CHAPTER – III

MAN -WOMAN RELATIONSHIP

Man -Woman Relationship in one of the most significant themes of Modern English Fiction. As a writer, Shashi Deshpande highlights the subordinate and inferior position occupied by women and their marginalization in the patriarchal set up. Many men and women live together and walk through life in their different age groups, classes and gendered roles. It is the relationship of husband and wife and the institution of marriage itself which is particularly and deeply probed into in the novels.

Shashi Deshpande presents the modern Indian woman who is intelligent and aware of her capabilities but has a fragmented self, thwarted under the weight of male dominance and patriarchal norms. In almost all her novels, the protagonists are married women. But most of them are dissatisfied with their married lives. Most of Deshpande’s protagonists have a love – hate relationship with their husbands.

Traditionally, in the Hindu marriage the position of husband and wife is clearly defined. The husband is expected to be the centre of authority. He will always dominate the life of the wife. The wife should regard him as her master and should serve him faithfully.

The Indian institution of marriage has undergone a number of changes. The traditional concept of loyalty, and marriage as sacrament and sex as a taboo has lost its importance. The theory of perpetual slavery for women propounded by Manu has
become a thing of the past. As Promilla Kapur, the renowned sociologist has concluded in her study Love, Marriage and Sex, woman now aspire for “natural companionship, respect, material comforts satisfaction of emotional and physical needs, in marriage” (12).

In Indian society, the husband-wife relationship lives under the influence of patriarchal norms which are deeply embedded in the way of life, mode of thinking and socialization of the young. Patriarchy legitimizes women’s oppression. It works in two different ways. The external manifestation of domination is through sexual, verbal and physical violence. The other subtler forms which have been imbibed by generations and internalized by the victims themselves are comparatively difficult to tackle.

Shashi Deshpande’s views regarding marriage are not as radical as those of the early western feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, and Germaine Greer. Her women characters are victims of an unequal power structure in marriage and sex. She has taken a balanced view of life from a woman’s point of view.

Marriage means that the identity of a woman as an individual is suspended. She is merely a part of her husband’s property, a mere commodity, solely a possession. Simone de Beauvoir opines: “Marriage is obscene, in principle in so far as it transforms into rights and duties those mutual relations which should be founded on spontaneous urge; it gives an instrumental and therefore degrading character to the two bodies, dooming them to know each other in their general aspects as bodies, not as persons” (463).
Shashi Deshpande brings out the boiling issue of marriage as a social practice that is a history of woman’s suppression, right from beginning to end. It is a long drawn out drama of negotiation in which she feels uncertain and humiliated. In marriage, a poor woman fares worst. She is literally bracketed with animals.

In her novels, Shashi Deshpande attempts to re-define human relationships, especially Man-Woman relationships in the context of the changing Indian society and thus identify the values which endure.

Shashi Deshpande’s That Long Silence won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi award for the year 1990. The novel tells the story of an Indian house wife who maintains silence throughout her married life. The silence between Jaya and her husband Mohan further deteriorates. At the end of the novel, she realizes that she should break the silence and try to achieve her identity as an individual through self realization and self-assertion. This is what S.P.Swain means when he says: “A sensitive and realistic dramatization of the married life of Jaya and her husband Mohan portrays an inquisitive critical appraisal to which the institution of marriage has been subjected to in recent years.” (129).

In That Long Silence, Jaya accepts marriage as a natural consequence of growing up “it was not love, but marriage that was the destiny waiting for us” (TLS, 91). When her marriage with Mohan is arranged, the issues that are discussed are the girl’s complexion and education and the boy’s family and his job.

The marriage is entered into by both men and women with a sense of self-preservation, self-promotion and self realization. Love is a later consideration. And
as Jaya discovers later, sexual memories have a certain coldness about them. Emotional and intellectual connections persist more strongly. In fact, they acquire a life of their own totally independent of the physical relationship as does her relationship with Kamat. Mohan and Jaya have built a life together, have produced two children and yet their wave lengths are different.

Marriage is a bond of many a woman, but it is not necessarily the same kind of bond; some are protected by it, some create their own space, others are irked by the dependence and the bondage it imposes on them. Yet marriage is valued by society because widowhood circumscribes a woman’s life and is considered inauspicious.

In *That Long Silence*, the domestic help values her mangalsutra realizing fully that she is supporting a burden. Jaya’s husband Mohan is an alcoholic and is no help at all. He is not a wage earner. But all the same, he protects her from the gaze of others.

“A husband is a sheltering tree’ is a refrain in *That Long Silence* used in several different ways” (*TLS*, 167). Sheltering trees protect, insulate and isolate; they do not allow anything to grow beneath them; they act as a wall between the self and the world. Jaya experiences all these feelings and emotions as she sees her mother being widowed by her father’s death, and she herself feels inhibited by Mohan’s dreams, which imprison her and reduce her area of freedom “the job I wanted to take, the baby I had wanted to adopt, the anti-price campaign I’d wanted to take part in …” (*TLS*, 120) yet when Mohan goes away for some time and Jaya, is overcome by fears of his having done away with himself or having abandoned her, and is terribly shaken, “Was it impossible for me to relate to the world without Mohan? . . . “with pity?
Contempt? Or, most frightening thought, without the barrier Mohan had raised between me and the other men?” (TLS, 167).

Jaya’s married name, Suhasini indicates the presence of the other. Suhasini had taken birth at the moment of her marriage and had followed the cultural stereotype of being a good wife. But as she finds her own feet, finds self-expression as a writer, experiences anger at social and gender injustice, she begins to cast off the role of Suhasini, which was in any case beginning to crack. She was a wife, a possession; an object owned and expected to fall in line, but she tries to distance herself from this image.

…the woman I had seen in the mirror the day of our wedding- a woman who had not seemed to be me, who had taken the burden of wifehood off me. A humourless, obsessive person. But Mohan’s eyes, as he spoke of her, were agonized, the eyes of a man who’d lost a dear one. Suhasini was dead, yes, that was it, she was the one Mohan was mourning, she’d walked into the sea at last. No, the fact was that I’d finally done it- I’d killed her. (TLS, 121).

Marriage makes several contradictory claims on the individuals irrespective of gender. On the one hand, it is based on domination of the other with the idea of female surrender and subordination built into it. On the other, the romantic notion of love is perceived as a necessary face of desire. Again, it is the man who decides and works for the position he wants in society; it is the woman who has to dress and act accordingly. Married couples are seen as a unit, inseparable in the public eye. It is not just a power relation; it is also a power game where each is trying to define the
other’s territory of freedom and choice and individuals are different in their response to the claims of this relationship.

Myths, cultural models, romantic songs and movies help a woman to accept the structures of marriage, but there are no role models available for managing life without a husband. A single woman is constrained in many ways, a widow is limited in her social sphere and a woman abandoned by her husband has no justification for living. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya recalls that though “there had been certainly no dearth of advice when I got married; nobody had bothered to tell her what to do when a marriage is over.” (*TLS*, 138) and marriage, like any other human relationship, can be over and done with through other means than death or abandonment.

In the novel there is an example of Jaya’s old maid servant Jeeja who experiences a terrible marriage to a drunkard only to be abandoned for another woman. Jeeja blindly accepts the traditional belief that a married woman must give birth to children. Jeeja has failed to do so. She accepts that she is of no importance to her husband and he had every right to abandon her. Therefore, Jeeja accepts his second wife and even looks after their son after their death.

Jaya’s analysis of her marriage makes her realize the limitations of traditional wife. In her past life, she is forced to accept the fact that, in seventeen years of marriage, she had moulded herself according to Mohan’s wishes. The only assertion of herself she recalls, was the abortion of her third child, which she had undergone without Mohan’s knowledge.
Thus begins, Jaya’s surrender and Mohan’s authority over her mind and body. They live together but there has been only emptiness between them. In the process, her martial relationship had become like “two bullocks yoked together” (TLS,11-12). She can feel her dependence on him, the burden of his wanting, and the burden of his caring. Her absorption into the family life is so total that from a fiercely independent girl, she gradually deteriorates into “the stereo type of a woman, nervous, incompetent needing male help and support” (TLS, 32).

Karl Marx, viewing the relation of man to woman as the more natural of one person to another seems strange to Jaya, “Natural? There’s only treachery, only deceit, only betrayal” (158).

Then there is Mohan’s mother who silently endures the whims and demands of her drunkard husband. In a frustrated attempt to free herself of repeated pregnancies, she hits herself and tries to abort another unwanted child. In the process, she meets her painful death. Marriage subjugates and enslaves women and it leads her to “aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently towards death without questioning its purpose” (Simone de The Second Sex p.500).

While Jaya’s living alone with Mohan in the Dadar flat, she reviews the sexual aspect of their marriage and the loss of desire and emotions in her. For, her sexual memories are the coldest. They stir up nothing in her. She knows the whole process of his love making which ends with Mohan’s question whether he has hurt her and her mechanical reply “no”. They never discuss their feelings on sex. The song, the poems, the stories of love and romance seems strange to Jaya when she feels his heavy, damp body on hers. Which is the real truth? “First there’s love, then there’s
sex- that was how I had imagined it to be. But after living with Mohan I had realized that it could so easily be the other way round” (TLS, 95).

Jaya’s association with Kamat, lends yet another dimension to Jaya’s personality. She is drawn towards him as he treats her as his equal and offers constructive criticism on her writings. In him, Jaya finds the companion she misses in Mohan, her husband. When Jaya begins to write under a pseudonym and her stories are rejected one after another Kamat warns her against indulging in self-pity and asks her to pursue her literary career by giving expression to her inner self.

