CHAPTER V

Feminine Awareness as Marital Discord
In Shashi Deshpande’s fictional world, marriage is an important event in the life of a woman. The importance of marriage is reflected in our literature and it is the central concern of Shashi Deshpande’s novels. In her novels, heroines are courageous and educated but in order to seek their individuality sometimes they revolt against the prevailing social system and that becomes the main factor of marital discord. Deshpande also concentrates on the theme of meaninglessness and sexual confusion suffered by women, in tradition-oriented institutions. Meaning and meaninglessness refer to this event in their lives and confrontation is between traditional sexual expectations and demands of the self. The woman in order to achieve the liberty seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage created by the parental family. She resents about the role of a daughter and looks forward to the role of a wife with the hope that her new role will help her in winning this liberty. But marriage proves to be another trap and woman feels like a caged animal. Making enormous sacrifices on their profession and self desire, women understand that marriage obstructs their growth as individuals. Because in this male-dominating world, a woman is not supposed to behave independently as Mahatma Gandhi expresses his opinion in his book ‘Harijan’:

Man has regarded woman as his tool. She has learnt to be his tool, and in the end found this easy and comfortable to be such, because when one drags another in his fall the descent is easy.

("Sunita, A Feminist Perspective P.33.")

So, in this educated epoch women are not free and they have many obstacles in achieving their awareness. According to Seema Sunil, “woman is like a fluid which has no form or shape of its own.” (Man – Woman relationship, P.21). If they have any shape or strong opinion about others, it becomes the reason of their marital discord.
Now - a - day Indian fiction has entered a new phase - the phase of an inimitable representation of the new Indian woman who is dissatisfied with the inhibiting culture, natural or sexual roles assign to her from the unconscious dawn of the patriarchal India. This new woman of the Indian English novel views herself as the object of cultural, social oppression and attempts to rebel against them, consciously or unconsciously, within her living space. But at the same time she rejects the social and cultural background totally and hence fails to transcend the horizons depicting a revolutionary conscience. Culture allows the woman to be a daughter, or a sister in her parental home and to be a wife and mother in her husband's home. In addition she has to play a professional role if she is working. Above all, Nature assigns her a sex based role where she is limited biologically, though she is divided between her natural or cultural roles themselves. A woman can be only a daughter, sister, wife, mother, woman, professional, but never her real "she". What she wants is the freedom to think and decide for herself and the liberation from her womanhood. For she finds her "womanly self" trapped and suffocated within her family. Thus, they try to escape from their cultural - bound roles, there is no way out of their natural - bound roles, especially their role as sexual partners. Deshpande's heroines are passive feminist. They are highly intelligent women who confront their problems inwardly, and analyse it objectively. The result is that love marriage becomes meaningless and they lose their status as props of life. Sex alone seems to sustain the man- woman relationship. The heroines of Deshpande resort to freedom not only intellectually but sexually too. For their sexual starvation forces them to seek recourse to extra- marital - sex other than their husbands. But in the last they realize that they have done wrong. It is true that while men have enjoyed sexual freedom from time immemorial, women have been hedged around by unbreakable taboos. But Deshpande's heroines have broken them. It is this working of an individual dialectic of the sexual dilemma in her novels that makes Shashi Deshpande a modern feminist.
In *Roots and Shadows*, Shashi Deshpande’s theme is the identity-crisis faced by Indu, the intelligent and sensitive married protagonist. Indu quests for release from the constrains of the tradition and traditional-bound institution of marriage in search of an autonomous self, only to realize that “this refuge is hard to achieve”. The realization of the need to conform for survival and the awareness the conformity is the greatest destroyer of self-hood, and the only self that can be achieved is the self born in interpersonal relationship make Indu cryout in agony and the cause of her marital discord:

This is my real sorrow that I can never be complete in myself until I had met Jayant, I had not known it......... that was somewhere outside me, a part of me without which I remained incomplete. Then I met Jayant and lost the ability to be alone.

(*Roots*, P.34)

In Indian society, before marriage a woman thinks that she would be independent after marriage, but it’s not true. Such is the case with Indu, her marriage with Jayant denies her fullness of experience. Though it is a love marriage still it brings her no satisfaction and happiness and suppresses her femininity. Jayant has dominating nature and does not care for her feelings. Jayant takes her for granted and expects her to submit. She does it because she loves him but is also confused about her individual liberty.

The conflicting situation of Indu’s marriage has awakened her consciousness. Taking about her predicament in her relationship with Jayant, Indu says:

What I feel for Jayant...... can I compress all of it within this word? (love). It is much more, so overwhelming a response of the whole of me to him. Sometime I wonder if I will leave him one day and live by myself. The only way in which I can be myself, my whole self again.
(Roots, P.157.)

As a result of her unhappy conjugal life with Jayant, Indu enters into a physical relationship with Naren. She gives the clue that now – a – day women dare to have extra marital affairs if they are not satisfied with their marriage. And this is the case with Indu when the easy compatibility between them makes her to take a daring step in surrendering herself to Naren. It is to be observed that she refuses to be consumed by guilt after committing adultery. She, in fact, reveals in the act with wild abandon and deliberately savours the memory of it, refusing to wipe it out of her mind she thinks:

I can go back and lie on my bed, I thought, and it will be like erasing the intervening period and what happened between Naren and me. But deliberately I went to my bed and began folding the covers. I don’t need to erase anything I have done, I told myself in a fit of bravado.

