities are her ambitions. She says, “His pain pierces my armor of understanding
but not caring.” (CS-1: 63) She is also afraid that their physical distances over the
long duration of two years would bring up a void between them; their love would be
replaced by silence. Most women at this thought quit their occupation, murder their
ambitions and tame their individuality but Deshpande’s heroine is different. She
reflects: “Two years, I tell myself are nothing. Lovers have stayed apart for ten times
two years and come together again.” (CS-1: 68)

She is different from those entire typical stereotype women who think submitting to
their husband’s whim is a solution to their problems. She thinks, “I am stronger and
fierce and fiery until he melts.” (CS-1: 64) She knows that even if she showed a
single moment of weakness, her decision would change. She has fought herself to climb the ladder of success. Not many women can do that and this makes Jayu a New Woman, the patronage of new thoughts who has the ability to write her own fate. It has always been a dilemma for working women to continue her job after she acquires motherhood. They choose motherhood over their jobs but Jayu is of a different thought process. When her husband tells her that she need not go and they could focus on their “other plans” (CS-1: 65), she knew he was talking about having children. But she decides “the child will have to wait. We will not let it be born yet.” (CS-1: 65)

Jayu is self aware and knows her responsibilities towards herself. She doesn’t just want to be a mother or a wife unlike her mother in law. She knows that her mother in law criticizes her working because, “for women of her generation, life held nothing, literally nothing, apart from husband and children.” (CS-1: 66) But above criticism Jayu believes in herself. She herself is her driving force. She is a strength and motivator to herself. Jayu knows that independence and individuality were important to a woman’s life. She had seen her mother who lived “her life through her daughters and her husband.” (CS-1: 67) Her mother was very sensitive, she was afraid of even the slightest discontinuities in the relations. Jayu had seen her mother torment herself, and she didn’t want to go through the same.

The husband in the story is an understanding person, he respects Jayu’s decisions but still he has his own idea of an ideal woman. He tells Jayu about his grand aunt who was a completely selfless woman. He thought that the ideal woman were like his mother & grand aunt devoted to the family. He loves Jayu but it is difficult for him to accept her as she is – an independent woman. She doesn’t want the night to get over as the next morning she would be leaving for her journey to success. She wanted to feel her husband’s love. Her longings to stay with him give her a little pain but she let go of her longings because she wants to discover her fortune. It is a matter of great strength to find ones real motive in life. For Jayu her fulfillment lies in her success. She does not flow away with the emotions of separation instead as they part at the airport her eyes are “tearless and dry and burning.” (CS-1: 69) ready to witness her fortune.
The story “Travel Plans” brings about the constraints which the marriage brings to a married woman. Though she is working outside, she is expected to work inside the house. Even if she has deadlines to stay up to at work she must be home on time to serve her homely duties. Deepa wants to be free of constraints; she wants to be “unburdened by the weight of anyone waiting for me.”(CS-2: 43) Adjustments are the companions of a woman in her married life. They may have a dream of their own but after marriage they put them aside to adjust to their wedded life. Deepa had decided to start her own travel agency with her friend Helen, and then she was married to Shriram and all her plans were sidetracked. Now she realizes that she was married to a traitor. She receives the most awaited letter from Shriram, wherein he apologizes to her for their marriage. He tells her that it was due to his mother’s illness and her persistence for his marriage that he had married her. He told her that he was already married to Cathy back in USA. She was shocked, almost fainted; she felt she had been used. His mother needed a daughter in law and she was available, treated as a commodity. She remembers her wedding night wherein she slept with him, her husband she had thought, a traitor now she thinks. In his letter he apologized to her about betraying her, about their wedding night together but to her it was not her body that felt betrayed but her belief. She had believed him, she hated him now. She decided in her mind that now she can freely move out of the marriage, nobody could hold her back now.

It is often believed that a girl is a responsibility to be passed from the parents to the groom’s house. Once wedded, her absence is filled in the maternal house, a house she had always known. Most women don’t break away from their painful marriage just because they would have nowhere else to go. This thought makes them endure all their marital pain. “There’s no gap, I realize. The hole is filled, the earth leveled and there’s nothing to show there ever was one.”(CS-2: 47)

She decides that it was the right time for her to move towards her ambitions. She says, “Does it matter to me now? I’m out of a marriage. I need the job.”(CS-2: 45) This arouses the picture of an independent woman in her, as she is ready to stand for herself. She does not fall back to her family with tears or being betrayed, but thinks of supporting herself by taking up a job. She feels it was good that her marriage was over. She plans of the travel agency again, she thinks: “It’s waiting
for me, I know, something I've always wanted to do for myself, something I have to do now.” (CS-2: 50)

Her act of putting her wedding photograph face down reflects her conviction to move over her pain and her past, and away from the traitor who betrayed her. She would never look back to this part of her life as she has decided to make companions with her ambition and success.

Deshpande has tried through Deepa to spread the message that the women today are no more the brainless puppets they are treated like. They are not confined to suppression and very well know how to move out. Deepa was not meant to serve the sickened parents of a man living in abroad. She had her own visions and aspirations and ultimately she was liberated through her constraints. She was self aware of her capacities to lead her life. She made her decision for herself on her own. She rose above her pain and gave wings to her ambitions –like a New Woman.

This story ‘The Cruelty Game’ is about a widow Pramila and her child. It highlights the cruelty which is done on Sharu- Pramila’s daughter. Pramila after the death of her husband has come to stay here with her daughter. After her arrival to the family all women who were against each other teamed up against Pramila just because she is a widow. The children in the family harass Sharu by making fun of her. The women do not talk to Pramila. But Pramila never utters a word and does whatever routine work is required of her. The story shows us how cursed is the life of a widow.

Pramila is a woman who is very much aware of her needs and her role of a mother. She wishes to be financially independent as she desires to give all the happiness and luxuries to Sharu. The moment she declares her thought, all criticize her decision as she is a widow and even misinterpret her decision, ”It's only an excuse to go out. To avoid working at home.” (CS-2: 220) They even comment that it is “a chance to deck herself in new saris.” (CS-2: 220) Despite of being women, none of them tries to understand Pramila’s condition. She wants to work to make her daughter’s life happy. But she is mistaken by one and all. They discuss among themselves that as she is a widow, she cannot wear new saris, as her husband is dead.
Thus we can see the shadow of society which follows the widow and does not allow her to breathe in peace.

12) A New Woman decides to remarry / take a divorce, rather than anyone forcing her.