Slowly, this relation leads to physical attraction. Kamat’s casual physical touch revives desire in Jaya and reminds her of her sexuality. But Jaya never forgets her marital status and doesn’t succumb to desire. Shashi Deshpande herself remarked in an interview: “I did bring in Kamat to serve a purpose; to show Jaya the kind of relationship that she could achieve with a man. She gets a kind of companionship from Kamat that she never gets from her husband yet that is marriage and this isn’t.” (Lakshmi Holmstrom”242-250).

Jaya walks out on Kamat when she finds him dead as she is aware that society doesn’t acknowledge any relationship between a woman and a man outside marriage however innocent it may be.

The chains of traditional marriage are heavy. In the absence of any alternative, wives often seek consolation in obsession or mental slavery leading to physical decay, disease and death. This unacknowledged martyrdom becomes an essential part of a housewife’s existence. She is expected to subordinate her own
needs to those of her family. Jaya is supposed to bear her exploitation and suffering silently as her fate. Mohan’s mother and his sister, Vimala, both suffer throughout their lives.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande minutely analyses the institution of marriage by taking examples from the lives of women belonging to the lower and middle class. The condition of lower class women, as presented by Deshpande, is miserable. For them, marriage is a form of slavery. They share a master-slave relationship with their husbands. Marriage for them means pain, suffering and burden. The condition of middle class women is better than that of lower class women, but they are also not free from suffering. One thing common to all these women is that all prefer to get married and maintain their marriage at any cost.

Shashi Deshpande shows that women aspire for love, respect and self-expression in marriage, but they do not get what they aspire for. But Deshpande suggests that a balanced and purposeful life is not an Utopian fancy for a woman if she liberates herself from the stereotyped conditioning of society and does not depend on the male presence to authenticate her thoughts, emotions and actions at every step. A woman’s relations with her family must develop within the totality of her life as a woman. Only then it can lead to a harmonious fulfilment.

The novel, *The Binding Vine* published in 1993, is a novel that admits complete structure with multiple layers of suggestion focusing on the tension of a young mother Urm (Urmila) who is the chief narrator in the novel. She is working as a lecturer in a college. She is married to Kishore who is the boy next-door, whom she had known
and played with in childhood, had fallen in love with as an adolescent, and had finally married with her parents consent.

Her relationship with Kishore is far from perfect. She walks out of the bedroom and her husband’s house on her wedding night because she saw the fear and trapped look on his face even as he said flippantly. ‘The two of us in a closed room,’ he said, parodying the words of a popular film-song, ‘and we can’t get out. That’s marriage (TBV, 137). It was perhaps because she wanted to prove that their marriage at least was not a trap with no escape, but a relationship in which each individual retained the option of escaping the hedge separating their houses as casually as he had always done, had tea with her family and then they both walked back to his house. There are no recriminations, no explanations. But the memory of the closed look she had seen on his face on their wedding night remains with her, making it impossible for her to speak to him freely about her innermost feelings.

Urmila knows that “Kishore will never remove his armour, there is something in him I will never reach” (TBV, 141) and as long as he is afraid of letting himself go, of baring his soul to another’s gaze; their relationship would always be less than perfect. Yet she finds happiness with him and counts the day to each homecoming of his, from his ship.

Marriage which was a spiritual bond in the olden times has become nowadays only a sexual, legal bond. Each time when Urmila tries to reveal her emotional insecurity whenever Kishore goes away from her, he asserts himself sexually. Kishore the archetypal Indian husband never understands the depth of her feeling. “Each time
you leave me, the parting is like death” (TBV,139). She tries to tell him two times, and both the times, he finds solution in the physical relationship; but to her.

… sex is only a temporary answer. I came out of it to find that the light had come back … ‘Go to sleep’, he said. He was kneeling by me, his face close to mine, but the closeness was only physical. His voice was cold. I could see the goose bumps on his shoulders, his chest. I did not look into his face, I was afraid of what I would see. I turned round and fell asleep (TBV, 140).

Thus, a marriage that suppresses Urmia’s human demands, a marriage that denies her fullness of experience, forces her to take refuge in Dr. Bhaskar Jain’s friendship. She tries to find herself in her relation with Bhaskar because he is a patient hearer to her talks, gives her right response, cares for her emotions and makes her feel complete. Extra-marital love, though not a true solution to the problems of such couples finds a prominent place in Deshpande’s novels. It shows the craving of the new woman to assert her whether it is inside marriage or outside it.

In Indian culture the word ‘marriage’ means that it is male –oriented. Societies turn out to be dissatisfying for the female partner, both physically and spiritually. It creates confusion in her whether to take up the path of submission or rejection because both end in discontentment. Marriage is found to be a degenerating power in which there is no involvement except in sex and everything goes on mechanically to carry on life. As a result marriage becomes meaningless and sex alone seems to sustain the man-woman relationship.
The novel begins with the painful experiences of Urmila, who has recently lost her daughter Anu, in an accident. The loss of her one-year old daughter makes Urmil extremely sensitive to woman’s intense relationship with their children. This growing awareness makes her relate to other women who may not be close to her in time or relationship. But it is their female experience of child bearing, nurturing of the child, and the precarious kind of life women live in a patriarchal society that draws her to them. She realizes the strong emotional bonds that relate a mother with her child.

The man-woman relationship, in marriage as an institution are explored through these instances and the novelist probes into many forms of female subjugation, suppression and even destruction through man and social indifference to the well-being of its women.

Shashi Deshpande admits that maternal instincts are invariably integrated in feminine sensibility and to impose them as a social obligation is undesirable and irrational. Urmila is endowed with excessive love for her lost daughter but she is not ready to bear the sight of humiliation of humanity in the name of feminine virtues.

Subhash K. Jha, who writes in a review on the question of woman’s right over her body which cannot be violated even in marriage, makes a very suggestive observation about the message for women embedded in the texture of the novel *The Binding Vine*.

_The Binding Vine_ is one of the few contemporary Indian novels to discuss its heroine’s sexuality, her “passion” with a measure of unrepentant concern. In this novel Deshpande travels much further down the road in exploring the working women’s needs of the head,
heart and further down the anatomy, than her earlier novels. (TBV, 1994)

Urmila’s husband Kishore makes an exceptionally egalitarian person. Born to a middle class family with an austere life style, he shows none of the aggressive pursuit of material wealth that characterizes the husbands of the other protagonists. He neither interferes in Urmila’s profession nor influences her in any of her decisions. He genuinely loves her and is close to his only surviving child, Kartik.

Urmila is struck by the quiet intensity of his mourning for their daughter on the night of Anu’s death. Urmila sees tears pouring silently down his face: “I could have wiped his tears, but I didn’t (TBV,14). Perhaps, no other husband in Deshpande’s fiction shows the capacity to live with his “vulnerability”. Affectionate and understanding, Kishore is an androgynous character.

In many ways, Kishore is an ideal husband. He treats his wife as an equal, as a person with a mind and will of her own. It is also clear that the liberated Urmila would not have accepted anything less had Kishore been different. He respects her wishes even when her decisions and actions are unorthodox, and yet emerges as a strong person. One incident stands out in this regard.

That one incident occurs on the night Anu is taken ill. Kishore and Urmila have had an ardent night together and he, after the act, lays smoking with one arm under his head, his face clear and calm. Urmila feels alienated and reduced to passivity. As he stubs the cigarette butt into the ashtray, the finality of the gesture provokes Urmila into rebellion. Gathering her nightdress about her she runs out into
the roaring wind and rain and gets completely drenched. His arm around her, he brings her back and after her bath, puts her to bed kneeling by her bed, he urges her to go to sleep. The incident is not discussed by either of them. However, Urmila later remembers that his closeness was only physical and his voice cold and it triggers despair. She remarks that: “Kishore will never remove his armour, there is something in him I will never reach. I have lived with the hope that someday I will --- Am I to give up this hope? … This signals a deep rooted insecurity in her relationship with Kishore” (TBV, 141).

The insights provided by John Gray in *Men, Women and Relationships* seems to be useful in unraveling the cause of her insecurity:

Men generally assume that once a woman is fulfilled. She should stay that way. Once he has proven his love, she should know it forever …. from the male point of view, this attitude makes perfect sense. Women find this attitude hard to accept. It is just plainly inconsistent with their internal reality. A woman needs to be reassured that she is special, worthy, understandable, and lovable. Men also need to be reassured, but they get that encouragement mainly through their work. Women, however, primarily need reassurance through their relationships (241).

Gray, an expert in interpersonal communication, is credited with the idea that the difference between men and women is more than biological. According to Gray, men and women feel and respond differently, and for a sound relationship between wives and husbands, a good understanding of the mental, emotional make-up of the
two sexes is necessary, as also is learning the art of asserting and asking for fulfilment.

Shashi Deshpande, in all most all her examination of man – woman relationships, stresses the fact that all the legally, socially and morally sanctioned sexual relationships within marriage, can deteriorate into the ugliest form of cruelty unless it grows out of mutual love, respect and understanding.

In *The Binding Vine*, there are several older women, like Vanaa’s and Urmi’s mothers and grandmothers, who have had to live with their unfulfilled wishes and repressed thoughts. The idea of a consensual marriage is absent, and a woman’s right to her body is not recognized. The idea of romance creates the myth of merger, of a two-in-one person, of shared thoughts and desires, but the relationship itself is built upon social images and leads to manipulation, secrets and pretence.