(Roots, P.168)

This bold assertion to herself has sparked off conflicting remarks from the reviewers. Commenting on her decision not to reveal this to her husband, P. Ramamoorthy says:

This sheds a brilliant light on Indu’s awareness of her autonomy and her realization that she is a being, not a dependent on Jayant. The novel gains its feminist stance in Indu’s exploration into herself but it also moves beyond the boundaries of feminism into perception of the very predicament of the human existence.

( P. Ramamoorthy, “My Life is my own: A study of Shashi Deshpande’s Women” Feminism and Recent Fiction, P.124).
This same incident is however, seen in a totally different light by P.Bhatnager who laments the fact that she has to commit adultery to come to terms with her marriage life. She feels that:

Indu’s casual and matter – of – fact attitude to what she had done is shocking. Have our morals really gone so low that women commit this sin for nothing, just to prove that they do not lack courage? Is this really representative of the modern Indian woman?


Perhaps this is Deshpande’s answer to the double standards practiced by our society where only men are allowed to take sexual liberties. Yet Indu plays the role of an ideal housewife but the role of a wife restricts, rather circumscribes, her self – development – firstly, by take sexual liberties. Yet Indu plays the role of an ideal housewife but the role of a wife restricts, rather circumscribes, her self – development – firstly, by taking away her freedom of thought and expression, and secondly, by denying her to scope of giving free play to artistic potential. This extra – marital affair helps her in finding her individuality. Neena Arora comments over the double standard of society:

Man considers it as normal behaviour to satisfy his desires at both the emotional and the physical levels outside marriage, while it is ruthlessly condemned as adultery in case a woman indulges in it even though accidently the slightest of any deviation on her part which may not even involve sex, man turns violent and hostile towards his wife and starts prosecuting her. This condemnation is dictated by man’s interest in
preserving his property rather than by any moral consideration.

( *Neena, A Feminist Study* P.61.)

Shashi Deshpande also focuses over the sexual humility of woman in her novels. In this novel, not only Indu but Akka is also a victim of sexual humility. Indu often recollects Akka’s story in Nirmala Atya’s words:

She was just 12 when she was married. And he was well past 30. Remember him still. He was a tall, bulky man with large, coarse features. And she...... she was small, dainty, really pretty, with her round face, fair skin, straight nose and curly hair. Six months after her marriage, she ‘grew up’ and went to her husband’s home. What she had to endure there, no one knows. She never told anyone. Our grandfather, her father, was a man who kept himself aloof. No one could approach him easily. And her mother, our grandmother, died when she was a child. But I heard that twice she tried to runaway – a girl of 13. Her mother – in – law, I heard whipped her for that and locked her as well. And then, sent her back to husband’s room. The child they said, cried and clung to her mother – in – law saying, “Lock me up again, lock me up.” But there was no escape from a husband then. I remember her telling me before my own marriage was consummated, Now your punishment begins, Narmada. You have to pay for all those Saris and Jewels.

( *Roots,* P.77.)

Sex as punishment perhaps, how it was viewed by such child bride who nevertheless did not raise any banner of revolt but on the other hand
continued to suffer and helped to perpetuate such oppression. Through the
character of Akka, Deshpande successfully portrays the contradictory traits
in a woman’s character. Akka is a domineering character but she controls
her husband after he suffers from a paralytic stroke. Thus Deshpande
represents the Indian woman’s love and devotion to her husband in every
condition whether bad or good. So modern women sometimes divert from
their path but in the end they realize that happiness lies within the
boundaries not outside of it. Indu has paradoxical situation in which
women are enmeshed. She cherishes within her heart deep and profound
love but when occasion comes to express it she retraces. This is because
she is sustained and reared by a tradition ridden society. She says:

    As a child they had told me I must be obedient and
        unquestioning. As a girl, they have told me I must
        be meek and submissive. Why? I had asked. Because
        you are a female .......... it is the only way, they said,
        for a female to live and survive.

    (Roots, P.158.)

But as a modern woman, Indu realizes the futility of such a
hypocritical life:

    And I ........ I had watched them and found it to be true. There had to be, if not the substance, at least the
        shadow of submission. But still I had laughed at them
        and sworn I would never pretend to be what I was not.

    (Roots, P.158.)

Indu’s strain for selfhood, her struggle towards integrity of the
mind, for an emotional and intellectual definition of herself as a self –
actualizing person, is in a sense, a fight against her womanhood. Indu tries
hard to find herself for the unhappiness in her married life and comes to the
conclusion that “self – surrender” and “self – abnegation” are her greatest
enemies. She feels that she loves her husband too passionately but Jayant
never tries to understand what she really wants. Indu needs satisfaction not
only in marriage but also as a writer because she fails to express herself either as a wife or as a writer. When she wants to leave her job, Jayant remarks:

When she told him she wanted to resign, he told her not to be silly: "we need money, don't we? Don't forget, we have a long way to go."

(Roots, P.162.)

These ideas of Jayant show the dual mentality of Indian man where he expects her to be a perfect traditional wife, on the other she may also be a professional woman. Indu wanted to ask to 'go where'. Now being educated, modern woman have grown up psychology but when they find that they have no expression for their feelings and rights, in their life, marital discord intervenes for achieving individuality. Finally staying in her parental house, provides her an opportunity to reconsider her relationship with her husband and to find out what is wrong there. Then she realizes that she has never revealed her wholeself even before her husband and has revealed only those parts which her husband wants to see. At last, her love for Jayant enables her to lose herself in Jayant, Thus, creating harmony in their lives.

Indu is able to judge Akka's choice of her being as heiress. She decides to sell the house and not to enrich herself despite Jayant's intension, and makes a trust out of it. In her personal life also, Indu decides not to be different but to go back to Jayant, resigns her job and devotes herself to the kind of writing she always dreamt of.