“Travel plans” is a story of betrayal, wherein a NRI man marries the protagonist of the story Deepa, keeping his marriage to another woman in USA a secret. Deepa is a working woman who stays with her in-laws after the marriage back in India. She has been told that she would be called to USA after some time by her husband Shriram. There are many unanswered questions knocking her head. Her marriage had been hurried through, they wanted a simple marriage and after the marriage her husband flies away to USA and she stays back in India waiting to be called.

She acknowledges about Shriram’s marriage from one of her friends Raja who reveals of his meeting them in USA. But she is not able to believe her ears. So she writes back to Shriram asking him to clear the doubts. She feels she has been cheated but is not sure of the credibility of the news. She married a man, she knew nothing about. This is a major problem with our society, where we take NRI grooms as the most prospective proposals for marriage without analyzing them as a person. Just because a man earns a currency of greater value, he is eligible for a marriage. The outcomes of this tradition can be very painful as Deshpande tries to reveal through Deepa.

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apologized to her about betraying her, about their wedding night together but to her it was not her body that felt betrayed but her belief. She had believed him, she hated him now. She decided in her mind that now she can freely move out of the marriage, nobody could hold her back now.

It is often believed that a girl is a responsibility to be passed from the parents to the groom’s house. Once wedded, her absence is filled in the maternal house, a house she had always known. Most women don’t break away from their painful marriage just because they would have nowhere else to go. This thought makes them endure all their marital pain. “There’s no gap, I realize. The hole is filled, the earth leveled and there’s nothing to show there ever was one.”(CS-2: 47)

The protagonist of the story Deepa shows the courage of moving out of a marriage that was nothing more than a betrayal. She decides that it was the right time for her to move towards her ambitions. Her act of putting her wedding photograph face down reflects her conviction to move over her pain and her past, and away from the traitor who betrayed her. She would never look back to this part of her life as she has decided to make companions with her ambition and success.

'A Man and A Woman' is the story of a youthful widow who is incapable of stifling her sexual desires. The widow Lalita is bored of her estranged life which is full of hardships as she is a widow. She wishes to remarry. The norms of widowhood are depicted by Deshpande. It also focuses on the dilemma of the widow. Lalita holds no place in the family. She is held unimportant by her in-laws. There was no joy for her as now her husband was dead. He died when his child became 4 months old.

“I remember the first time he stood up, holding on to a chair. He looked so shocked, so comic, I couldn’t help laughing. I burst out and my mother-in-law came out to see who it was. When she saw me. ‘My God! Lalita! You!’ She said. You think it looks nice to laugh like that?” (CS-2: 205-206)

A widow cannot laugh and have fun freely after the death of her husband. On seeing her child stand up she was thrilled and gave a loud laugh surprisingly. But
her mother-in-law did not like it. She once purchased a red and blue sari and was scolded by the in laws. They gave a cheap remark that she "might as well have danced naked on the streets!" (CS-2: 212). Thus Lalita had to live in many restrictions. There were no means of entertainment for her, no one to talk with, no energy and vigor. It was a routine dull life of hardships full of boredom.

Deshpande in her stories has emphasized over the transition in the attitude of widowed women. Lalita wishes to remarry. She even wants to go and work outside. But the family opposes it. They feel that she wishes to go out to avoid working at home. They even feel that it will bring disgrace to them as the world will feel that she is not cared for. Thus Lalita is a New Woman despite of being a widow. She understands her pangs and tries to get a solution from them. She wants to get free from this widowhood rules. The family has a false pride and so they keep her in restrictions.

A widow has to live a secluded life by sleeping on a rug, and no entertainment for her. As Lalita is in her youth she wants to have a life partner, a man. She is in her thirties and still has the beauty and appeal to attract a man. God has created her "for the joy of life, a body for a man's hands." (CS-2: 207) Her husband’s small brother is attracted to her and tries to carry her into a sexual encounter with him. Lalita falls trap to this as she cannot control her desires but repents later. She feels guilty of a grave offense. The heaviness of that crime which makes her suffer is reflected in her words in a conversation with Manu, the friend of her husband.

"Nothing can convince me that what I’ve done is not wrong. It were not for Ramesh, I would kill myself. I have to live with this weakness. A slave to my body. I disgust myself. I am dirty, abnormal." (CS-2: 212)

The deed has left her shattered. She is already facing many problems in her life and this incident multiplies her pain. As she is just a B.A. she cannot get a proper job. She has no parents nor can she live with her brother. She thinks, "I have become incapable of living by myself." (CS-2: 213)
Manu the crippled friend of her husband tells her that as both are crippled, one physically and the other mentally, they should get married. Despite of being in a pathetic state at present Lalita stammers on hearing this. The story offers an "antidote" to Lalita’s life full of weariness, dreariness, frigidity and distance that the solution to this problem can only be remarriage. And finally Lalita marries Manu. She resisted it in the initial conversation because of the taboos in their family and in the society. The family’s false pride also stops her from doing this. But ultimately realizing her own needs, her craving for a man and even for getting freedom from the unbearable sufferings of widowhood; Lalita consents for the remarriage.

"Rain" is about an illegal connection of Radha with her cousin (later her husband). Radha’s husband is sick and needs medical treatment from the fatal illness. Radha seeks the aid of her cousin who is a doctor. Radha is deeply troubled to see this state of her husband. She has begun neglecting herself and is totally speechless and blank. Her husband is in his last stage of life due to the deadly illness. There is no person who comes to her help. She says, "His parents are too old. The others, they have their own lives to lead." (CS-2:229) Radha’s cousin is moved by their plight. The man is on his death bed and Radha is fighting singlehandedly to save him. The pativrata image of a woman is pictured here by Deshpande. A woman can go to any extent to protect her man. Radha too tries everything but goes astray as she finds solace from this suffering in her cousin and ends up having an illegal physical relation with him. The trauma of her husband’s illness puts her into "some crisis, emotional and physical." (CS-2: 229) This has left her bewildered and she has lost sense of the good and the bad. The cousin in his youth was very much attracted to Radha. She was in his fantasies. For Radha he had, “centered all those vague longings, dreams and erotic fancies that torment a young man." (CS-2: 228)