Vanaa’s mother, Kishore’s stepmother and Urmi’s mother-in-law makes a bold attempt to speak on the subject of marital rape. Mira’s life illustrates the traumatic aspect of loveless marriages where women are doomed to suffer silently the sexual assaults of their husbands. A budding poet and an eager student, Mira loses her right to a bright future, when an obsessive lover much older to her in age, plots to get married to her, leaving her with no choice. Her fear of marriage and the right it grants to a man over a woman’s body is expression one of her poems: “But tell me friend did Lakshmi too twist brocade tassels round her fingers and tremble, fearing the coming of the dark – clouded, engulfing night” (*TBV*, 66).
Emotionally immature and with a sensitive heart, Mira cannot accept her husband’s love and obsession that is limited to sex. She fails to accept him as her husband and worship him. Mira realizes that patriarchal Hindu society and its traditions do not acknowledge a woman’s feelings. She writes in her diaries: “I give him the facts, nothing more, never my feelings …. ‘Please’, he says, ‘please, I love you’. And over and over again until he has done, ‘I love you’. Love! How I hate the word. It this is love it is a terrible thing. I have learnt to say ‘no’ at last, but it makes no difference, no difference at all” (TBV, 67)

It is socially accepted that in marriage a husband has a right over his wife’s body and it is the duty of the wife to satisfy the physical needs of her husband, whether she is willing or not. Shashi Deshpande through her novels criticizes the traditional negation of a women’s right over her body and her own sexuality. As one of the most eminent women lawyers Indrani Jaisingh opines: “It is assumed that by marrying a man, a woman has given her consent to sexual intercourse with her husband at any time. Thus, even if he forces himself on her, he is not committing an offence …. ” (Trivedi, 147).

Mira too becomes a victim and endures the violation of her body in silence. But her feelings are expressed through her poetry in which she pours out her bitter experiences. Urmi remembers the poem behind which lies the man “who tried to possess another human being against her will”. … Don’t tread paths barred to you obey, never utter a ‘no’ submit and your life will be a paradise, she said and blessed me (TBV, 83).
Mira’s diaries also mention her meeting with the rising poet Venu who later becomes the venerable old man of poetry, while the silenced poet Mira has been dead many years during the birth of her very first child. Her character highlights the traditional silencing of women writers.

Another sad aspect of man’s desire to impose his will on a woman is depicted through Kalpana’s, who is a lower middle class rape victim with the crime committed by her own uncle. This uncle of hers is a lecherous man and keen to take her for a second wife. But Kalpana is in love with a young man of her age. She is unwilling to sacrifice herself for the security of her childless aunt. She is a self – respecting and young bold girl.

But she is unfortunately raped and brutally beaten by her uncle. In a society governed by Manu’s laws which despise women as beings full of “carnal passions, love for ornament, impure desires, wrath, dishonesty, malice and bad contact” (TBV,16) it is Kalpana who is blamed for the heinous crime by policemen and neighbours.

Having waited for a year after her marriage, when Shakutai comes to stay with her husband, she found him jobless and homeless and, living in a small room with his cousins. But she joined him and worked all day without any complaints. Her husband’s insistence on sexual intercourse even when they had to sleep in the corridor, with men walking up and down, was most humiliating for her and then come unwanted pregnancies. In spite of such experiences she takes up menial jobs to support her three children when her husband leaves her for another woman.
Since her husband has deserted her, it is she who is blamed by the society for his walking out. She bitterly tells Urmi what people say about her “What can you expect, they say of a girl, whose mother has left her husband?” (TBV, 147).

Her efforts to survive with her children are of no avail in an oppressive patriarchal set up. Shakutai’s sister, Sulu has her own tragic life. She is an affectionate and helpful lady. She is childless and is suffering from a skin disease. Her husband forces her to make Shakutai’s daughter Kalpana marry him. The so called security of a marriage has made Sulu compromise with the situation. Her acceptance of a life of humiliation where she can serve Kalpana and her husband after, their marriage shows her desperation and lack of choice. She immolates herself out of guilt, when she comes to know that it is her own husband (Prabhakar) who raped Kalpana.

Through the character of Shakutai Jeeja, Nayana, and Sulu, Deshpande shows how at the lower level of society, marital vows are flouted most casually by men. Polygamy and extra-marital relationships are common the phenomena in that society. Marriage gives women nothing more than a ‘mangalsutra’ in the neck and ‘Kumkum’ on the forehead. It also reveals the duality of society which expects a woman to keep her marriage even if the husband is good for nothing whereas it allows a man to walk out for no reason.

Vanaa’s mother and Urmila’s husband Kishore’s step mother is forced to marry a man who wants a mother for his beloved son, more than a wife. Vanaa, Urmia’s childhood friend and now her sister-in-law, in order to safe guard her marriage
to Harish, who is a doctor makes a fetish of order and regularity. Urmila asks her to raise her voice and assert herself.

Inni confesses to Urmila that it was Urmila’s father who had sent her away to Ranidurg as a kind of punishment to his wife for leaving her in the care of an old male servant while she went out on an urgency. It reveals the degree to which Indian women are subjected to domination by their husbands. The dominating attitude of the husband transforms these vivacious and intelligent girls into fearful and nervous women.

Even the relationship of Urmila, the main protagonist who is educated and financially independent and has a love marriage, with her husband, Kishore in under question. An officer in the Merchant Navy, he comes home once on a while to spend some time with his wife and children. Urmila longs to have him permanently with her at home and fears that she may lose him altogether. He wants to alleviate her anxiety by having sex with her. Although Urmila submits herself to him in sex, but she longs to reach his spiritual centre (TBV, 141).

Every time he goes, ‘the parting is like death’ to Urmila. Urmila remains disillusioned and unfulfilled with Kishore’s passionate love-making. A woman doesn’t need a husband just to sleep with; she needs a friend, a lover and a companion. Urmila says, “Sex is only a temporary answer. He was kneeling by me his face close to mine but the closeness was only physical. His voice was cold” (TBV, 139).
Urmi’s dissatisfaction with the situation between her and Kishore leads her to revolt against the traditional limitations of a wife and assert her needs. She neither wants to live on her husband’s money nor submit before him.

Urmila in spite of being a self dependent and confident woman recognizes a woman’s need for love and affection. But Urmi looks at the institution of marriage in real life as a sheer cold-blooded thing where people weigh up their families’ social status and money and the boy and the girl look for height, weight, complexion and education which seems ridiculous because it is the mental compatibility which matters.

Since time immemorial women have been victims of male domination and oppression- treated as beasts of burden and as objects for pleasure. Men have always looked down upon women as the weaker sex, as a piece of property, servile to them. Women’s oppression is to be traced not to individual male malevolence but to the social and the familial structures based on patriarchy. In a patriarchal society, a female child is brought up under the strict control of her parents with the view that she is to be given to a new master, her husband, who will determine and shape her for the rest of her life. She gets hardly any encouragement to develop her independent individual self. The decision in terms of her career or even marriage is taken by her father, brother or mother. Simone De Beauvior observes that “Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society”. (The Second Sex, 445) The patriarchal practices which reduce women’s status to inferior social beings are further perpetuated by myths and traditions which unfortunately have been embedded in the fabric of every society.
In Indian classical literature, a woman is always shown in relationship to man; the husband-wife relationship is given more importance than the daughter-father, sister-brother or daughter-mother relationship. Traditionally, a “good woman” is always synonymous with good wife and a good wife must be chaste, faithful and virtuous like Sita or Savitri. “For both men and women in Hindu society the ideal woman has been traditionally personified by Sita who is portrayed in the Ramayana, as the quintessence of wifely devotion” (70).

Marriage is the deepest as well as the most problematic of all human relations. Sociologists define it as a “Cultural phenomenon which sanctions a more or less permanent union between partners conferring legitimacy on their offspring” (127). Religiously marriage is supposed to be the holy union of two souls and bodies. Amongst Hindus, the wife is known as ‘Ardhangini’ or ‘Sahadharmini’, terms which emphasize her equality and oneness with the husband. Despite these idealized concepts of marriage since woman is considered to be an “embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith & knowledge” (76) she should be virtuous, chaste, submissive, homely, graceful and devoted to her husband and family.

Simone de Beauvoir, in her book The Second Sex argues that in patriarchy women have been forced to occupy a secondary position in relation to men, a position comparable in many respects to that of radical minorities in spite of the fact that they constitute at least one half of the human race. She believes that this secondary position is not imposed of necessity by natural “feminine” characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of social traditions and education which have been under the control of men. Lynne Segal, a famous feminist, believes that “Men wield power
over women through terror” (448). Woman suffers not only by man’s act of physical violence, but she is often emotionally hurt and crippled through his arrogance, cynicism and indifference.

*A Matter of Time* too deals with the theme of self – identity and the complexities of man-woman relationships in the context of marriage. The trauma of a disturbed adolescence, the attempt to break traditional moulds in which women are trapped, sexual discrimination, the rejection of the dependency syndrome are some of the other concerns which give the novel a feminist bent.

In the very beginning of the novel, Sumi reacts to Gopal’s desertion. There is none of the typical ranting and raving. She is proud and defiant. It is clear that she does not want anyone’s pity. She realizes that life must go on and she must be strong for the sake of her daughters. This is reiterated throughout the novel. Even Aru, of the younger generation, who had thought that her mother was indifferent to Gopal’s desertion, realizes this after her mother Sumi’s death. “I thought she didn’t care about what papa did, I thought she was uncaring, indifferent, I said angry words to her but I know now that was not true” (*AMT*, 240).