In the end, she achieves freedom out of her confusion so she says: I must know to live without fear.......... fear of being involved, misjudged, misunderstood, displeasing. Without fear or failure. (191) Indu discovers that relationships are the roots of one's being and follow one like shadows. Indu's uncompromising and paradoxical feminine — self, that frantically longed for 'self' — expression, finally finds its roots in the home with her husband. So, through the character of Indu, Deshpande suggests that there
is a greater chance of happiness for women if they learn to conquer their fears and assert themselves. As P. Bhatnagar comments:

Thus Shashi Deshpande makes her heroine choose security through reconciliation. The ethos in the novel is neither of victory nor of defeat but harmony and understanding between two opposing ideas and conflicting selves. This is quite representative of the basic Indian attitude.

( Bhatnager, Indian Womanhood, P.128).

Shashi Deshpande’s The Dark Holds No Terrors describes the story of a marriage on the rocks. This novel reflects the unhappy conjugal life of Sarita ( Sariu ) and Manohar (Manu). Saru, the protagonist, is “two-in-one woman” a successful doctor in the daytime wearing a white coat and an air of confidence, and a “terrified trapped animal” at night. A woman who is fettered by her marriage to a man who has sadistic tendencies. Saru’s marital discord develops due to her famous personality as a doctor because Manu thinks that woman should not be superior to man and can’t take hard decision of life. According to law maker of Indian orthodox culture, a woman can never be a decision maker as Doniger wendy says:

A girl, a young woman, or even old woman should not do anything independently even in (her) house.

( Doniger, , The Laws of Manu P.155.)

When Saru shows her independency in her house, her husband – wife relationship turns sour which has begun in a romantic way. In the beginning, they are quite happy as Manu says, “when we’re together, its heaven, where we are.” ( P.30). In fact, Saru finds it hard to believe that such things happen only to girl in movies and books – not to girl like her. Manu cares for her feelings as no one has ever done. But soon her married life begins to crumble as the medical profession takes an upper hand and Saru is recognized as a renowned lady doctor. Her economic liberty makes Manu feel thoroughly insecure. After the incident of the explosion in the
nearby factory, there is no holding back for Saru when she emerges as a successful and reputed doctor. Manu feels totally ignored because all the nods and smiles and namastes are for Saru. None comes to meet Manu and now Saru also has no time for him. Manu feels inferior to his wife and meaningless ideas come in his mind. Edmund Fuller remarks about this male psychology thus:

Man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin but from inner problem.... a conviction of isolation, randomness, and meaningless in his way of existence.

(*Fuller, Man in Modern Fiction* P.3.)

In retrospect, Saru also observes the condition of her husband and says:

That it was there it began...... this terrible thing that has destroyed our marriage I know this too....... that the human personality has an infinite capacity for growth. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the something that made me inches taller made him inches shorter.

(*Dark Holds*, P.42.)

In this way Saru's success highlights Manu's failure. Saru works out a changing parallel from algebra to clarify her point:

\[ a + b \text{ they told us in mathematics is equal to } b + a \text{ was no, definitely not, equal to } b + a. \text{ it become a monstrously unbalanced equation, lopsides, unequal, impossible.} \]

(*Dark*, P.42).

In Indian society, where man being the dominating power, cannot tolerate that woman would be superior to him. Saru is conscious that there is something in a male that is whitted down and ultimately destroyed by female domination. And yet it so happens that she starts dominating him
when he fails to satisfy her sexually. The rift between them gradually grows wider, and one unfortunate incident blows the lid off the simmering pot. It changes Manu into a wild animal at night when he begins to abuse her physically in the privacy of their room. A girl who comes home to interview Saru for a magazine, innocently asks Manu: “How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?” (Dark, P.200) From that moment Manu has changed his attitude. On the other side, the burden of double duties gradually imbalance the marital balance between Manu and Saru. Her work keeps her away from Manu for longer hours and she reaches home at late night: “He sulked and I was either impatient with him or ignored him.” (Dark, P.92) Saru feels that she has to give up her pride in their professional rank and then everything will be all right. One day she gathers up courage and tells Manu: “I want to stop working. I want to give it all up........ my practice, the hospital, everything.” (Dark, P.79) In her novels, Deshpande presents the true conflicting situation of Indian woman who only looks her husband’s happiness and for achieving that she can sacrifice anything. So Saru would like to stay at home and look after the children, do the cooking and cleaning. Manu shudders at her suggestion of giving up her job because he knows that they cannot maintain the same standard of living only with his income. So his immediate concern is:

And how will we live? Can you bear to send the children to a third – rate school? To buy them the cheapest cloths, the cheapest of everything? To save and scrap and still have nothing after the first few days of the month? No, Saru, there can be no going back, we have to go on.

(Dark, P.81.)

Manu has dual type of nature, on one hand he does not tolerate Saru’s popularity, and on the other he wants that she may continue her job for his family’s requirements. The happiness of her married life vanishes
soon when Saru realizes that it depends on needs. Saru also feels sexual humiliation when she has to go at night when he turns into a rapist of his wife. It all starts when they have to go for a small holiday to Ooty. They go for shopping and happened to meet a colleague of Manu and his wife who had been dreaming of going to Matheran for years but could not afford it. The wife tartly remarks: “If you had married a doctor.... You’d have gone to Ooty too.” (Dark, P.111) This taunt creates bitterness in both Saru and Manu and they drive back in the silence. She can feel “the hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horribly familiar body. (Dark, P.112)

Initially, Saru cannot recognize the face and she is bewildered from his behaviour. She is surprised that all this has no effect on Manu. It is a significant factor that in the Indian setup man dominates on his wife. As said in research conducted by S. Anand Lakshmi Director, Lady Irwin college, Delhi:

The supremacy of the male is so well established that the average Indian is surprised to even be queried about it. Whatever the ecology of the social group, even in communities where the women may be the bread winners, the male is considered superior. Within the family the sense of inferiority of the female is pervasive.


