Chapter - V

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Indian literature in English is deeply influenced by myths, archetypes and puranas. Even Indian English literature, despite the western impact, in which women are considered as puppets at the hand of males, is deeply related with traditional Indian family bondage. They are the prototypes of Sita and Savitri. In twentieth century the values of family bond is changing rapidly in India from joint family concept presently to nucleus family concept. The broader family system of Indian society is shattering into pieces in the form of revolt against the social injustices, indignities and psychological confinement but as and when women by to break the family bond them either became docile and pretty or sacrifice their endearing qualities.

The protagonists of Anita Desai are concerned with the struggle of an individual in society and family as well from which they can’t escape themselves. They either doom to death for hankering of freedom or surrender themselves before social bondages. Her central characters, in all her novels, are females, whereas Shashi Deshpande is basically concerned with stark realities prevailing in society in which an individual is victimized whether they are males or females. No doubt, family bond is there in her novels, but they are more human being than individual. Both the writhers deal with upper middle class urban society.

In this thesis a study of protagonists of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande has been discussed at length keeping in view their facing of stark realities of life. As far as women novelists are concerned, they are more concerned with psychological depth of the experiences of women characters. Nayantara Sehgal is more concerned with personal and political experiences
because she was the daughter of Vijay Laxmi Pandit (the sister of Jawahar Lal Nehru) and S.R. Pandit (a Sanskrit Scholar and Lawyer). In her novels she describes the vanities and hypocrisies prevailing in the richest contemporary Indian society of aristocratic class. Kamala Markandayya looks beyond the elite in her exploration of similar themes. She describes the life of the poor and middle class society. Although there is a sense of racial prejudice against Indian migrants in Britain of which she has first hand knowledge. R.P. Jhabvala considered herself not as an Indian writer but as one of those European writers who have written about India. She got Booker Prize Award on her famous novel *Heat and Dust* which studies the interaction between India and Britain.

Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande are the progenitor of certain new themes and techniques which was borrowed by her from the great Indian and British novelists as well. Since Anita Desai was the daughter of Bengali father and German mother, the influence of heredity can clearly be seen in her novels. For a short period she worked in Max Muller Bhawan, Calcutta. Her novels show her mastery over language and her deep study of various religions, philosophies and also the practical aspects through the art of living of the different countries of the world. She is deeply interested in English Literature and has thoroughly read it. She also has a good knowledge of art and paintings. Because of her sensibility, she has a better knowledge of darker side of life in the world. Shashi Deshpande has a superb and sophisticated imagination that brings forth the faces of the individuals that convey to her intuition the most hidden causes of their sufferings. The atmosphere in which she was brought up and the admixture of her heredity present a cosmopolitan nature. The open mindedness, love for freedom, freedom from thoughtless superstitions should be the result. Her thirst for knowledge can be felt by her reading of Wuthering Heights at
the age of nine. The Sanskrit verses of Bhagwat Gita shows her intellectual and philosophical attitude which influenced her. She has written not only novels, and short stories but her collection of essays writing from the margin is a superb one.

The everlasting tradition of psychological novel which started from the writings of George Eliot and is continued till today through the writings of Virginia Woolf and Henry James were in a position to affect her thoughts and ideas. The technique of stream of consciousness writing and interior monologue are employed by many writers before her. In this technique, plots and tales are successfully presented by the writer like Hemingway. Shashi Deshpande has also used it wherever she wants. She does not believe that the world is facing social, political and religious problems only. She knew it very well that these problems cannot be solved through slogans and ethical and moral principles. She was deeply interested in her continental and American predecessors and wanted to analyse the human mind in order to know how man can achieve the peace of mind, sense of security and mutual respect. This humanistic aspect of her novels can be seen easily in all her novels.

In an interview on 4th April, 1991 Anita Desai says to Sucheta Mukherjee: “that the characters who go against the grain of society, who try to establish as individuals, I think, these are the people that interest me or excite my admiration.... Most of them fight against the norms, against what is expected from them. That is why a great many of them stumble and also fail. I don't think that failure is so important.” It is no doubt the fight that is important. The norms are breaking in present scenario but in most of Indian families women are still called as sacrificial heifer. Although changing values can easily be perceived in Indian family through the novels of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. These changing values are moral in respect of
women as daughters, sisters, mothers and wives and men who want freedom from the family bondage. The revolt of women takes place at the cost of their self.

As mother, Sita, in *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* refuses to give birth to her child in a cruel world. Monisha’s mother in *Voices in the City* decides to have a relationship with a man other than her husband. Nanda Kaul in *Fire on the Mountain* is not accepted as an ideal daughter/grand daughter and acquires enough courage to be self sufficient. Bim’s mother in *Clear Light of Day* is more concerned with herself than her children.