According to the writer’s narration we find that Radha is burdened with her misery. She wants to find solace from it and thus she ends up doing this sinful act as she is emotionally burdened. Radha is totally unaware of what she is doing whereas her cousin is carried off in his past by their closeness. And when both of them are in a compromising position with each other, the telephone rings and they receive the message that Radha’s husband is dead. Radha a widow, now leaves the place and goes away to her house. The cousin on meeting her after some time is shocked, "so
ostentatiously widowed, denuded of all her wifely symbols." (CS-2: 232) On meeting her after so long the cousin still feels that she is the woman he still desires. So he proposes her, but Radha gives a shocking reply, "one doesn't marry a widow." (CS-2: 233) Radha is a woman who has educated herself. She too has her aspirations for herself. The way she says these words makes us realize that she too is interested to get married again. She is totally shattered, tired and embarrassed of herself as she has committed a heinous crime of having a sexual relation with her cousin. She tells him, “To live here like a young girl. But I’m not, am I? Not anymore.” (CS-2: 233)

Thus Deshpande highlights the dilemma which Radha and many women like her face. They despite of being educated and aware of their physical desires and other needs cannot break the norms of society and remain in the state of widowhood. The frustration of their lives leads to such situations. But Radha a New Woman as she was fought her thoughts and finally agrees to the marriage proposal. The society has been always been unkind to widows. But an educated widow even though is facing the same plight has the courage to assert herself and take a stand for her life. So we can conclude that today education has brought about a wave of change where the women who are in state of widowhood can change the directions of their life and live a respectful life by defying the age old conventions. Thus Radha is portrayed as a courageous woman who follows her heart by breaking the societal norms.

The story ‘The Cruelty Game’ is about a widow Pramila and her child. It highlights the cruelty which is done on Sharu- Pramila’s daughter. A new development in the family came like a bolt from the blue. Pramila has decided to go to Bombay. She is getting married with the friend of her late husband. When the children in the family come to know that Pramila is getting married to Jagdish they begin teasing her. But Sharu is terrified on hearing all this. She retorts to all and says that: "My mother is married to my father. I’ve seen the photo, I promise you” (CS-2: 224) The women in the family also criticize Pramila for this. But Pramila has acknowledged herself and made a determination of what she seeks in her life. And for it she can even reconstruct her life by remarrying. It is a bold step as it will bring turmoil in her life. But even for her identity she has decided to do it. Sharu yearns to see the trust for her in the eyes of her cousins, but all know it that Pramila is leaving for Bombay and is getting married again. None of the children believe her. She pleads
and even swears by God. The children treat her this way to make her feel that her mother is wrong. It is because of the discussions between the elders, that the children feel this. Deshpande here highlights the fact that a woman even though she is a widow, would have an end to her suffering if she is financially independent. Pramila too as an educated woman yearns to be self made. For this she decides to move to Bombay. Thus she can have a job, and her new husband’s support to bring up her child. Today the woman is liberated through the education she has. Pramila can bring an end to her misery by working. She even has the courage to remarry like a New Woman who understands her own needs and speaks for it. Had she been passive towards her state in her in-laws family she would have had to suffer lifelong. But she has a new outlook towards her life and thus she decides to take a stand for her life and be free from the shackles of widowhood.

The women in Deshpande’s stories pass through various stages of convention, transition and advancement. They have tried to come out of the pativrata type of image. They now declare their desires and aspirations. Thus she is modern and new in her attitude towards the society. Pramila is portrayed as a confident lady. The storyteller Maya who is Sharu’s cousin is very much impressed by Pramila aunty. Maya feels that Pramila is very unique from the other women of her family. Even though throughout the story we see Pramila as a silent woman, she is not that silent that she will not take a stand for the tortures given to her daughter by her own cousins. She has taken this bold decision to give a peaceful life to Sharu. Thus we can say that her widowhood is the reason behind her silence, as widowhood does not grant you the permit to raise your voice against society. But Pramila realized that if she remained silent she would have to suffer till her death. So to put an end to all these she takes this decision despite of Sharu’s anger towards her.

“And Then” is the story of a widowed mother. She has two children - Vishwa and Anju. Both are very busy in their own lives with no time for her. She lives in isolation. After the death of her husband she becomes lonely. One day at a party at her son’s place she meets Anju’s friend Shaku. Shaku is a woman who married a guy whom she loved. But after some time both separated. She got divorced from her husband and lives in a working women’s hostel. But the problem she faces everywhere is that as she is single. She doesn’t get a room because people fear that
she may entertain men at her room. When people come to know that she lives alone, they exclaim,) “no husband? You’re living alone?” (CS-2: 178) Thus Deshpande here has portrayed the bitter reality of our Indian society where they still regard a single woman as a bad woman and always doubt her moves. It is not necessary that a single woman is always ready to mingle or available. There is no respect for a single woman. But today the New Woman is a bold woman who can break the shackles of marriage if she finds her husband lacking in something or who doesn’t match with her personality. When she takes such a bold step she is considered a rebel by the society. Even though the male is at fault, it’s always the woman who is considered a culprit and bad woman. Thus we find Shaku in the story as a New Woman who is financially independent and has the courage to even live a life of a single woman without breaking the morality codes. Shaku asks Anju’s mother to rent her a room. This makes her feel humiliated. She then talks to Vishwa about this. But her son Vishwa tells her to stay away from her as she has left her husband. But on thinking over it, the mother is shocked at the thought of her own child. And finally at the end of her story she takes the decision to give voice to her likes and dislikes rather than being led by her children. She becomes aware that she need not indulge in self-pity and leave this tormenting life full of doubts and fears. She no longer needs to wait for her children to take care of her and be there for her. She even thinks to allow Shaku as a paying guest and thus reconstruct her own life by not carrying forward the wish of her son- the male authoritarian voice of the society.

As observed Shashi Deshpande’s stories take us deep into the psychological insight on how a woman’s mind thinks; mostly women of India. The social and cultural conditioning has taught the women of India to be self-effacing, obedient and enslaved by man, to suffer silently the tyrannies of patriarchal society. Deshpande’s heroines go through lots of self-introspection and emerge as liberated personalities opposite to their biological nature. Different from the characters of other writers the search for identity of these heroines arises from the crisis which occurs in their lives. They try to break the shackles of social conditioning. After a lot of struggle they emerge as liberated and independent individuals no longer tied by anything, but powerful to lead on their own. These women make their own path on the way to liberation and discover their own self. During this trial of their life they begin to develop a better understanding of their own self as well as those around them. In
writing about these eccentric lot Deshpande pleases the society to reinvent itself in order to welcome these New Women. The image of a woman in India is bound by marriage, how she is as a wife and finally a mother. These 3 factors made the identity of a woman. But today apart from having an identity in the family, without disturbing the status-quo of her family, the New Woman seeks an identity of her own. This working-out of their personality is depicted by the heroines of Deshpande’s stories. This struggle for an identity makes the woman lonely too. But they emerge as courageous middle class women who finally get the ‘space’ for themselves.