The novel revolves around four generations of women belonging to a middle-class family. Manorama is of the first generation and she comes from a humble background. This had led to her marriage to the rich Vithalrao. The sudden rise in her status had added to her confidence but she grew insecure when she could not give a male child to the family. He however never grudged the birth of his only daughter Kalyani. But her knowledge of tradition which, allowed a husband to leave his wife if she gave birth only to daughters, made her fearful of being abandoned for another
wife. This insecurity colours her life and as a result she fails to forge a meaningful relationship even with her only daughter Kalyani.

Manorama is disappointed in her daughter. Kalyani, looks average in intelligence. A boy’s interest in Kalyani infuriates Manorama, who, in her domineering way, decides to marry her daughter to her brother Shripati. He was born after Manorama’s marriage and their mother died a year after his birth. Shripati’s intelligence and ambition made Vithalrao finance his education and he becomes a lawyer in Bombay. Manorama forces Shripati into a loveless marriage by appealing to his sense of gratitude to them. She coerces the two into matrimony to prevent the property from going to another family. Thus Kalyani is married to her unwilling maternal uncle, Shripati and from the beginning there was “the hopelessness that lay within the relationship that doomed it from the start” (AMT, 88).

Kalyani’s little hope of finding fulfillment in marriage ends the day she lost her son on the railway platform. She is unable to control her three children while Shripati had gone to check the train timings, Kalyani lost track of their mentally retarded son, Madhav, Shripati’s wild search for him lasted three months and ended in Vain. Abandoned by Shripati, Kalyani returned to her father’s house with her two daughters, Sumi and Premi. She lived with her parents hoping to be reconciled to her husband. Manorama’s letter to Shripati from her deathbed brings him back but the day Kalyani hears about the construction of a room upstairs she realizes the seriousness of Shripati’s anger. Manorama’s death does not unite the two and a strange silence engulfs the house and its residents. Shripati agrees to stay in the house but in the upstairs. Blaming her for letting their mentally challenged son walk away,
Shripati punishes Kalyani by abandoning her and severing all relations with her. Shripat’s dissociation from his family because of his lost son can also be perceived as his way of rejecting a marriage he was forced into. But his means of getting even with his sister culminates in a life-long suffering for the innocent Kalyani. The silence that he adopts as a means of punishing his wife also isolates him from his own family and a life of normalcy.

Kalyani, a woman rooted in tradition calls her husband’s obstinacy her fate and considers her situation better than that of widows. She was a married woman even in spite of living in the same house she had not talked or communicated with her husband for over thirty years. Much to the bewilderment of her granddaughter, Arundhati, She carries her husband’s name and the mark of matrimony in spite of his desertion. Her daughter Sumi, also returns home after her husband Gopal’s walk-out. Kalyani’s faith in marriage is shaken

Is it enough to have a husband, and never mind the fact that he has not looked at your face for years, never mind the fact that he has not spoken to you for decades? Does this wifehood make up for everything, for the deprivation of a man’s love, for the feel of his body against yours, the warmth of his breath on your face, the touch of his lips on yours, his hands on your breasts? Kalyani lost all this but her Kumkum is intact and she can move in the company of women with the pride of a wife (AMT, 167).

Shripati’s death in an accident ends Kalyani’s hopeless marriage. But with him dies her hope of being reconciled. The heart-shattering cry of Kalyani which
Aru hears at night speaks of the agony and despair of a lifetime wasted due to her husband’s stubborn rejection of her.

Shashi Deshpande’s views regarding marriage are quite different from the view of the western militant feminist writers. Western writers give the females enough scope to go without husbands and even without marriage. But Deshpande, though she dislikes marriage where two people “shut themselves off in two separate glass jars” allows her protagonists to cross the sacred bond of marriage. What she likes is to seek solution to the problems of Indian women under the present marriage system perpetrated by patriarchy. On the other hand, the western feminist authors provide enough scope for women to live independently even without marriage or after marriage without husband if they are not adjustable. For instance, Simone de Beauvoir writes, “It has been said that marriage diminishes man, which is often true, but almost always it annihilates women” (Beauvoir, 22) Germaine Greer goes to the extent of saying that women should not marry. Kate Millet is of the view that “marriage reduces the status of women to a mere object for decoration and a tool of man’s sexual gratification (Sharma, 112).

Deshpande knows the worth and sagacity of marriage in the Indian society. She is not against marriage. What she wants is an honorable adjustment between wife and husband where the dignity and honour of the wife is safe and secure. She does not like to change the husband, but to make changes in the husband’s attitude and behaviour towards his wife in the light of modernity. Her ideology may not be of the type that the radical feminists hold, but she has her own brand of feminism. As Jaidav
says, “the authentic protagonists of Shashi Deshpande’s novels strive to make their marriage work in their endeavour to lead a meaningful existence (25).

*A Matter of Time* starts with Gopal’s decision to withdraw from his responsibility this wrecks the smooth life of Sumi and her three daughters. Helplessly Sumi returns to her father’s house to her mother, Kalyani who is shocked at their destiny.

In the beginning Sumi’s mother Kalyani had never liked a marriage between her daughter and Gopal. In her choice of Gopal Sumi had disappointed her father who had other plans for her life. But Gopal and Sumi find joy in their life together and their early married life reveals their compatibility. Gopal has recalled his physical union with Sumi, “And I knew then that it was for this, this losing yourself in another human being, that men give up their dreams of freedom” (*AMT*,223).

The physically and mentally compatible life between Sumi and Gopal starts with understanding and love. Her sister considers their marriage an ideal relationship between her sister and uncle Gopal. Gopal’s sudden alienation and desertion of the family wrecks the smooth life of Sumi and her three daughters. She returns to her parent’s home. Sumi accepts Gopal’s decision in silence. Though she is badly hurt she doesn’t surround herself with gloom and despair. She boldly faces the pain and humiliation inflicted on her and with determination she focuses on getting on with life.

Thus Sumi revolts against the traditions which make a woman’s happiness dependent on marriage. She tries to bring back normalcy in the lives of her children
for she wants them to enjoy life and not spite it. “if I meet Gopal I will ask him one question, just one, the question no one has thought of what is it Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in the age of acquisition and possession walk out of on his family and all that he owns? Because, and I remember this so clearly, it was you who said that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How then can you, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back on everything in your life” (AMT,27).

In *A Matter of Time*, Sumi-Gopal relationship collapses and goes through a crisis that envelops the whole family and ends in death.

As such the Sumi - Gopal relationship is a more serious comment on marriage. It also questions the traditional concept of the Hindu marriage as something that is sacrosanct. Sumi recalls how once she and Gopal had argued about the meaning of the word Sa-hriday and Gopal had said, “There’s no word in English that can fit the concept. English is a practical language; it has no words for the impossible Sa-hriday in the sense of oneness is an impossible concept”. Two people have two bodies and two hearts, “They can never beat in such unison that there’s only one sound”. Now Sumi realizes that those interpretations were hints; the potential to walk out on his family had always been there in Gopal (AMT,23-24). It is not only the individual ego that interferes; more often than not it is the need for a sense of privacy and of freedom, the need to keep a part of oneself in one’s possession, the need to preserve the self that may disrupt a relationship.

In this novel, Gopal is not a neurotic person. He is clear – headed and has a strong sense of values. He also has a strong awareness of environmental influences.
Once he had pointed out to Sumi that we are shaped by the age we live in. In that case what is it, Sumi wonders, that has turned him into an ascetic in the age of acquisition (*AMT*, 27). Gopal’s walking out on them dispossesses the whole family. The total dependence of the household is on the male. This is another aspect of marriage that needs to be examined. In this case, it is not only emotional dependence but also an economic one. This puts a question mark on the fourfold division of the ashrams which gives the husband the choice of moving out of a householder’s life. Men can abandon their wives and children with impunity, leaving their dependents to cope as best as they can.

There are several examples one can trace in social history as well as in myth, where the wives are abandoned midway on some pretext or the other, Sita and Shakuntala are two major examples where the wives are abandoned and expected to give birth to their children and bring them up single-handedly. There are also examples of husbands who turn ascetics and free themselves from the bondage of the family as it happened in the case of Buddha. These acts project marriage as a tie of limited concern, one which is a limiting’ of the individual, whether male or female, and is in its objectives a closed world that keeps larger concerns out. But incidentally, tradition does not blame them. There appear to be no disapproval of the acts of such husbands and consequently no insight is offered into the dependent status of the women or comments made upon the economic condition. Very conveniently, hermits turn up, foster fathers are available or grown-up sons willingly come forth to share the burden. But reality is very different. Sumi needs to vacate the house and look for other means of support. At first, she moves into her father’s house. The home Sumi and Gopal had built together is dismembered in a matter of minutes. Later, when she
goes house hunting, she realizes how difficult it is for an all-women family to hire a house-or, as in her case, to be able to afford it.

*A Matter of Time* focuses on the woman’s situation when she is abandoned not by accident or nature but through the act of a man. Sumi’s refusal to take help from her father or from Ramesh, her husband’s nephew, is based upon her need for self-respect. That is the only way she can be herself. Gopal’s desertion also impacts the lives of their three daughters, giving rise to feelings of resentment and withdrawal.

Communication is not merely a question of words or of language, but also of receptivity and a sharing of perceptions. Gopal feels limited and confined by his role as a father and a husband. He feels he is running out of time. He has lost his faith in the life he was leading; reality has become unreal for him. Like Saru’s in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*. Gopal’s desertion is seen from several angles. There is Kalyani’s view, a woman who is conventional and who has suffered both loneliness and abandonment. Her meeting with Gopal is in the nature of a plea. She wants to apologise for Sumi’s short comings as a wife. If there have been any failings, he should forgive her. Kalyani’s attitude places Sumi firmly in the role of a subordinate who has failed to please. She assures him that Sumi will inherit all her jewellery, an assurance that reflects the value society attaches to a woman.