Anita Desai also portrayed women as daughters and sisters in many of her novels. Maya’s tragic end occurs on account of her disharmonies relationship with her husband since her father had showered too much care. She cannot find that care and affection in her husband, Gautama. As a sister the sacrifice of Tara is worth recording. During childhood she plays tricks with her brother, Raja. Later on she acknowledges her right as equal to Raja and she becomes his opponent. Anita is guilty conscious not to share the family responsibility. She revolts against the dehumanizing ways of the family members including women like Monishas.

The female characters of Anita Desai as daughters enjoy enough pleasure in their adolescent. Maya is happy in her childhood under the able patronage of Rai Saheb. Tara also enjoys her childhood in the lap of Mira Masi. Sarah also never feels in her family subordinate as being girl child. Leela saves joys and sorrows in the company of her brother. Overall women as daughters enjoy over protection which obviously occur in Indian traditional family.
Anita Desai is basically concerned with urban middle class family of contemporary society. Her characters not only prefer freedom but they are also career oriented—either males or females. Sarah willingly prefers India for peace and tranquility as an Indian wife. In contrast, Maya is reaching to western mode for sensuality, liberty and hence suffers from neurosis. In great tension and turmoil she wishes the company of her mother in law but her mother-in-law also refuses without acknowledging her mental trauma.

So far as the matter of large heartedness is concerned, we find only Anita Desai in Indo-English fiction writing. She has a deep sympathy for the suffering of humanity and her medium of communication with this suffering is symbols, images and metaphors. She is considered as a social artist and are of the opinion that social relations should be formed in right order. In her writings she seems to be influenced much from her contemporary writers. A certain type of change is seen in the writings of major novelists of the twentieth century like Proust, Woolf, Joyce and Richardson.

Shashi Deshpande perceives her character as individuals, neither as woman nor in the terms of binaries like centre/margin, oppressor/oppressed etc. in her first novel Sarita defies her mother by joining medical college and flouts caste restriction by marrying a man she loves. In If I die Today the entrance of the Guru disturbs the placid life of doctors and their family. In Roots and Shadows Indu also has married a man of her choice. The fifth novel Roots and Shadows deals with the hollowness of modern Indian life in which Jaya’s husband is suspected of fraudulence and they have to settle in a power locality.
In Binding Vine Urmi aggrieves over the death of her baby daughter and of Kalpana, a Teenage victim of rape, fighting in the hospital of survival. A Matter of Time depicts the complex web of human relationships of an extended family over three generations. When Gopal walks out on her for reasons even he can’t articulate. Suni returns in her parental Big house with her parents living strangely in oppressive silence for about thirty five years. The central character Aru tries to understand her father’s desertion and mother indifference.

Small Remedies have two women characters in which, one is obsessed with music while the other is a passionate believer of communion. They break a way from their families to seek fulfilment in public life. Savitribai elopes with her Muslim lover to pursue her career in music, whereas Leela gives her life to the party and to working with the factory workers in Bombay.

Moving on is the latest novel of Shashi Deshpande in which we find a father who delights in the human body, its mysteries, its passion and the knowledge that it contains and conceals. There is a mother who wields the power of her love mercilessly. The novel begins with the discovery of her father’s diary. As Manjari unlocks the past she becomes a rebellious daughter with her uncanny insight into the nature of human relationship, Deshpande deals with nuances and explodes the stereotypes of familial bonds.

Recently Shashi Deshpande has published three novels “A Summer Adventure”, The Hidden Treasure” and “The Only Witness” in a volume published by Puffin Books in 2000. She started writing children stories for her two young sons- Agit and Nikhil. A summer adventure deals with her own happy childhood in a small town of Karnataka, Dharwad. The
Hidden Treasure is the story of four cousins Dinu, Minu, Polly and Ravi who have indomitable courage. They came to their Kaka’s farm to spend their Diwali festival and came to know that their ancestor had buried their savings at foot of ancestral manson. In the last novel The Only Witness Dinu, Minu and Polly go to Bombay to spend the summer with Rave. There they make new friends one of whom claims to have seen the bank robber. They find themselves desperate to know that one of their friends is kidnapped.

In brief we can say that Shashi Deshpande deals with human relationship in its stark realities without discriminating any difference between man and woman which she mentions in her collection of essay Writing from the Margin. But Anita Desai is basically concerned with her female protagonists who ultimately suffers on account of the fact they try to revolt against Indian familial bondage in which a woman always requires protections as it is said.

Pita rakshati Kaumarye, Bharta rakshati Youwane
Sthavire putrah rakshanti, na stri swatantryamarhati.

But in the twentieth century, women are comparatively more powerful than men in all the fields of life. They don’t deserve to be called as marginalized but rather complement in all round development of Indian society.