In the last phase of her life she brings herself face to face with her own self and comesout from confused state of mind. She decides to leave her husband to solve her inner problems. In feminist terms, Saru’s return to her parental home can be interpreted as what Kristeva calls:

The refusal of the temporal order and the search for a landscape that would accommodate their need.
The homecoming affords her to sort out her problems, and re-examine her crises. In the end of the novel, she discusses with her father about the sadistic behaviour of her husband, quite in a different way:

I know you are my father and I'm your daughter, but still........ you're a man and I'm a woman. Can we talk of such things.

(Dark, P.199)

But Saru's father couldn't help her because this kind of relationship never existed between him and his wife. So he remarks:

Do you know, Saru, I often feel sorry that we left so many things unsaid, your mother and I. when she lay dying I wanted to ask her....... Would you like to meet Saru? Sometimes I think she might have said 'yes'. But I never did. Silence became a habit for us.

(Dark, P.199)

Having his own experience her father advises her to ask Manu for the reason of his strange behavior otherwise this lack of communication will break their relationship too. Saru expects Manu to plea but he is in his usual self. There is no change in him. In all her novels, Deshpande's protagonists pass through this crisis because in Indian culture, a woman's identity is defined by others, in terms of her relationship with men, i.e. as daughter, as wife, as mother, for she does not have an identity of her own. So, Saru's education and being a doctor become curse for her.

Emancipation and marital compatibility forces Deshpande's heroines to have extra - marital relationship. As Suzanne La Follette says that education and freedom makes woman more candid in sexual relationship without any guilt:

The emancipation of women has another significant effect namely an increase in frankness concerning extra legal sexual relations. They suffer no guilt and
they begin to evolve a new code of sense of sexual ethics. They experience a sense of sexual autonomy freeing themselves from sexual politics.

*Follette, The feminist paper* from Adams, P.558.

This disillusionment in marital life makes Saru look for other avenues. Her affair with Boozie and Padmakar Rao are temporary substitutes for unfulfilled marital life. In Indian society man can do as he pleases but it is a taboo for a woman to have extra-marital relationship. Women are proposed to have moral espial as Robin Morgan says:

> Women have over the centuries developed an ethic that is appropriate to the world view that is emerging out of the new physics: they see in terms of human values for centuries. Their primary value is a reverence for life. This ethic must become the governing world ethic.


But in case of Sarita, Deshpande seems to have made no attempt to bring her finally anywhere close to accept this vision. Saru is career-oriented woman. Who does not hesitate to fulfill her dreams even maintaining relationship with persons, other than her husband. Saru’s relationship with Padmakar Rao also ends in disillusionment. In the end Saru realizes that extra-relationship for married couple gives no happiness in life as Kamini Dinesh comments:

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (also) there are other men but the relationship gives no solace. On the other hand, the homosexual Boozie and the frustrated Padmakar bring to Saru the disillusioning realization that there can be no happiness or fulfillment in these relationships. There can not be an ‘escape route’ from the tension of married life. The woman seeking a crunch has, finally to fall back on herself.
(Kamini, "Moving out of the cloistered self: Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists, P.200. )

Leaving her husband, Saru feels isolated at her father’s house. At that time she reconsiders her previous life and its problems and expresses her thought:

We came into this world alone and go out of it alone. The period in between is short. And all those ties we cherish as eternal and long – lasting are more ephemeral than a dewdrop.

(Dark, P.208)

She comes to the conclusion that happiness lies within herself. No other relation or person can solve her personal problems. In her father’s house she dwells with confusion with the feeling of homelessness because she does not realize Manu’s house, her home:

No, she could not call it home. It [Manu’s house] was not home. Nor was this [her father’s house] home. How add to live for so long and discover that you have no home at all.

(Dark, P.215.)

Saru’s probe for home is really a search for peace. When she considers about life, reality of the whole thing dawns on her, “perhaps the only truth is that man is born to be cold and lonely and alone.” (219) It is the reality and we should know that human beings and human relations may fail but our self will not: “We have to go on trying. If we can’t believe in ourselves, we are sunk.” (220) So far, Saru has placed the problem outside her. With Manu, she is not happy, but now she realizes that the problem lies as much within as outside. She realizes her mistake and accepts that she is:

the guilty sister, unfaithful daughter, the unloving wife........ perhaps spiked with guilt. Yes, she was all of them, she could not deny that now. She had to
accept these selves to become whole again. But if she was all of them, they were not all of her. She was all these and so much more.

( Drak. P.230. )

Thus, the realization comes in the mind of Deshpande’s protagonists that they should mould themselves only then they can live proper life without any discord. Saru touches the crux of the problem and says:

If I have been a puppet it is because I made myself one. I have been clinging to the tenuous shadow of a marriage whose substance has long silence disintegrated, because I have been afraid of proving my mother right.

( Dark. P.220 )

Saru has seen her relation with Manu vis–a- vis her mother’s predictions. Now the reality downs and she has to take decision without any biases. In the end of the novel, she is ready to face the realities of life. It is here that the significant of the epigraph becomes evident. The epigraph from the Dhammapada reads:

You are your own refuge;
There is no there refuse.
This refuse is hard to achieve.