Aru comes to him as an adversary, filled with anger and resentment. He is unable to tell her that he is frightened of his own emptiness. People change and cannot help it; they change when they are frightened of their own selves and do not know how to resist the tide. There is a sense of an existential loneliness; one has to live and die alone; marriage doesn’t take care of it. Kalyani lives alone in
separateness. Sudha, after the death of P.K. retreats into herself, away from her half-brother, from her son and daughter-in-law. Gopal had similarly withdrawn from Sudha and her family half repeating the Hamlet story.

Bring a modern young girl, Aru thinks of legal action. It you cannot hold the man to love, you can hold him accountable for maintenance. But Sumi does not want to do so. She tells her daughter. ‘Let him go, Aru, just let him go’ (AMT, 61). Aru’s attitude like Kalyani’s, reflects a social attitude. Two people get married, but when one walks out of it, is it the breaking of an unwritten contract and should or should there not be some accountability? But marriage is hardly ever between two people; it is also a social tie and their decisions affect their parents, children and friends. Gopal’s walking out on his family necessitates a reconfiguration of relationships and a reworking of emotional responses.

Gopal repeats to himself the question that Aru had asked him. Why did he get married and have children? He married Sumi because he felt attracted towards her, ‘obsessed by her presence’, he married her because she was a good girl and also because his body told him that he was right (AMT, 67). But it is his body that now fails him. ‘He could lie beside Sumi night after night, quiescent, feeling nothing’ (AMT,69) Gopal’s dependence upon his bodily response is somewhat one-sided and mistaken. At a later stage, when Sumi visits him in his room, and as they talk about their marriage and their daughters, Gopal realizes that the space between them in the room is filled with desire, his desire, that his body, after all these many months, is awake why now; why here” (AMT, 223).
Marriage is much more than a physical relationship or physical desire. The body chemistry requires the other to be desirable. But at no stage are Sumi and Gopal averse to each other’s presence. Right at the beginning of the novel, when Gopal comes home and Sumi is watching TV, her body automatically folds itself to make place for him on the sofa. Gopal is also conscious that Sumi is beautiful. The death of desire is not merely the end of physical relationships, but becomes indicative of the loneliness of the individual. Marriages do end most of the time, but they continue to work, held together as they are by social frames and the roles that are being lived, sometimes in companionable silence, at other times through constant bickering and unacknowledged aggression. The conventional idea of marriage fails to take into account the nature of reality and the physical and emotional separateness of an individual. It claims too much and for too long.

As Sumi and Gopal dissect their relationship, its beginning and end come together. Sumi is, in many ways, wiser than Gopal. She doesn’t want to hurt and doesn’t want the past to drag at her and her daughter’s lives. Unused to freedom, she is willing to turn this new loneliness that has descended on her into freedom for the self. And she is aware that her mother’s marriage and her own marriage are enough in themselves to turn her daughters away from the idea of marriage. It is not only Aru who asks her father why he had got married if it was to end like this, but Premi also asks him. And Aru puts the same question to Premi: What do women (and men) get out of marriage? Premi answers that there is Nikhil, a child of their marriage. Children are, as P.K. had also felt, a compensation for all else. They offer continuity in a mortal world. But Gopal’s mind does not accept this trite consolation. And it is not even the desire for a male child. Sumi, when she looks back, feels that her
parents’ marriage tie snapped because her father was frightened of his own self. In any case, it had been a marriage of convenience, a marriage that had followed a common practice, prevalent in the southern parts of India, where the mother’s brother is often considered the first suitor for a girl, and Shripati, even as he snaps the marriage tie, does fulfil his duty.

Gopal, on the other hand, is a difficult case. He is not the custodian of any property. There has always been a Camus-like realization of individual separateness, something he shares with Kishore (Vine) or else, why should a young boy escape from his half-sister’s protection and struggle alone in a distant town? And which man at twenty-six would tell the women he lives with that when the time comes, they must let each other go? No handcuffs. Sumi had sensed Gopal’s gradual withdrawal, “I knew exactly when it happened. And I knew I could not stop you. I could do nothing. When you left, I knew I would not question you, I would just let you go” (AMT, 221).

In A Matter of Time, there are two incidents at the surface level, which may appear to be of a similar kind, in reality, they are very different. Shripati walked out of a duty marriage and, at least for the world at large, had an acceptable reason for doing so. He could, in the eyes of society, hold his wife guilty. And at no stage is she economically deprived. In fact, she is the inheritor of her father’s property. Gopal, on the other hand, walks out of a love relationship and abandons three daughters whose education, careers and lives are at stake. They, the husband and wife, share memories of tenderly felt emotions of physical closeness, of dependence and togetherness. Gopal remembers:
I joined you in the river you swam half-way to meet me... we came out of the water then, we went to our room and it was there, with the sound of the river in our ears still, that we came together for the first time. And I knew then that it was for this, this losing yourself in another human being, that men give up their dreams of freedom. And women, too? Did you have your dreams of freedom as well? (AMT, 222-23).

Sumi feels that the time of their life together was complete. She doesn’t want to hold him against has wish. She doesn’t want to look at her life, a truncated one. A husband’s abandonment can be an act of betrayal. A woman may feel broken and humiliated by it. But Sumi rejects such feelings and works her way towards a fresh foothold now that the ground has shifted beneath her feet.

Gopal, as he talks first to Premi and then to Surekha, begins to analyse his own reasons. Why is it that he has acted in this manner? Where lies the roots of his present behaviour? He goes back into the past, his parent’s death, the knowledge that Sudha’s father and his are two different people, the sense of an uncertain, sonhood. The Hamlet story forms a subtext here. And the real catalytic event is the article that he wrote, an article under pressure, an act that Aru resented. Aru accuses him of being a coward. Gopal admits that he was frightened. To quote him: He says: “The students hit me with their fists, their feet, anywhere, and everywhere. Of course, I was frightened. And much after it was over, when I saw the bruises – , they healed so slowly, it was if they’d infected some indelible dye under my skin – I was frightened all over again” (AMT, 212).
But physical violence and irrational hatred in themselves are not enough to destroy a man. The reader later learns that they had also abused him and one of the abuses was ‘you bastard of a Brahmin’ (AMT, 218). It was this location in a framework that he had always considered irrelevant that diminished him as a human being.

Marriage is not limited simply to the two people who get married, or the family they bring up; it includes their childhood, the psychological beings, their dreams and their failures. Gopal and Sumi at this particular juncture of their lives are two individuals who think differently. Sumi who has always given him freedom makes space for his failures and makes no claims. She cannot run away. She does not think of suicide. Instead, she tentatively works towards reconstructing her world. Gopal cuts himself off and even though he allows his mother-in-law, sister-in-law and daughters to come and reason is too obsessed with memories of his past and his present sense of failure.

Deshpande’s novels are concerned with a woman’s search for her identity—an exploration into the female psyche. Her protagonists undergo an arduous journey to discover themselves and this leads them through a maze of self doubt and fear. In her novels, she depicts women in myriad roles – wife, mother, daughter and individuals in their own right.

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

Deshpande’s portrayal of the women of different generations presents the divided world of women in the traditional and modern milieu. There are important continuities along with some new perceptions and attitudes that the women discover as they look at the different generations. In *A Matter of Time* three women of a family come together, and discover the strength and reality of the other.

In *Small Remedies* (2000), her latest novel, Deshpande attempt much more than she did in her earlier novels. It is a sensitive portrayal of women’s quest for identity in a patriarchal world. It is the most confident assertion of her strength as a novelist with her deliberate denial of sentimentality and her total control over the unwieldy material.

Small Remedies represents a mature vision of life where the author tries to seek justification for the complex nature of man and woman relationships. Here Madhu Saptarishi the protagonist tries to write the life story of a famous classical singer Savitribai Indorekar, the doyen of the Gwalior Gharana who left marriage and home as she wanted to follow her intelligence. Apart from Savitribai, Madhu’s story includes the story of her aunt Leela, a fiercely independent woman. In remembering and retelling the stories of Leela, Savitribai and Munni, Madhu presents the clear disparities in gender paritrachy in the Indian society.
Small Remedies is the story of broken and disjointed lives. The sadness of these lives arises from the denial of unsavory experiences of the past that may deface the present. The narrator who narrates the stories has her own story, equally sad and disjointed, that bears upon these stories. She has lost her only son; thus, has lost her way in life.

The lives of the two - women are explored by the protagonist; Madhu - one obsessed with music and the other a passionate believer in communism, who breaks away from her family to seek fulfillment in public life. Savitribai Indorekar, born into a conventional Hindu family, elopes with her Muslim lover and accompanist Ghulaam Saab, to pursue a career in music. Moderate, iron-willed Leela, on the other hand, dedicates her life to the party, and to working with the factory workers of Bombay. Fifty years after these events have been set in motion, Madhu, Leela’s niece, travels to Bhavanipur, Savitribai’s home in her last years, to write a biography of Bai. Madhu who is caught in her own despair over the loss of her only son Adit, tries to make sense of the lives of Bai and those around her, and in doing so, finds a way out of her own grief.