In the story ‘The Inner Rooms’ Deshpande has focused on Amba-the character of Mahabharat who has been humiliated by Bhishma and Salva. Amba has vowed to take a revenge on Bhishma – the cause of her misery. Amba has been modeled as a hurt and angered woman who discovers her strong identity. She immolates herself to erase the rejection at the hands of Salva & Bhishma. She takes this drastic step because she felt that she would avenge this deed of the men who rejected her in her next birth. Amba’s anguish symbolizes the plight of many Indian women of her time, as they had no say in any affair, be it their life or any family matter.

‘It was the Nightingale’ depicts a woman who has decided to give priority to her career. She has decided to go abroad for further advancement in her career. For this she has to sacrifice her marital pleasure for two years. She decides to leave her husband for preserving her identity. She is emotionally dependent on her husband who does not want to cast herself into the traditional mould set up by the society for women. She remembers the words of her husband pointing out to his mother that:

“For women of her generation life held nothing, literally nothing, apart from husband and children.” (CS-1: 66)

Thus she is intent upon proving her husband wrong despite of all her love for him as she yearns to break from this social conditioning.

‘The Awakening’ and ‘I Want’ portray images of girls who have compromised with life and their desires for better prospects. Alka the heroine in ‘The Awakening’ discovers that she has to sacrifice her dream of living a comfortable life
at the altar of duty towards her family. She is forced to work as a typist after her father’s death, and continue with her “shoddy way of life” which she hated from the beginning. ‘I Want’ depicts a girl who has to sacrifice her job and her career as she is going to get married. Her family wants her to resign as she has to be a wife – to a man whom she has not chosen and does not fit into her husband image. But as the boy has agreed she has to agree under pressure from her family by suppressing her desires. ‘An Antidote to Boredom’ is the story of a woman who after years of marriage takes a bold step of having an affair with a widower. On knowing that her husband is aware about it she is afraid and immediately puts an end to it. She withdraws herself into the prison of her boring marriage, and become the submissive wife again. The woman does not have the courage to rebel against the societal norms and emphasize on her desires. The relationship which she had with the widower was just a temporary antidote to her boring married life even though she was happy and enjoyed it. ‘A Day like Any Other’ is the story of a woman who neglects the infidelity of her husband for the sake of saving her marriage. She prefers being silent. As the marriage has given her material comforts she does not react to the philandering of her husband. She is from the class of women who are ready to suppress their identity for a few material pleasures.

Deshpande thus has given examples of women characters that never rebel openly, even don’t emphasize their desires for the fear of losing their family or causing inconvenience to the family despite of hating the situations they are in. To continue with life smoothly they sacrifice themselves. In Indian society a woman has limited freedom. So these women continue drudging with life without uttering a word. Stories like ‘Death of a Child’, ‘Why a Robin?’ and ‘My Beloved Charioteer’ depict the images of the relationships of the mother and her children. ‘Death of a Child’ speaks about the misery of a mother who has aborted her child. She did this to give herself a space rather than just be a mother. Motherhood seemed a burden to her now as she already had children and did not want this child. But after aborting the child she feels guilty and longs for the child. ‘Why a Robin?’ is the story of a woman who is hated by her small daughter. But on attaining puberty the daughter starts loving her mother and both of them are united. It has been seen that women get close to one another whenever there are women’s issues or problems. ‘My Beloved Charioteer’ is one such story wherein the mother wins the heart of her daughter by telling her the
real truth of her married life and how she was oppressed by the father whom the daughter admired and loved deeply.

Usually women cannot come out of their relationships due to a variety of reasons. The various shackles that keep them tied to their relations are financial and emotional dependence on their male counterpart. They are not able to break the stereotypes of the society that keep them dependent on others. They are fully aware of their positions and roles. They are well aware of their sufferings and the unmet expectations in the relationship but still continue with it just because they think they do not have any other option or take it as code of conduct for an Indian woman. These aspects are well depicted in Deshpande’s “Why a Robin”, “A Man and A Woman”, “The Valley in Shadow”, and “My Beloved Charioteer”.

In “Why a Robin” the husband and the wife have been distanced because the husband has closed all doors of communication and held the wife responsible for the death of a child. There is a rift between them. The silence of the husband torments her.

“But his silence, more eloquent than any anger, freezes me. And I don’t really need to ask the question –why me? Because I know” (CS-1:47). She is guilty and considers herself a failure, “as a wife, as a companion, as a mother. Between my husband and myself there is a blankness- we never even quarrel” (CS-1:48).

She is miserable by her low self esteem which is magnified by the fact that she is the wife and hence the culprit. Things were the same since the beginning since she always underestimated herself in the relationship. She has lost herself at the altar of marriage by neglecting her desires. She feels that her existence has diminished just because she never put forward her or seek to fulfill herself.

“A Man and A Woman” is the story of Lalita, a widow, for whom life died with her husband. She slowly became aware of the fact that any a small step towards her fulfillment becomes an issue to the society. She desires for ‘a red and blue sari’ but when she buys it there is a shocking reaction by her family. Whenever she laughs
aloud with her daughter she is rebuked by her family members. She was compelled to sacrifice all the joys as her husband was dead. Her brother-in-law makes physical advances towards her. This arises her suppressed sexual desires. This makes her guilty as she has a strict code of conduct for a widow to be followed. She shares her agony with Manu - a crippled friend of her husband. She starts feeling that it is wrong to have physical desires. Manu tells her that it is natural and she need not be ashamed of it. On discussing with Manu, she feels that she cannot get free from her family shackles. Manu even proposes her to marry him as both are handicapped- one physically and the other mentally. He proposes for a new beginning but Lalita is in a dilemma.

“The Valley in the Shadow” is the story of polio struck woman ignored by her husband. He had married her for her money but he no longer cared for her, after the birth of their son. He literally avoided her after the child’s birth. She craved for his love and attention but never got any. He neglected her sexual needs which led her to weave sexual fantasies. She was guilty as she was crippled. ‘The Intrusion’ tells about a honeymoon of a couple. The wife is not at all prepared for the experience which the husband is all set for. She yearns to know him as a friend, talk to him through the night like old friends. His sexual intimacy frightens her and she feels like a whore as the atmosphere makes her uneasy. On pondering over the situation she feels that that her parents have marketed her as a commodity but no one has considered her feelings. Unable to argue she is forced into a marriage where she is a stranger to the boy. He is not at all disturbed by such thoughts and is very eager to fulfill his lust. But she realizes that he is not at all interested in anything of this sort. He literally rapes her. This shatters her as she feels it as an intrusion into her territory. ‘I Want’ also talks about the helplessness of Alka. Like ‘The Intrusion’s heroine Alka too feels that her desires and wants are not important. Her family has selected a boy for her without her consent. The boy has a list of ‘I Want’ for his partner but no one asked Alka what she wanted.