This epigraph strongly suggests that a woman should take life as it comes and assay to find solace and happiness with whatever is available. Thus, Deshpande suggests that escapism is no solution. She fulfils courage in her protagonists that woman should not be dependent on others for happiness. In this way, they can achieve their selfhood in married life without any discord.

In Indian society marriage has a great importance. Indian couple, like Donnes lovers, together make a world of their own. Each is incomplete without the other. Though a man and a woman become complementary to each other through marriage, there is no certainty regarding their mutual
love for each other. There is a grain of truth in Nirad C. Chaudhuri’s remark that:

Marriage between a man and woman is like the relationship between shirt and tie either a good contrast or matching.

(Nirad, *What I was will have gone*, P.7.)

If anyone looses its style, it remains only an odd appearance. In *That Long Silence*, Deshpande shows a contrasting marriage of Jaya and Mohan who breaks her self-imposed silence in achieving her self-hood and undergoes the mental torture and sufferings at the hands of her husband due to business malpractice. In the beginning of her married life she longs to be called an ideal wife but it can not long last. She revolts in silence when her husband talks about women being treated very cruelly by their husband and he calls it “strength”:

He saw strength in the woman sitting silently in front of the fire, but I saw despair. I saw a despair so great that it would not voice itself. I saw a struggle so bitter that silence was only weapon. Silence and surrender.

(*That Long Silence*, P.36.)

Mohan has dual mentality and encourages her to write papers and magazines. However, he finds her theme autobiographical in nature and therefore obnoxious. Jaya becomes deeply distressed to know that the writer in her cannot come to light because of her husband:

I had known then that it hadn’t mattered to Mohan that I had written a good story about a couple, a man who could not reach out to his wife except through her body. For Mohan it had mattered that people might think the couple was us, that the man him. To Mohan, I had been no writer, only an exhibitionist.

(*Silence*, P.44.)
She begins to compromise with Mohan’s requirements but it effect her writing career as well as physical relation drastically. When she considers about the whole span of her life, she realizes her status and will not accept her earlier image of a pair of bullocks yoked together, signaling a loveless couple:

Two bullocks yoked together – that was how I saw the two of us the day we come here, Mohan and I. now I reject the image. It’s wrong. If I think of us in that way, I condemn myself to a lifetime of disbelieve in ourselves. I’ve always thought – there is only one life, no chance of a reprieve, no second chances. But in this life itself there are so many crossroads, so many choices.

*(Silence, P. 7.)*

Despite her marriage and subsequently becoming a mother of two children, she feels lonely. Shashi Deshpande uses a beautiful image to explain Jaya’s married life:

A pair of bullocks yoked together……. a clever phrase, but can it substitute for the reality? A man and a woman married for seventeen years. A couple with two children. A family somewhat like the one caught and preserved for posterity by the advertising visuals I so loved. But the reality was only this. We were two persons. A man, A woman.

*(Silence, P.126.)*

To an Indian the image of a pair of bullocks so yoked together means that the bullocks so yoked share the burden between themselves but no one knows whether they love each other or not. The image of the beasts performing the duty mechanically undermines the husband- wife relationship, who are supposed to be united in marriage for love and not for leading a mechanical life terminating in mutual hatred and disturb. Jaya has
every reason to be bitter and with a straightforward language Jaya recalls their relationship as wife and husband:

Sensual memories are the coldest. They stir up nothing in you. As I thought of those days of my feelings, and then looked at the man lying beside me, nothing stirred in me. Those emotions and responses seemed to belong to other people, not to the two of us lying here together....... Infact, we had never spoken of sex at all. It had been as if the experience was erased each time after it happened; it never existed in words....... First there is love, then there’s sex – that was how I had always imagined it to be. But after living with Mohan I had realized that it could so easily be the other way round. Love ........? Yes, what else could I call it but love when I thought of how I had longed for this physical presence, when I remembered how readily, almost greedily, I had responded to his touch?....... his love had seemed to be the most important thing in my life? It seems to me now that we had, both of us, rehearsed the role of husband and wife so well that when the time came we could play them flawlessly, word- perfect.

(Silence, P.95.)

In their married life nothing can be more frustrating and depressing than this experience of futility. Jaya does not co-operate in her husband’s act of malpractice which breaks her relationship. As Indra Bhatt observes:

Shashi Deshpande unmarks both Jaya and Mohan when they face crisis in their lives. They have run into stormy weather and their secure shattered life washes away like a water in a rainy storm.
(Bhatt, That Long Silence: A Study
Indian Women Novelists, P. 156.)

Looking up her husband as a “sheltering tree” she has been lulled into a false sense of security because it is taught to Indian woman that whatever chaotic conditions prevailed outside, a home is a safe and secure place with husband as the head of the family. But in this novel, Mohan also seeks unstinting support of his wife. He feels cheated by his wife and burstout:

I’ve always put you and the children first. I have been patient with all your whims, I have grudged you nothing, but the truth is that you despise me because I have failed. As long as I had my job and position, it was alright. But now because I am likely to lose it all……. Do you think I haven’t seen how changed you are since we came here, since I told you about my situation.

(Silence, P.12.)

Shashi Deshpande, not only traces the inner condition of women but man’s too. Specially when he indulges in malpractice to fulfill his families happiness and requirements. Jaya struggles alone with the trauma, though it upsets her mental equilibrium. In her life, Jaya has learnt a lot of things through experience as Purbi Panwar remarks:

Jaya no longer wants to play the role of a passive wife. Perhaps, this is the hardness and ruthlessness that Deshpande talks about in the foreward. A man is conditioned to it right from the beginning, a woman learns through experience.