Our society has been so conditioned to categorize women as immoral for the slightest deviation on their part from the normal course of behaviour. Madhu realizes that while people were willing to overlook her father’s eccentricities and his foibles they were not so generous when it came to accept Savitribai. “Being a man, he could get away with much. He could live the way he wanted without open censure or disapproval” (SR, 139). It is only when a woman dares to defy convention that people are shocked.
According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, “In Small Remedies, Deshpande is attempting much more than she did in her earlier novels, all five of them are different from each other – but smaller than this in scope” (SR, 35). The novelist has included a cross-section of people who belong to different communities. She writes about a Goan Christian family and also mentions Muslim tabla player and briefly touches upon his life and the people surrounding him, notably his grand–daughter, Hasina.

The story of Madhu is equally touching. Through Savitribai is the biographical heroine, Madhu is the protagonist of the novel. Her lonely childhood and her stay with her aunt’s family, which was rather intolerant, made her very sensitive. The initial confusion collapses when she marries Som and has a son. Madhu had no mother, but only her father and Babu a male servant. She never worried of not having a mother. She takes mothers as drab creatures, forever working, scolding their children and it does not arouse any sense of deprivation in her. She gets everything after having a son. She felt proud of being the mother of a son and thanks God for the gift. “What can you give me my lord, I who have everything? Aditya’s mother becomes her identity and she enjoys it” (SR, 89).

Madhu’s father gave her a secure life. He poured love and affection on her she being a motherless child. Her father’s death, in her prime age, shatters the adolescent girl’s innocent dreams. Her sorrow knows no bounds when she learns that her father had another woman in his life. Her grief being out of control, her impulse makes her body respond to the comforting embrace of her father’s friend. His effort to console her, leads to sexual encounter between the two. Immediately after this incident, Madhu goes to see her dying father in Bombay. After the death of her father
her grief engulfs her and blanks the incident from her memory. Before her father’s
dying she has left her father’s house she is sent to stay in her aunt’s house and finds
herself in a new town and a house full of new people. She spends her days in a phase
of complete loss of identity.

When she is forced by her husband and friend Chandru to write a biography of
the leading musician Savitribai Indorekar, she is unable to refuse. She shifts to
Bhavanipur and stays with a young and loving couple Lata and Hari. She tries to
remain aloof but Lata and Hari try to make her a part of their life. Then she goes to
meet Savitribai. She has an association with Savitribai which goes back to her
childhood in Neemgaon when Bai had come to live in the house next door. Her life
had attracted publishers because she had set an example not only by her music but
also by her life.

Savitribai’s story of success comes to us with its accompanying angst as the
novel goes into reflect the history of that time. Born in an affluent Brahmin family,
she shared with her mother a love of music. Tutored by her mother, who used to sing
‘aarti’, ‘ritual songs’ and ‘stotras’, the child sang at a family gathering. But before she
could complete the story, she was silenced by her grandmother.

Savitribai was not allowed to sing or learn music by her father and grand-
parents as they did not want her “to be one of those women?” (SR, 62). Music at that
time was associated with those professional who were kept outside the circle of
‘respectable’ society. It is, as Jasbir Jain has stated, “this notion of ‘respectability’
that confines a woman’s talents and demands a heavy sacrifice from her” (255). It
was in her father-in-law’s house that Savitribai seized the opportunity to learn music.
Her father-in-law was very fond of music. Though he himself could not become an expert singer, he patronized musicians and arranged performances for them both in his own house and outside. These were two rooms in her father-in-laws’ house, separated from the rest of the house and the doors of those rooms were always locked. It was there that the musicians stayed. It was a ‘forbidden’ world for women. Though her father-in-law was liberal and believed in girls’ education, there was a clear dividing line between what females could do and what they could not. “Associating with musicians definitely lay outside the Laxman Rekha” (SR, 218).

There was a window opening into the corridor through which one could hear the music. Savitribai could not resist the temptation and thought that if she sat under the window, she would be invisible and in this way she could listen to the musicians. One day her father-in-law, passing along the corridor saw the open window. As he was going to shut it, he saw Savitribai crouching on the floor. She was terrified but he said nothing and moved on, leaving the window open the way it had been. He not only let it go but also sent a message that there was to be a performance and the women could listen to it if they wanted to. The door would be open but they would have to stay in the ‘other’ side of the house.

This practice of keeping the women on the other side of the house, ‘antahpura’ or the ‘Zanana’ was with a purpose – to deny the public space to women and to limit them to their domestic roles. Savitribai could no longer pretend that the mundane domestic ‘life that she was leading satisfied her. She took a bold step. She pleaded to her father-in-law to be allowed to learn music and she was allowed both lessons and an opportunity to attend concerts. It was really a revolutionary step on the part of
her father-in-law to allow his daughter-in-law to learn music. Shashi Deshpande comments ironically on the social system when she writes:

For a man, a wealthy man and the head of the family, to indulge in his love of music, even to have a singer as a mistress, was all right. But for a daughter-in-law to be learning music, and that seriously, as if she was going to be a professional. Surely there was outrage; surely there was anger in the family. Rules could be modified for the daughters, sometimes they were, purely out of affection, but daughters-in-law carry the weight of the honour of the family its reputation, its Izzat (SR, 220).

Though, in a way, Savitribai had her father-in-law’s support and encouragement, Madhu could imagine that it must have taken enormous courage on her part to face the ‘anger, derision, contempt, ridicule … the jibes and the hostility’ of other women when she came out of her music room.

To be set apart from your own kind, not to be able to conform to flout the rules laid down, is to lay yourself upon to cruelty. Animals know this, they do it more openly, and their cruelty towards the deviant is never concealed. But the subtle cruelty of persistent hostility leaves deeper wounds (SR, 220-221).

While relating her story, Savitribai never mentioned any of the hardships that she had faced. Her silence “glosses over both her struggle and her endurance” (SR, 221). Only once she gave voice to her feelings “Sometimes I wished I had been born
in one of those musicians’ families in which I would naturally have become a singer. In those families, you are born into the profession. There is never any problem even for women” (SR, 221) but even those women, writes Shashi Deshpande, who were born in professional families, remained ‘outside the circle of respectable society’. Because of their birth, they were denied the life of ordinary women. It they had the ‘freedom’ to be artists; they were denied the right to live like most women do. The inherent difficulties of living a life that satisfies the creative desire in a woman is brought out by Jasbir Jain:

Savitribai’s case illustrates with great realism the truth Virginia Woolf has expressed in *A Room of One’s Own*. There are not so many female artists primarily because women have never had the same space or opportunity. In India, performing arts have always been a problematic profession for women, at least till a couple of decades ago, before the onslaught of electronic media…. The choice before Savitribai was clear; it had to be one or the other. There was simply no question of combing the two (118).

There is always a temptation to take the ‘normal’ path and be accepted. But Bai did not succumb to this temptation. Her search for a good teacher is another long story of struggle. The lady teacher that her father-in-law arranged for her was not good but she helped Savitribai by getting permission to introduce a tabla player into her classes. This was a turning point in her life. It was at this time that she left her in father-in-law’s house and came to live in Bombay with Ghulam Sahab, the tabla player, in search of her guru Kashinath Buwa. She first heard him during a Ganpati
festival in Bombay at the home of a family friend when she was still living with her father-in-laws. She expressed her desire to be his disciple but he dismissed the idea because he thought music was no profession for a respectable married woman. She could take up music as a hobby and not as a profession and for that “there were others who could teach her” (SR, 130). But Bai did not give up. Once in Bombay, she went to him almost every other day, trying to persuade him but he was adamant. She was disappointed when he fell ill. But he recovered and left Bombay for Bhawanipur, his home town to live the rest of his life near the Bhawani temple. She followed him and told him that she would not leave Bhawanipur and would sit outside his house without food or drink until he agreed to take her as his pupil. He finally agreed but he did not give in totally and laid down his own conditions. She agreed to everything but regretted the only fact that she could not live near the temple like other male students who had the advantage of listening to him doing ‘Riaz’ and also the benefit of the classes he suddenly decided to take. For Savitribai, it became a curse to be a woman and more so a Brahmin woman belonging to a respectable family.

Savitribai’s story is a sad comment on the social structure which goes on to privilege one over the other. Kabir and Eklavya were reprimanded by their ‘gurus’ because they came from the lower caste of society. Savitribai was penalized because she was a woman from a respectable Brahmin family.

Savitribai had to go through a lot of physical hardships. She had to travel by the local train to get to the guruji’s place with a two mile walk through the fields. The house in which she lived was also in very bad condition. There were just two rooms
with a toilet outside, shared by others. There was no electricity and water had to be
drawn from the well. Madhu wonders at the enormous courage shown by her:

A young woman who had lived the sheltered life of the daughter-in-
law of an affluent Brahmin family, living this kind of life. A woman
who had been, both as a child and a married girl, part of a large family,
living in a strange town among total strangers with the added burden of
being a Hindu woman, a married Hindu woman … (SR, 38).

As Madhu explores Savitribai life, she finds that Savitribai has defied all
cultural assumptions. She steps across the threshold and breaks out of the restrictions
of upper caste patriarchal society in search of her dream. In her conversation with
Madhu, she does not at all mention her daughter Munni, who is Madhu’s childhood
friend and who is later killed in a bomb blast, nor does she make any recognition of
Madhu. Madhu, whom motherhood has absorbed to the extent of self denial,
wonders: “In this story I see the artist, the woman in search of her genius, of her
destiny. But the artist was born out of the woman. First there was the woman and
then the artist. This possible to cut the umbilical cord, to sever the connection between
the two? Did Bai manage to do this?” (SR, 133).