‘The First Lady’ portrays the picture of a husband and wife who are very rich and powerful. But this accumulation of power has changed the man. It also throws light on the sexual barriers which the women in Indian society face. The woman is smitten by the man who is a freedom fighter. Both get married despite of all barriers to their relationship. But the wife realizes that the husband has become an
influential politician after Independence and lives a life full of luxuries and comforts. She fell in love with him thinking that he too loved her. But the man had no time for love and was not capable of loving anyone around. He even practices celibacy after the birth of their children. He thinks that people marry for procreation. And thus after the birth of children he observes celibacy. He does not bother what are the wishes of his wife. The woman’s dissatisfaction leads her to getting attracted to a young man. The man dies soon. After his death the woman feels that "Life has lost its meaning because it relates to nothing but one’s own petty concerns" (CS-1: 13)

Thus the whole story is a flashback of the events in the woman’s life. She reminisces over her past, she is happy that her lover is dead as she didn’t want him to see her as a fat woman with health complications. She reflects on her life and experiences the need for love and deceptiveness of women’s dreams and desires. Only ‘An Antidote to Boredom’ depicts an extra-marital relation between the woman and a widower. But in the end the woman cannot break the shackles of morality and as conditioned to be submissive to her husband, she returns back to him. The husband neither cares for the wife nor is aware of anything about her. He is selfish and shows no concern for the feelings of others. She is known to each and every move he makes. The husband is accustomed to a routine life which has made their life boring. Her life takes a beautiful turn when she meets a widower at her child’s school. The relation with the widower makes her life exciting and new. She looks forward to meeting him. On being questioned by the man that does she feel guilty, she says that she doesn’t because the husband never thought or cared for her. She plans a meeting with the widower when her husband is away to Delhi. And suddenly from the blue the husband asks her to join him for Delhi. When she refuses he gives her a hint about her secret affair. Thus despite of asserting herself to her desires by being in a relationship with a widower she cannot break from the stereotypical image of a married Indian woman. She is bold enough to assert herself- a trait of a New Woman wherein she decides what she wants for herself. She wanted companionship, love and care, which she got from the widower however for a short period.

‘Rain’ is a story which is narrated by Radha’s cousin, who is in love with Radha. Radha gets married to another man. After 12 years when her husband falls sick, Radha goes to Bombay along with her husband to her cousin who is now a
doctor in Bombay. Her husband gets treated in a hospital. At home, Radha develops a sexual relation with her cousin. Once when they were making love in the evening hours, they receive a call telling them of the death of Radha’s husband. After the death of her husband Radha now lives with her parents. The narrator is unable to wipe her away from his memory and finally they get married. They live a happy married life until one day when they receive a call while they are making love. This reminds the husband of the love making when they receive the news of the death of Radha’s first husband. After this incident things are never the same between them.

Deshpande’s stories reveal the silence of women. Within this silence the women emerge, display their inner strength and awareness comes upon them. The awareness of what she desires for herself makes her a symbol of the New Woman. To achieve liberty and freedom from the patriarchal society a woman needs to be indifferent to men around her. ‘The Cruelty Game’ and ‘And Then’ portray the relations between the children, their parents and their grandparents. These stories show the power of hierarchical structure prevalent in our Indian families. In ‘The Cruelty Game’ we see Pramila aunty who is a widow and has come to live with her in-laws after her husband’s death. She has a daughter named Sharu. The treatment given to the aunty and Sharu is terrorizing. The way Pramila is distanced from the other women is not good. But as she is a widow that is the way she has to live following the code of conduct framed for widows. Even the small child is not spared by the children in the family. They make fun of her by tricking her. Even though Pramila notices it she never says a single word to protect her child. That shows her powerless state.

“She never spoke even when she saw us tormenting Sharu; she just looked at us”. (CS-2: 219)

The fun crosses all limits when they make Sharu jump into a pit, this physical harm hurts Sharu and Pramila too. Pramila plans to celebrate Sharu’s birthday despite everyone’s opposition. But the cruel pranks of all the children and the sarcastic abused heaped by the members of the family spoil everything. Thus Pramila and Sharu decide to leave the place as there is no solace amidst the so called family.

‘And Then’ is the story which reveals the bonding between children, their parents and their grandchildren. Dipali the grand daughter is very much attached to
her grandmother. But her mother Asha does not approve this bond. She feels that the grandmother will spoil her child. The old woman understands everything around her but cannot say anything even though she is at her son’s house. She feels helpless. Reflecting in the past she realizes that her own children never cared for her or bothered to know her wishes. The daughter Anju has gone to abroad for further studies. Despite of forcing her to get married Anju left her mother, this makes the mother feel cheated. The old woman is old fashioned and rigid due to her expectations. This makes her family alien to her.

Many stories of Deshpande are based on family bonding. There are 3 stories that purely discuss relationships apart from marital problems or the conflicts between mother and daughter as discussed before. ‘A Liberated Woman’ discusses the idea of liberation and the deep meanings which are hidden behind the word ‘liberation’. It is an irony on the desire of liberation which arises in the mind of many women. The story is about a woman who is a Doctor by profession. She meets her family friend after many years of her marriage. The friend is also a colleague of her husband. He was the one who had encouraged the boy and girl to get married as he was of the view that,

“It had seemed to me an absurdity that two people so much in love should be kept apart because of something so trivial as caste.” (CS-1: 38)

They have met again after a gap of 12 years. The woman tells her about her marriage and its critical state. On knowing that the man is a sadist who abuses his wife, the family friend is shocked. He is surprised and taken aback because she is still tied up to her husband. He urges her to break free from him. He thinks:

“But what really astonishes me is her feebleness, her attitude of despairing indifference. Surely she, an educated, earning, competent woman, has no right to behave this way...to plug all her escape routes herself and act like a rat in the trap.” (CS-1: 44)
He is aghast when she refuses to divorce the husband. She fears that the children would know about their father. Thus despite of being independent and competent than her husband she has decided to keep the marriage intact because she does not want to defame the husband before her children. The family friend came across an interview of the woman titled “A LIBERATED WOMAN”. This puts him in a shock as the word liberated seems to be mocking at her painful life from which she has no liberation at all.