(Panwar, “Breaking the silence" Rev. of that Long silence, P. 12.)

Jaya stands for the modern emancipated woman who revolts Mohan’s restrictions and it leads her, extra - relationship with Kamat
where she finds humane sympathy and partaking. Jaya feels comfortable with him and says:

With this man I had not been a woman. I had been an ease in our relationship I had never known in any other..... I told him things I'd never been able to speak of not to Dad, not to Mohan.

*(Silence, P.153.)*

Sex has always seemed such a consequential thing to her, but he realizes it just another part of the overall scheme of life and nothing to feel guilty about it. While they have involved in sex occasionally, and while sometimes she feels “overwhelming urge to respond to him” (157) bodily, it remained basically a minor aspect of their relationship, more important is the intuitive understanding and friendship between them. So, Deshpande suggests that there should be friendly relationship between husband and wife, sex will be natural thing, otherwise, modern woman, who does not hesitate to go outside for it will commit sex with other person. So Kamat motivates her to move towards the utilization of her potential to the fullest which is the highest level known as self-actualization. Kamat cautions her against self-pity:

I am warning you – beware of this women are the victims theory of your’s........ take yourself seriously, woman. Don’t sulk behind name. and work- work if you want others to take you seriously.

*(Silence, P.148.)*

Through Kamat she finds out the answer to all her pending questions which has caused remorse and grief to her earlier. She frankly admits it:

And so I have crawled into my whole. I had felt safe then. Comfortable, unassailable. And so I had stopped writing. It had not been just a coincidence,........ Mohan had propelled me into the other kind of
writing. "I encouraged you", he had said to me. He was right. But I went on with my chest-beating fit of penitence, Mohan had not forced me to do that kind of writing. I'd gone into myself. With my eyes open.

(Silence, P.146.)

In this way Jaya, Deshpande's *That Long Silence*, seeks to relaxation of the star looking hopefully towards the future. In this respect she is somewhat different from the earlier heroines of Deshpande. This novel not only presents the condition of Jaya's disturbed marital life but also of those women who cannot raise their voice against their husbands. Kusum, her mad cousin, Mohan's mother and many other victims like them- "victims of patriarchy and also of their own silence." (Parkar, P.168) Kusum is a deseted wife so she commits suicide a day before her husband is supposed to take her home. In a letter informing Jaya of the death, her mother writes: But it was a good thing in a way. She was if use of anyone after she went crazy, nobody needs her. (Silence, P.22) Mohan's mother also used to get beaten by her husband frequently. But these women have lack of courage and education so they do not revolt against the social system although they also do not escape from marital discord.

Deshpande does not take the side of her women characters rather presenting them as close to reality as possible, portraying both their strength and weakness. She says that the men in her books ate "never bad and the women never entirely good." The only unfairness she observes in the setup is that "men have made the world a more comfortable place for themselves." That is what Deshpande does in *That Long Silence*. But Sarla Palkar observes that it is a strong of self-analyses:

That Long silence is also a self- critique. The important insight that Shashi Deshpande imparts to us through Jaya is that woman should accept their own responsibility for what they are, see how much they
have contributed to their own victimization. Instead of putting the blame on everybody except themselves.

(Palkar, *Breaking the silence*, Deshpande That Long Silence, P.169.)

In the end of the novel, Jaya, honestly questions herself: will she suffer like those women? Suddenly she fills with courage and breaks her silence. Deshpande actually brings us hope that women should not afraid of circumstances. Jaya also affirms with confidence and says: “I am not afraid anymore. The panic has gone.” (191) She decides not to mutilate herself to please Mohan, cutting off bits of herself. She recalls the message of Bhagavadgita in the con text: “Yathaccasi batha kuru.” Jaya reflects that if anyone has courage, master (God) for it not to tell him/her what to do. Thus, in Deshpande’s novels not only women but men also want to reconcile as Jaya and Mohan have both been busy trying to salvage a collapsing union. Jaya knows that her journey is not going to be easy: It would be highly challenging one, infact, self-transformation is never easy to accomplish. Jaya has raises of hope and says:

But we can always hope. Without that, life would be impossible. And if there is anything I know it is this: life has always to be made possible.

(Silence, P.193.)

In this way, Deshpande emphasizes on having courage in the life of women. She proves that a balanced fulfiled life should not be merely a fancy of women. If they decide to realize their creative energy, they will be able to improve their condition and make them free of the discord and bondage of life.

Like other novels, Shashi Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine* also portrays her middle-class female protagonist’s struggle in male-dominated society to achieve their individuality. Today, middle-class women are trying to have a balance in their family, and professional life. They are not merely educated; they are co-bread-winner of their husband’s income to
maintain the standard of living. They have thus assumed a new role
themselves in the wake of changing circumstances. This has, however, not
exonerated them from their traditional role and responsibility in the family
which, in addition to their career-consciousness, have led to severe
problems of adjustment and cause of marital discord. Deshpande has dealt
wide effected area of changing relationship between man and woman
specially, the theme of meaninglessness and sexual confusion. The reality
of modern women is that even to the basic needs of life love, marriage, sex,
they are in a state of utter confusion. Sometime they fail to reject totally
their social and cultural background. That’s why they feel a kind of
imbalance between traditional expectations and their new modern
demands. In most Indian women novelists, however, we do not find
complete answers. But Shashi Deshpande is capable of giving complete
answers. She shows the right path which is necessary to live a happy life
for modern, emancipated, educated and intelligent middle-class working
women.