Madhu tries to probe into whether it was Bai who disowned Munni or it was
Munni who disowned her mother and gets confused. Here the comments made by
Anne Collette are very relevant:

Bai has gained the title of Savitribai Indoreker, Doyen Hindustani
music (SR, 28) but it is a title and the achievement of a dream won
only in battle against the terrible weapons of a social orthodoxy that defines the parameters of a life in terms of class/caste and gender, and patrols those borders relentlessly. Victory in such a battle is won at no small cost, and in Bai’s case it would appear to be won only through the denial of motherhood (SR, 74).

Savitribai’s forget fullness regarding her daughter is deliberate and this is perhaps, as Jasbir Jain has stated, “the struggle that has exacted its price and brought about the hardening of emotions, a kind of ruthlessness that Shashi Deshpande sees as a on essential basis for survival” (SR, 222). Madhu also comes to realize that Bai is much more than Munni’s mother:

Now, after all these sessions with Bai, I know that Bai looks back at the young woman training under the Guruji, the young woman living in one room and traveling between it and Guruji’s home, as her truest self. Free for the first time in years, living the life she wanted, steady in the pursuit of the goal, pure of purpose (SR, 170).

Simone Be Beauvoir in The Second Sex pointed out that women were constrained by the social roles and as such could not exercise their existential freedom. She emphasized that unless women break away from their status as secondary, they would not be able to realize their human potential. Savitribai’s struggle for freedom and self expression is a challenge to patriarchy, “not confronting it headlong but in discovering one’s own strength as a woman” (Naik, 222).

Bai’s life makes Madhu compare her with her Aunt, Leela. She enters into public life despite social barriers. At that time when the remarriage of a widow was
out of question, she remarried and that took a Christian. Before marriage her name was Sindhu. She was disowned by the family and became a notorious figure. Little girls were threatened with t they were disobedient: asked ‘Do you want to become a Sindhu?’ The black sheep of the family. A widow who remarried and what was worse, infinitely worse, married a Christian man’ (SR, 45). Leela taught for many years and worked among the factory workers. She also participated in the Quit India Movement and Anti-Price Rise Movement and did daring things during the emergency but her family members did not mention any of her achievements. In this context, Charchalak Naik observes.

In almost all societies, a woman is culturally assigned norms of behavior in which standards of conduct, taste and decorum set the boundaries for her as external signs of what it means to be seemingly proper and respectable within the differentiated hierarchy called ‘gender’. Any form of deviation from prescribed norms or any display of transgressive potential in violation of the ideal image of womanhood makes her an unruly woman to be ostracized by society (SR, 224).

But Leela “resolute of purpose, straight and direct in all that she did in her life” pursued her goal and endured the barriers erected by the society” (SR,225). She was a woman who had always supported herself. When her first husband Vasant died, she took up a job and educated her brother-in-law. Even after marrying Joe, who was a doctor with a fairly good income, she continued to live on her own money and continued to wear cotton sarees from the mills where her first husband had worked. After the death of Joe, she moved back into her Maruti chawl home the very next day,
the place where she had begun her married life at the age of fifteen. She participated in various social and political movements and worked as a leader of trade unions. She also worked in the crowded chawls among the cotton mills, worked for women who ignored their symptoms of TB and sent them to the clinic especially established for TB patients. She was also an active member of the communist party. She successfully combined her personal and public life. It was Leela who brought motherless Madhu out of the terrifying vacuum she faced when her father had died. Leela married Joe, a man from another religion, with whom she shared neither food nor language. She could speak no English and knew nothing of literature or music, the two great forces in Joe’s life. Still they built a lovely relationship giving enough space to each other. Though she has kept out of Joe’s family by Paula’s (Joe’s daughter by his first wife) atrocious behaviour, she still forged a relationship with each of them.

Leela was full of courage. When Joe died; she showed no outward expression of grief though “something had gone out of her- a passion, a force, a fire” (p.149). A bit of this courage reappeared when workers were arrested during a railway strike and their families were thrown out of their homes. It was at this time that Indira Gandhi declared the emergency. She resisted it. She did many daring things and remained in prison for nearly a year. In her last days, she was anguished to see the changed world around her “the city metamorphosing into something very different from the Bombay of mills, factories and the workers, the Bombay of middle – class dreams and hard work that she had known and loved” (SR, 198). Her life story in the words of Collette: “is a story of human potentiality and possibility” (SR, 77).
Madhu’s association with Joe and Tony introduces her to her future husband Som, who is Joe’s student and Tony’s friend. Som’s regular visits to Madhu’s room with Tony and Chandru makes her a part of their friend circle. Som’s heart breaks after being rejected by the beautiful young lady, Neelam. Made him confide in Madhu and soon he begins to see the beautiful person in her. His words, “I want you to be my wife, I want to live my life with you, I want us to have children” (SR, 181). Change Madhu’s life, for she enters the world of matrimony with him. Marriage brings passion in her life as she discovers her sexuality and her love for Som. Later she recalls, “My delight in him, in what he is doing to me, our delight in each other, the laughter and conversation we indulge in which we’re making love, his hands moving all the while, teasingly, tantalizingly over my body – this is passion. It’s love too” (SR, 182). Confident and secure in Som’s love, Madhu rejects the thought of agony and distress in love.

But the love security and happiness she found with Som and her son, Aditya for seventeen years, is destroyed by her honest confession of an incident of pre-marital sex. A painting in an exhibition brings back to her memory the trauma she went through while her father was on his death bed. Madhu, then fifteen, was shocked to learn that her father, her only guardian in the world was breathing his last. In a state of shock and desolation, she finds comfort in the consoling embrace of one of her father’s friends. Guided by an uncontrollable passion they get carried away by the physical comfort in each other’s arms. And the man old enough to be her father later hangs himself due to guilt. Troubled by the knowledge of the man’s suicide because of her, Madhu after a nightmare, confides her thoughts in Som.
The revelation of this secret which she had locked in the innermost recesses of her mind shatters Som. He had suspected his wife’s ruined chastity. Som hopes that she was an unwilling partner. But Madhu’s honesty in declaring that it was not a rape kills Som’s faith in her. Madhu’s anxiety over the Man’s suicide loses its importance as she realizes,

This is what I’m speaking of to Som; this is what I’m sharing with him. But it’s the single act of sex that Som holds on to, it’s this fact that he can’t let go of, as if it’s been welded into his palm. Purity, chastity, an intact hymen- these are the things Som is thinking of, these are the truths that matter. I know this when I see his face, when I feel the hurting grip of his hard when he says, ‘Tell me, go on, go on’ (SR, 262).

Som after this incident from her past destroys their relationship. She cannot understand that her physical intimacy with that man involved no emotions as she had even forgotten his existence. Som begins to doubt Madhu’s character. Som questions her relationship with every man she was close to. She was surprised to see her husband changing from a generous and affectionate husband to “a sad and angry man, distraught, possessed by a madness that seemed to have no end” (SR, 257).

Som’s allegations inspite of her repeated denial forces her to retreat into silence. His disappointment in loving and marrying a girl who had lost her chastity is the result of his traditional beliefs. As A. K. Jain points “... sexual purity both pre-marital virginal and marital fidelity ... are cherished Indian values sanctified by tradition and particularly enjoined upon women” (12).
Som’s disgust over Madhu’s past makes him savage in his love-making and gradually he ceases to touch her. The physical gratification that they sought in each other also disappears and soon their relationship is marred by distrust as he tells her, “if you could keep such a thing from me, how can I believe anything you say, how can I ever believe you again? (SR, 259)

Their violent fights trouble their teenage son, who, disgusted with the scene at home walks out, only to meet his death in a bomb blast. With their only son’s death, Som and Madhu experience a void in their lives. Their destroyed relationship stops them from sharing their grief with each other. And both are equally shattered by the loss; struggle to endure the burden of living in this state of hopelessness. Madhu is forced by her husband’s friend Chandru, to write a biography of Savitribai. The year that she spends in Bhavanipur makes her accept her loss. The approaching death anniversary of Aditya and Som’s letter calling her back home makes Madhu realize that they have to be together to mourn Adtiya. They have to live together because their best memories of Aditya can be recreated only by their remembering him together.

At the end of the novel Madhu’s realization that they must recreate happy memories of their Adtiya then maybe they can overcome the anger that was threatening their marriage. The situation is similar to what Shashi Deshpande had presented in one of her earlier novels The Dark Holds No Terrors. Saru the protagonist of the novel finally realizes her mistake and returns to her husband house for a happy marriage life. Madhu and Som to decide to come together to face life with the maturity gained through sorrow.
Almost all of Shashi Deshpande’s novels begin with discord and disappointment in marital relationship. An analysis of these marriages reveals that most of the heroines entered into matrimony in order to be rescued from their life of suppression because of the traditional rules and restrictions imposed on the unmarried girls by their parents or guardians. The age old dream of a girl being chosen by an ideal superior male attracts them to love and marriage.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande’s pre-occupation with man-woman relationship has led to her analysis of the institution of marriage in this age of transition. Analyzing from a woman’s point of view Deshpande points to the uneasiness of women in the traditional role, which expects her to be an embodiment of sacrifice and suffering, a monument of patience and devotion and a selfless bestowed of love and affection.

Shashi Deshpande’s novels are concerned with a woman’s quest for self; an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist’s place in it. Her writings hold and universal appeal that clearly emanate from her footedness in every day India – a society in which we breathe and a culture to which we belong. In her novels, she has strengthened the feminist movement by her deep analysis of man-woman relationship as she excels in the portrayal of women characters. Her female protagonists are powerful and authentic and they deal with the problems triumphantly after recognizing their ‘selves’.