On examining the bias shown towards women and the struggle for having an identity of their own it has been observed that there are many factors which affect these issues. All the women characters have an awareness of the factors which will hamper their development. They do not undergo struggle but have awareness about it within them. Through it they understand and accept life the way it is rather than being heroic figures of our Indian mythology. In the stories we find women who are oppressed and degraded but Deshpande portrays them as characters with a future. For e.g. Jayu in the story 'It was the Nightingale’, and Lalita in ‘A Man and A Woman’. These women have realized that it is their choice where they wish to take their life based on the chances offered by life. Thus they try to make their life with the help of the openings.

Family is considered as the pillar of our Indian society. It is a strong bond which makes it difficult for any a woman to break free if she wants to dissolve her marriage. Due to this many women reject feminism as it advocated personal attitude, ego, and desires for self and sexual liberty. All these factors have no place in the Indian family system which functions at hierarchical levels. They can be a destroyer of the whole family. With the increase in the number of writers in India and abroad in all languages we witness a miraculous transition in the phase of Indian Womanhood. All literature is based upon themes like-the oppression and exploitation of women, search for their identity and an insight into understanding of the problems faced by women in our complex patriarchal society where the dilemma of the women is difficult to understand. In our rigid social structure with various hierarchical levels it is rather difficult for a woman to find a place for herself and speak up for herself with lot many roles to play single handedly.
Today we see the myth of a ‘super woman’, created by the feminine identity. There is a competition between men and women to break the glass ceiling of unseen barriers. They have to fulfill the goals of their career as well as try to fit into the traditional roles of wife, daughter, and mother to have healthy relationships. In the Indian society we hear stories about Sita and Savitri from mythology to inspire women. The girl child is always dictated to be like Sita/Savitri rather than being strong and rebellious like Draupadi. From the beginning the Indian culture teaches self-sacrifice to their women. To create a strong identity, one needs to explore all differences and be firm on what they think/desire. Women need to understand that to have what they desire it is not necessary to abandon their opinions and values. The traditional mythological characters are an illusion as they created women who have lost their identities. Trying to fit themselves into these traditional moulds they lose self confidence and there is a decrease in possibilities. This makes them feel dissatisfied with their own self, finally leading to a traumatized life where there is no way out. For e.g. in stories ‘My Beloved Charioteer’ & ‘The Intrusion’ we come across such characters.

In some stories we see characters in depression due to their relationships. Depression either due to her personal shortcomings or due to the social constraints. Social stereotypes of behavior expected from their roles are always queued for a woman-be it a mother or a wife. They sometimes clash with her history, her hopes and self-perception. This leads to psycho-somatic problems in women. The psyche which is aware of all the agony going around in their life cannot stop thinking and ultimately leads to psycho-somatic disorders. Women view themselves in the image in which men perceive them. Due to this they sometimes develop a negative image of themselves. We find such a character in ‘The Valley in the Shadow’. The inclination of women to their relations has a potential and danger too. Relations are a threat also but sometimes they even help women to find their identity. Women, who are lost by being submissive to their male counterparts because of their power, recover themselves through their other relationship where they are considered equal. Thus by revealing the vicissitudes and exploring the potential of the relations, women are able to reshape themselves. Every woman’s personality which she feels is unique and real gets blur with the passage of time as she is compelled to focus on her relations and fulfill the needs of all around her.
3.4 Style & Narrative Technique

Deshpande's style is portrayed by "economy, curtness, solidness, clarity and vividness" which David Madden sees as the qualities of "the plain or simple style." (Scott and Madden 94) Deshpande has been exceptionally cautious about her system in fiction. She told Lakshmi Holmstrom:

Craftsmanship is so important in writing, and you only learn it by doing it. And the short story was the perfect form to learn from, because one had to be brief. One had to be careful. And that training is still with me: I am very careful about not using any extra words....because I didn’t want to overplay anything.” (Interview to Holmstrom in Pathak 243)

Economy is the Sine qua non of a decent short story as borne out by Deshpande's stories which are not loaded with admonishing labels. Her dialect is straightforward, immediate and succinct; near the talking voice. Off and on again, rather than full and long sentences, she uses words directly and economically. Deshpande utilizes certain literary devices to render an aesthetic touch to her works. Through analogies, metaphors, allegory, incongruity, stream of cognizance, inside monologue and even myth and legends, Deshpande renders her interpretation brief, solid and dense. To expose the internal workings of the heroes' brains and the enthusiastic swells in their hearts, Deshpande utilizes similitude of 'the dark' and 'the sunlight', "death" and 'life', "silence". Also, she uses techniques like inner monologue or stream of cognizance to give the book fans first individual records of the past. Individuals reproduce their past through their dreams and contemplation. This technique likewise exposes the characters' considerations and sentiments which are overall unarticulated in the content. What's more that is the reason her third person coupled with flashback techniques to loan power and authenticity to the novel. A standout amongst the most pleasant peculiarities of Deshpande's written work is the utilization of artistic inference, myth and legends and parallels. In some of her stories, Deshpande has done a reversal to Mahabharata one of the best sagas of India. By utilizing myth, Deshpande has offered voice to the women in the epic. She provides for them opportunity to understand their own particular inward turmoil. Deshpande
does not feel that the dialect English which she utilizes for her works makes her non-Indian any way. She ever does not try for Indian interpretations in her attempts to give an Indian flavor. She doesn't compose for the foreign readers. She is essentially Indian and composes for the Indians:

"My English is as we use it. I don't make it easier for anyone really. If I make any changes, it's because the novel needs it, not because the reader needs it." (Interview to Holmstrom in Pathak 249)

Shashi Deshpande a renowned writer has created a notable impression for herself in writing about the various roles of women in the society –a daughter, a wife, a mother and as a person bound by the unbending rule book laid down by man. In her writings, there is the clear voice of women which are trapped in a society which is under progress. Her writings have created an impact at a time when the Indian society passes through a transition point from the age old tradition to a life of modernity. It is a troublesome occupation, definitely, to offer words to those women who are uncertain of their torments and are in an unpleasant state. These women are intensely mindful of the minimization of their personality but still sentenced to carry on with this life of muted enduring which came as an inheritance from their forefathers. Sunita Reddy is of the same opinion as Deshpande

“In many ways, their condition is even more pitiable than that of women of earlier generations who questioningly accepted their secondary position in society.” (Reddy 29)

Stories portray life of a patriarchal society inside which the life of a woman gets unimportant.