*In Binding Vine*, Urmī’s problem is that being financially
emancipated and having confidence in herself as she works outside the
home, she has developed a kind of super-ego in herself which denies her to
submit before her husband, Kisore. Even she can’t bear the submission of
Vanna, her friend and sister in law, and her mother to their spouses. She
says:

“..... but her submissiveness, her willingness to go
along with him in whatever he wants makes me angry.
‘You let him get away with too much.’ I tell her. What
do you want me to do?
‘Assert yourself. You don’t have to crawl before him.
Do you?’
‘I don’t crawl. I do want I want
‘No, you don’t. you’ re scared him, yes, you are. I have
seen you.
The denial of submission lies in the fact that Urmì wants to assert herself. She advises that women should not submit before men to achieve their existence. She has to reject Kishore and this can be done by escaping from the tailored roles of woman. Since the beginning of married life Urmì finds that the bond between her and her husband is not love but sex. So she feels the distance from Kishore and it's the reason of their misunderstanding. She realises that "He looked trapped." (137) He finds the solution in the physical relationship. But to her:

Sex is only a temporary answer. I came out of it to find that the lights had come back .... 'Go to sleep', he said. He was kneeling by me. His face close to me..... I did not look into his face. I was afraid of what I would see, I turned round and fell asleep.

(The Binding Vine, P.140.)

This incompatibility to understand each other ends in alienation. But it is misfortune of Indian Women that they only adjust with husbands because men can never be changed. As Urmì feels in her life unchangeable behaviour of Kishore:

Yes, here it is., the knowledge I spared myself then. 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. Each relationship, always imperfect, survives on hope. Am I to give up this hope?

Thus, marriage suppresses Urmì's human demands and fullness of experience which forces her to take interest in Dr. Bhaskar Jain’s friendship who cares for her emotions and makes her feel complete. When Urmì's husband lives outside from home, sometime she has erotic feeling within her and finds it hard to control: "I could put my desires into a deep freeze and takes them out, intact and whole, when he returned". (65)
The realization of this demand of sex by new women has been effectively suggested by Deshpande. When Urmi develops the friendship with Dr. Bhaskar, the conflict between her mind and heart becomes apparent. She says:

And yet it seems to me that this responding to Bhaskar is the only way of releasing the musky adolescent with dreams of living happily ever after with Kishore who's trapped inside me, of finding out what's left when she's gone.

**(Binding Vine, P. 160.)**

Deshpande delineates modern women who do not hesitate to express their feelings of sex. R. Mala appreciates her for this quality of female that makes Deshpande feminist “.It is this working of an individual dialectic of the sexual dilemma in her novels that makes Shahi Deshpande a modern feminist”. (Indian Women Novelist, P 57.) In this novel, Deshpande’s protagonist Urmi not only sort out her problems but decides to fight another women’s battle who do not have courage to go against the turmoil of society. Urmi’s mother-in-law suffers from rape within marriage. Her poems and diary connote molestation in marriage as expressed in following lines:

But tell me, friend, did Laxmi too twist brocate tassels round her fingers and trembles, fearing the coming of the dark clouded, engulfing night?. . But I have my defences; I give him the facts, nothing more, never my feelings... And so it begins. “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. If this is love it is a terrible thing. I have learnt to say ’no’ at all. What is it he wants from me? I look at myself in the mirror and wonder what is there in me? Why does it have to be me? Why can’t he leave me alone?
(The Binding Vine, P.67.)

Such passage embodies the psychological fear and physical suffering of Mira in material life. Mira has tried to achieve her true identity by writing beautiful lyrical poetry but she has no courage to show it at that time. She expresses her feelings through poem because this was the only way to escape from miserable condition and emptiness of her humdrum life. Indrani Jaisingh, an eminent lawyer for women, writes about the prisioned condition of women after marriage:

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

(JaiSingh, Survivors: Changing Attitudes to Divorce among Women in India. P65.)

In India, woman is still suffering from this enforced act of man upon her. Even Shakutai, a woman from lower strata of society, suffering sexual humility and says to Urmí:

Woman had to sleep there in public with strange men walking up and down. And my husband..... the voice drops low, ‘you, know what men are, he wanted to’....we are not animal I told him, As if he cared. And I got pregnant. It was the worst thing that could happened to us then.

(Binding Vine, P. 110-111.)
While reading Mira’s life-history Urmii Compares her to Kalpana, a Victim of rape hanging between life and death in a hospital ward, and concludes: “what has happened to Kalpana happened to Mira too.” (63) Sex as a male feeling has been prominent theme in literature from a longtime. But Deshpande’s novels realistically present the decline of spiritual element in sex and her heroines suffer from sexual humility. Mira’s desire to be a poet and her hampers about expressing it around, her fear of being laughed at, are all obvious in her poems:

> Huddles in my cocoon, a somnolent
> silkworm. Will I emerage a beauteous
> being? Or will I suffocating cease to exist.

*(Binding Vine, P.65.)*

Her innermost feelings find expression in her poems written in Kanada. Mira, symbolizes the plight of numerous women who face the same problem but are not able to voice their sufferings. In India, it is wife’s duty to please her husband. Tradition demands that a good wife should possess the following qualities

Karyesi Dasi
Karyeshu Mantri
Roopecha Laxmi
Kshmaya Daridri
Bhukteshu Mata
Shuyanesu Veshya
Shatkarma Yukta
Kuladharma Patni

*(Sunita, A Feminist Perspective, P. 98)*

Above quoted lines mean that a wife should serve her husband like a slave, give him proper advice, look as beautiful as goddess Laxmi, forgive all his sins however terrible they may be, feed him like a mother, and sere him like a prostitute in bed. These line often quoted as advice to wives, clearly show the injustice meted out to women who are expected to give
priority to their husband’s pleasure. But today’s woman does not follow this agenda and resulting sometimes into material discord too.