Critics have never been at ease in grouping Shashi Deshpande with feminist writers. Of course the protagonists of her novels are women, the victims of cultural/social oppression and they revolt against their family traditions in search for freedom and quest of their ‘selves’. Through this, they do try to redefine human
relationship and behaviour. In this sense, her works are women – oriented, yet it would be unjust to brand her as a feminist for there is nothing doctrinaire about her writings and she believes that man -woman relationship should be treated on a place of equal rights.

Her novels are imbued with references to myths; however it is from the women’s perspective that she deals with the intricacies of myth. She looks at the construction of womanhood, particularly in the context of the social and cultural conditions that exist in India.

Shashi Deshpande’s *Moving On* has been considered a treatise on men -woman relationship and its wayward ways by analyzing the characters from a psychoanalytical perspective. The novel is a family story of intimate spaces, emotional wounds and intrusions that are absolutely unexpected. In the words of Chanchala K. Naik in probing into the complex relationships with in the family, Deshpande weaves her narrative around multiple acts of transgression while bringing into contestation self/other, man/woman, bone/body, physical/emotional, sexual/ethical, individual/social binaries (218).

In *Moving On*, Manjari is a woman who resists the patriarchal ideology and tries to live on her own terms. It is a story that begins, conventionally enough with a woman’s discovery of her father’s diary. As Manjari goes through its pages rescuing old memories and recasting events and responds to them, the present makes its own demands.
The novel symbolizes the inner struggle of the protagonist, Manjari, an educated, a prematurely widowed, leads who lives in close association with society brushing aside all its narrow conventions. Manjari is the daughter of an anatomist father, Badhri Narayan and a writer mother Vasu, (Mai). She is studying medicine and marries Shyam, a person much below the social status of her family. In the words of Binod Mishra, “Manjari - Shyam relationship is based on the foundations of the body “…. Their union was the union of two hungry bodies and it had too little scope for any discussion, say even of wooing” (MO, 63).

She often longs to feel a man’s arm around to wish for a ‘crushing grip’. Her immature behaviour is exposed when she stamps a kiss on Shyam’s forehead announcing her declaration of love. Galaxy Manjari’s married life with Shyam begins on a dismal note. Manjari doesn’t feel good at her husband Shyam’s house in a very disgusting and unbeatable ambience. In the beginning of their married life, they are happy. After Manjari gives birth to Anand, the requirements increase. But Shyam couldn’t fulfill it as unfortunately his prospects in film making also dwindle because of some flops and some abandoned proposals. He doesn’t bother about family matters. This causes a strain in their married life. It creates a gap between Shyam and Manjari and there is a vacuum in their mutual understanding and love.

As a lover, Shyam is perfect to Manjari. But he becomes an irresponsible husband and father when he has to meet the practical responsibilities in his married life. Manjari, who still longs to get some solace in the arms of Shyam, soon gets wriggling once the sexual spells are over. Shyam’s professional failures and Manjari’s increasing demands lead him to a state of depression. Meanwhile, driven
by Anand’s illness, she stays in her father’s house and this leads to cracks in her marital life that keeps the gap widening every day. His calls are not responded to Manjari as she is busy with the child. It may be the reason for Shyam’s disloyalty to his wife and Malu, Manjari’s sister, is made pregnant by him. Shyam’s lack of concern for his wife is also more apparent in it. It manifests a truth that Shyam doesn’t love Manjari now as he did love her once. Thus Shyam becomes a traitor in the eyes of Manjari and gradually she is ill treatment makes him feel contempt for life. At the end, his sense of guilt troubles his conscience and forces him to commit suicide.

Manjari is married at eighteen and becomes a widowed at twenty one. She becomes a burden to herself. Her short married life receives a severe jolt after Shyam is drowned in the sea. This puts her on a razor’s edge. She becomes bold, challenging and conscious. After Shyam’s death, she determines to discard all her bodily movements and rhythm as she would like to be faithful to her husband’s soul. This has been maintained by her for many years until she comes to touch the hand of Raman, a tenant living on the top floor in her house. It really makes us wonder where Manjari’s true love and faithfulness of Shyam have gone. For years, her sexual desires have been suppressed in her. The rigid restrictions of the society cannot stop the desires of the body as well as mind. One day, when she gets a chance, she fulfills her bodily hunger with a person of dubious identity. She explains her experience: “It’s not his action that has disturbed as much as my own response, the way my body gave a startled leap in response to his touch. It’s my body that frightens me, It’s my body that is suddenly my enemy. I feel as if I have been invaded by a stranger, a stranger I’d kept out successfully for so long” (MO, 226-227).
This she generates a conflict in her mind. Her sense of guilt troubles her conscience and she considers her act as a sort of disloyalty to Shyam’s soul. But as she is struggling to control the demands of the bodily urges, she allows Raman to invade her body.

She seems mentally disturbed sometimes. Though it is an adulterous relationship, she is unique in providing her own explanation regarding her relationship with Raman, which is a love-hate relationship. She says: “I don’t want to hear his voice either. Only the body, his body, only my body, my starved body. No thoughts, no feelings, only sensation. The smell of sundried clothes, of sweet, the hardness, the pressure of his body, its weight on mine and my body responding, welcoming his” (MO, 257).

She wants to forget everything. Though it is not acceptable, in society, it makes Manjari appear a different type of woman.

When Manjari suddenly decides to rebel for the sake of marrying Shyam, a cinema photographer, it causes a permanent rift between her and her family. This almost provides the room for treating Manjari as the ‘other’ a rebel as society denies her the freedom to select her own life partner. In her relationship with her tenant also, her condition as a woman is critical compared to the condition of Raman. And one can raise a question on the matter. The answer to this seemingly uncharacteristic behavior lays somewhere in society’s elaborate rules that deny a woman the expression of her sexuality while allowing this freedom to a man. In understanding Manjari’s struggle, one is forced to rethink one’s role in the tapestry of life.
In the novel, there is a character Raja, Manjari’s childhood friend. Actually he is a widower, who wants to reclaim his married life again by marrying Manjari. He proposed to Manjari, but for the sake of marriage rather than for love. Manjari thinks, “the reasons he produces for his desire to marry me certainly don’t make him out to be an ardent lover” (39). She refuses to accept his proposals and tries to explain but “Raja strenuously refutes all the arguments” (40). In his boyhood days, he has had much love for Manjari. Actually his love and his desire for Manjari have been suppressed for years and of course they are at the unconscious level in the mind of Raja and now eagerly to find its way to release. Whenever time permits him, Raja almost compels Manjari to marry him by giving his own reasons. Though it may be all right for the sake of fulfilling long time desire, her feelings should also be considered. She is not a toy to provide her instant nod to accept Raja’s repeated proposals. She is known for her own experience and marriage merles a means of social security for a woman is not acceptable to Manjari. When Manjari wants to but car to fulfill one of her middle-class dreams, Raja raises a question, ‘But why do you need a car?’ (MO, 65) she replies, “I bet …. if, I were a man, you’d never have asked that question” (MO, 65). Raja actually worries about her family condition and future. If she spends all her money in buying a car, what will see do in future as she has no job at present. She freely raises the question because of the she is a woman. Manjari doesn’t bother about Raja’s advice and she hopes that she will get a job in future.

Manjari meets the real test of her life, when she is visited by strangers and has receives some anonymous phone calls from the Mafia gang. This leads to of mental pressure and almost forces her to sell her ancestral house. When she doesn’t responds
to the threat of the mafia underworld, she is physically assaulted, almost to the verge of rape. She receives a phone call in the afternoon and the voice warns her as follows. “We don’t want to hurt you, but you’re a woman, don’t forget that” (MO, 167). But she becomes more stubborn and decides not to sell the house but to stay and fight. She boldly meets the situation, “This is what they want, and they’re trying to reduce me to this shivering cowardly mass of fear. I won’t be scared” (MO, 167) Thus Manjari is bold enough to meet the situation though she is relegated to the ‘other’ by different persons in different manners.

*Moving On* deals with the man-woman relationship within the institution of marriage and out of that too. In the words of K.A. Agrawal: “All the novels of Shashi Deshpande centre on family relationships and the necessity for women to live within relationships. Family is the nerve centre of all human activities in her novels” (73) She can be studied as a writer of human relationships bent on solving the intricate bonds and knots between man and woman, father and daughter, brother and sister and many more.

Shashi Deshpande has exposed the real self and the other of Manjari in a psychological way. The novel projects Manjari as a complex character trying to reach her real self through the conflicting demands and role in her life. Manjari is of course the new woman, who redefines freedom and also relationships. Though she is an affectionate daughter, a loving sister, a caring mother and a good friend, she is not dependent on anyone.

To conclude, this chapter shows the prevailing state of man-woman relationship in its multiple variations as seen in Deshpande’s novels. The institution
of marriage is well-scrutinized in the works; this Institution often ends up as a patriarchal tool for curtailing the freedom of women and reducing them to slavery. Loyalty and devotion are expected only from wives with the husbands often remaining indifferent to the needs and aspirations of their women; Women are also sexually abused by their own relatives and acquaintances.

The Mother-Daughter relationship is as vital and intense as Man-Woman relationship. What starts with the umbilical bond, grows from strength to strength. Again, this is a complex relationship involving both devotion and derision, often leading to strange love-hate situations. The Mother-Daughter relationship has served as the theme of innumerable literary works especially by women writers. The next chapter deals with Mother-Daughter relationships in the novels of Shashi Deshpande.