Also Deshpande is genuinely worried about the reasonable impression of family role- relationship. She has managed different aspects of human connections most strongly in light of the fact that the customary legacy of India gives incredible significance to the family as a unit. Consequently while investigating the roles of a woman in Indian culture, Deshpande offers book lovers a private and limited
narrative of the inward universe of women and the agony of attaining self realization in her short stories. The stories deal with the particular ventures of a woman; the female lead adapts when she experiences the emergency. The stories delineate successfully an aggravated however a courageous womanlike mind in the new ethos.

Every writer has a different style and technique to pen down their experiences. Jasbir Jain in her book Gender and Narrative Strategy states that:

*Women writers while evolving narrative strategies are faced with a double problem: how to step out of the framework defined by men and patriarchal values; and how to identify and create a tradition of their own. (32)*

The women writers have a dilemma of two types while writing out their novels or stories. The first factor is that they are penning down their experiences which are very different compared to that of men. And second factor is that they are women. They ought to rise above gender inequality while writing. This applies more to those feminist writers who write their literature based on the agony and the traumatic condition in which the women are suffering. Their writing raises a voice against the oppression and injustice done to women. To pen these experiences a writer may use different narrative techniques. According to Jasbir Jain:

*When the experience which is being narrated moves against the current, is unconventional or unusual, is radical in its standpoint, or displays a strength which may be best muted for the time being, strategy is resorted to. There is no hesitation in laying a false trail or employing subterfuge. Moreover, it is never the same, for then it would become a theory. It may be imagery, or landscape, or scriptural references or character, or subplot, or structure which is being used for this purpose-and waiting to be decoded. (30)*

Thus the writers use different techniques and make space for themselves whenever required.
3.4.1 Satire and Irony

This is a commonly used technique. It could be a satire on a situation or satire in a monologue or a dialogue. Irony can also be used based on a situation or in words also. It is sometimes used to bring a twist in the plot and can also be mild and comical. In Deshpande’s stories we find her dangerously satirical without any wit. She has commented sarcastically on Indian traditions in many stories. Writers use satire whenever they want to whip the society for their tyrannical rules and to depict the sufferings of women in a patriarchal society.

Deshpande has used satire and irony to expose the attitude of society for women. She has written incidences where the women have been considered to be at the secondary position. She has sarcastically criticized our Indian societal values wherein the women undergo mental struggles-women in a state of flux who discover their identity and finally emerge as strong personalities. In the short stories she has focused on the weaknesses of women who are afraid to protest due to the conditioning of the patriarchal order for the harmony of their marriage or for their safety & financial security. She presents them as objects of derision. There is no humor in Deshpande’s writing. She is just intensely sarcastic. In ‘Death of a Child’ we see a mother mourning over her aborted child who was in her womb. The irony of the story is that the mother herself did not want to give birth to the child due the fear of losing her identity to just rearing children. She later grieves over it. In ‘A Man and A Woman’ we find that incident ironical where the cripple friend Manu proposes to the widow Lalita. He tells her that he is physically handicapped whereas she is handicapped as she is a widow now. The widow objects to the proposal by mincing words to hide her unwillingness at marrying a cripple.

Many stories have exposed the agonies of women resulting from the oppression of their lovers/husbands, and the women who have become the silent sufferers. Through this Deshpande has voiced her hatred openly at life which has put the women in a critical condition. In ‘The First Lady’ she has satirized on the show of pomposity and celebrations of men of high society and has even described the loneliness of their women like the heroine in a ‘A Liberated Woman’ marks the irony in the wife- a so called liberated woman of Indian society who despite of being a
doctor and being financially independent is just a puppet in the hands of her husband. There is no liberation for her from her sadist husband. Nor can she vent out her sorrow before anyone. Rather she would not dare to express it to avoid a mishap in her already wrecked marriage. It is a situational irony used by Deshpande.

Deshpande has also used the, mythological characters like Sita, Draupadi, Savitri, Amba, Gandhari etc. ‘The Inner Rooms’ is based on the mythical character Amba of Mahabharat. According to the story of Bhishma’s bravery, Amba is the secondary character. Amba wanted to marry Salva, but he rejected her. Later Bhishma kidnaps Amba and her two sisters for Vichitraveerya but he too rejects her. She is humiliated by this two men and is angered at them She s more angry with Bhishma due to his oath of celibacy. She immolates herself with an oath to avenge her humiliation in the next birth. The story is narrated through Amba’s feminist approach. Her anger and frustration against Bhishma can be noticed through her words. In another story ‘The Last Enemy’ we come across Duryodhana who is in hiding in a pond. He is afraid as he fears that Bhishma will come and attack him. He is sure of his defeat but realization comes to him in a paradoxical way when he thinks:

“it is the dead who always win, the dead who are the real victors.”(CS 1: 19)

3.4.2 Metaphors

Metaphors reveal the writer’s mental attitude and tells us how much focused they are on their vision. Metaphors capture the passion of a writer’s creative vision. Metaphors like ‘the dark’, ‘the sunlight’, ‘life’ and ‘death’ have been used by Deshpande in many of her stories. In ‘Can you hear Silence?’ silence is used as a metaphor. In ‘Rain’, the rain is symbolic of death and ‘desolation’ of sorrow. Death as a metaphor has been used in ‘Death of a Child’.

3.4.3 Use of English Language

Deshpande has never been inclined towards the technicality or stylistic variations and yet her language sounds fresh and naturally precise. All her writing bears testimony of the statement “Art lies in concealing art”. Her use of a very efficient language is a modest and chief feature of her writing. She is “an ordinary
woman who writes sitting at home.” Yet she never compromises with the respect and flexibility of thoughts of a writer. She abhors the myth of elitist “snobbery” of the Indian writers who write in English. She considers it a right to choose a language she wishes to write in.

Her genuine concern is to express her thoughts in English very clearly and efficiently. In an interview to Stanley Carvalho, Deshpande remarked:

“When I write narrative, I think in English; when I write dialogue I think in Kannada or Marathi, which are my languages”.

Legitimizing her style of switching over of languages she said further: “In our middle-class families, most of us converse in English but automatically switch over to our mother tongue when we speak to our elders, relatives, and so on.” Sometimes we find that her writing seems to be a translation from Hindi, Marathi or Kannada and yet her narration is liberated from these Indian coinages. “I do not use Indianisms to make my writing look Indian, she said. I never try to make India look exotic either”.

Deshpande uses the English language as she finds it the most suitable mode of self expression. Neither was she left with a choice: “I never did study Marathi or Kannada. And even more importantly I haven’t actually used these languages as working tools.” She is however conscious of the loopholes of creative writing in languages apart from the mother tongue. But usage of the English language makes her reserved too at times. She confesses honestly: “I lose the range of nuances which are available in Marathi – for example, the richness of the phrases that make up that language. So I lose out on that, but I gain in other ways because English has its own special qualities too”. During the modification phase of her manuscripts, she looks “particularly closely at the language.” What is still worse is that writing in English alienates you from the main stream.” Due to this reason she expects to be considered equal with writers of other regional languages, rather than to be ‘non-Indian’ from any angle ‘. Her English has deep roots in her background:
“I am different from other Indians who write in English, my background is very firm there, I was never educated abroad. My novels don’t have any Westerners, for example. They are just about Indian people and the complexities of our lives. Our inner lives and our outer lives and the reconciliation between them. My English is as we use it. I don’t make it easier for anyone really. If I make my changes, it’s because I think the novel needs it, not because the reader needs it.”

Based on her themes and her technical concerns, Deshpande’s short stories are identical to her novels in many ways and we find a common thread between the short stories and the novels. This is a valuable asset of her writings. Her themes dwell upon frustration and depression, sense of guilt, loss of respect, misunderstanding and incompatibility of partners, isolation of a sensitive protagonist against an incompatible marriage and the hostile conditions around her.

In the English literature today we find a ‘New Woman’ who has began to emerge slowly and steadily even though she has to battle her way through her self-destruction by being dependent on others, maverick fury and an aggressive self-assertion of her own rights. A ‘New Woman’ is not new if she imitates the man or if she breaks the traditional barriers. Nor has she to be like the man in any way in terms of his aggression or his masculinity. A ‘New Woman’ is one who has the power over her ‘own’ self as reflected in the various short stories written by our authors like Amrita Pritam, Ajit Kaur, Manu Bhandari, Priya Tendulkar and Shashi Deshpande.

Her short fiction demonstrates an openness and courage which is not found in the short fiction in English. Her heroines are the creators of their own destiny. All her stories are genuine touching accounts of the middleclass working women and the kind of injustices they face in a patriarchal society.

Like Jane Austen’s stories, Deshpande too has a narrow range which is a fictionalization of the personal experiences. Her writing, be it a short story or a novel depicts a typical life of a middle class house wife. All her works lay stress upon finding a space for oneself, to discover the ‘self” and to progress in life through one’s
own efforts. There is repetition of certain themes in her novels and short stories - a striking feature of her work. The dilemmas faced by her characters are always sorted out by them and they have reached new horizons in their life by self-discovering themselves. Mostly the characters are either sexually or professionally frustrated in their lives.

In her works we find repulsion towards physical functions like menstruation, pregnancy and procreation. Deshpande is of the view that women should not be treated as mere breeding machines. The significance of the physical functions of a woman are belittled by Deshpande at times, she writes to equalize the balance by emphasizing that a woman is not only an aggregate of such functions. Rather than all this a woman has to be judged equally with a man with reference to her potentials. Deshpande is very spontaneous in her writing and is of the belief that great writing and propaganda never go hand in hand. Thus she is a woman who sympathizes with and understands the problems of women. The concerns of Deshpande for Indian women must be highly appreciated. Subjective labeling by putting her writing into the group of rebellious feminism of the Western type would be unfair.

The new Indian woman and her predicament have been portrayed delicately by Deshpande along with the endeavors made to comprehend her psyche as well as her identity as a daughter, wife, mother and most importantly as an individual who is convention bound in a male-dominant society. She believes that Indian women have an experience of life which is significant from other women. The plight of Indian women is a general human predicament. According to Deshpande no theories can solve the problems of all women - especially Indian women. She elaborates her view:

“But to me feminism isn’t a matter of theory; it is difficult to apply Kate Millet 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.”

Her strong point is the detailed explanation of a woman’s inner psyche. Her heroines are those who fight for their voices to be heard and undergo a search for ‘self’ which keeps them alive but yet at times they “become fluid, with no shape, no form of their own”. Deshpande’s genuine interest in the issues of women in India is unquestionable. According to her it is the need of the hour that a 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.” The stage is still to be set in Deshpande’s works by abandoning the anatomical descriptions and a detailing of specifications which is reflected in her short fiction. This effect is closely observed in her novels and this is a testimony to the fact that Deshpande genuinely has comprehended the plight of women in our country and also understood the grass root reality. Even by abiding with the barriers of the middle class Indian families she has thrown light on many of the questions which relate to the status of Indian society and issues related to gender.

Deshpande has closely analyzed the relationships of man and woman by sticking to the traditional norms of the society and focuses on the experiences had from life which reminds us of the narrow range of Jane Austen and her limited access to information. Deshpande like Austen is basically troubled with the varied problems and suffocating environment of her heroines who strive to live in this patriarchal domination and struggle to achieve their identity as a woman who is first and foremost an individual and then a daughter, wife and a mother. Since the publication of her first short story collection in 1978 Deshpande has been noticed by all- reviewers as well as her readers. The crux of all her writing is self-awareness. This is the essence of all her heroines in her short stories and her novels too. She has been clinging to this issue in all her works. This proves that she has a deep comprehension of human psychology. Her plot begins with the agitation and tension between a husband and wife. She constructs it slowly and gradually around them till an understanding develops in the heroine who is in search of her own ‘self’. Until she feels that it is best for her to keep smiling and bear everything as both the husband and wife are inter-related and inter-dependent on each other.
Thus we can conclude that Shashi Deshpande stands out among all the writers in English. She is skilled with an unusual bent of mind. She has developed a maturity from all her experiences in life and from reading. She has carved a niche for herself among all the Indian English writers through her fictional concern and her art.

Her spontaneity and transparent use of language makes it easy and enjoyable for the readers to read. She has contributed by highlighting the problems and plight of the Indian women. She has put the trials and tribulations of the middle class Indian women- the educated and working women both. She once remarked:

“I realize that I write what I write because I have to, because it is within me. It’s one point of view, a world from within the woman, and that I think is my contribution to Indian writing.”

Deshpande knows the Indian scenario with respect to the lot of women, but that does not make her a harsh and military minded feminist writer who portrays the man to be the sole reason for all the problems in the life of a woman. She is more concerned about the human predicament. She is a superb chronicler of man-woman relationships. She has faithfully depicted the interaction of the traditional and modern culture and the tensions generated due to this clash. According to Deshpande, her best work is still to come and hopefully that is what will judge her abilities as a writer.
3.5 References


(All the References from Collected Short Stories -1 are shortly referred as CS-1)


(All the References from Collected Short Stories – 2 are shortly referred as CS 2)


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