*The Binding Vine* is a refreshing change from the earlier novels of Deshpande. According to India Nityanandam: “The step forward, achieved in this novel, is the introduction of female, bonding, the desire of one woman to help another less fortunate one. Urmila draws society’s attention to the plight of rape victim and is determined to get Mira’s poems published. This is a positive development in the protagonist, for Sarita, Jaya and Indu were involved in fighting only their own battles.” (“Shashi Deshpande’s The Binding Vine: Silent No more,” Indian women Novelists, set III Vol. 4 P. 66.) Deshpande also takes a bold step forward in projecting a woman’s biological needs and also raises the question of woman’s right over her body which cannot be secured even in marriage. The novel can best be summed up in the words of Subhas. K. Jha. Who writes in a review; “The Binding Vine is one of the few contemporary Indian novels to discuss it’s 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 her earlier novels.(“Coming to Terms with Tragedy,” Re. of The Binding Vine, The Economic Times, No. 30, 1994.) So, Urmila exposes the evils of society and *encourages* women to express themselves strongly.

In *A Matter of Time*, Shashi Deshpande has entered a new phase – the phase of an inimitable representation of the new Indian women who are dissatisfied with the inhibiting culture, nature or sexual role assigned to them. These new women of the Indian Society has attempted to rebel against their bad circumstances. Deshpande seems attuned to ordinary experience because her feminism is not western oriented, it is born out of a typically Indian situation where women are placed between two poles: tradition and modernity; between family and profession; between culture and nature. Shashi Deshpande mixes “humanism” with “feminism” in her
fiction and so her vision of Indian women tends to be optimistic, though radical.

In this novel, *A Matter of Time*, Deshpande makes a man protagonist. No doubt, the novel also reveals women in a middle-class society who suffer in their married life because of their husbands. In this novel, the reason of their problems are different from earlier novels. Deshpande, who is an acknowledged master at expressing the anguish and frustration of women gives a true-to-life sage of the trauma faced by Sumi, Gopal’s wife. She does not know, why her husband left her? Anticipating this Deshpande get Gopal to ask the same question to himself: “Why did I marry Sumi? Because I met her–It’s as simple as that.” (P.65-66)

In this novel, Gopal’s desertion of the family because the cause of discord because how a man can left home without any reason? Sumi tries to survive through it, but the change in her visible:

> With Gopal’s going it was as if the swift flowing stream of her being had grown thick and viscous – her thoughts, her very pulse and heartbeats seemed to have slowed down. It had worried but it had been a necessary physical reaction of her emotional state, as if this slowing down was essential for her survival.

(*Matter*, P.66.)

In this novel, there is no affairs or fight, only a bald non descript feeling of emptiness. There is moral crisis which may be occurring within the character. Gopal’s absence has created a vast void in Sumi. In her words:

> his absence has left such a vast emptiness that I can’t find my bearings, there are no markers anymore to show me which way I should go.

(*Matter*, P.28.)
This novel is different in its theme. The quest for individual identity is marked by the conflict between inner and outer selves of the protagonists. To quote Laurence:

Freedom means, the individual coming to terms with his own past and with himself, accepting his limitations and going on from there however terrified he may be. This kind of inner freedom has been continuing them.

(Laurence, An Introduction to A Jest of God by Margret, P.2.)

Thus, freedom is not merely the escape from assigned roles but a kind of inner freedom which is spiritual or psychological. In this novel, Deshpande represents her male protagonist who has quest to be free and wants to realise the self-necessities. This “inner freedom” when achieved, enable the protagonist of Deshpande to accept their role with a new awakening. Though Gopal’s desertion upsets a number of characters, apart from his wife sumi. Aru, elder daughter, is so upset and angry with her father that she wants to file a case against him. Sumi disagrees and tells Aru, “I just want to get on my life,” she puts on arms around Aru’s shoulder and says :Let him go, Aru just let him go. This is not good for you.(16)With these words, she allows to Gopal to have his own space, to implement on his own decisions, to free himself from bondage of love as he needs this freedom. In a manner quite similar to that of her counter parts, Indu, Saru, Jaya, Urmia in Despande’s earlier novels, Sumi reveals an independent nature. Her pride refuses to allow her to show her grief to Gopal or request him to return home. In earlier novels heroines become disturbed when they separate themselves from their husband but Sumi shows different nature. It is Gopal’s departure which makes her more confident.

Deshpande in A Matter of Time, once again, touches on the aspect of female sexuality. Sumi, sometimes, recalls her friend, Vani, Confiding in
her when her husband was away for a year abroad: "Oh, I miss him so much, .... specially at night. There its out. I can not say this to anyone."

(191)Sumi also feels like that when Gopal deserts her Sumi looks at the mystical figure of Surpanakha from a new angle. She is unable to appreciate Rama and Laxmana's treatment of Surpanakha:

"She is as ugly as Surpanakha," she has heard Kalyani say. And she has been thinking since then of this demon sister of the demon king Ravan, who felt in love with the Aryan Prince Rama. An unpleasant story, it's accured to her, with the two princes Rama and Lakshmana mocking and ridiculing her and finally mutilating her by cutting off her nose.

(A Matter, 191.)

It makes her reflect:

Female sexuality. We're ashamed of owing it, we can't speak of it not even to our own selves. But Surpanakha, was not, she spoke of her desires, she flaunted them. And therefore, were the men, unused to such women, frightened? Did they feel threatened by her? I think so. Surpanakha, neither ugly nor hideous, but a woman charged with sexuality, not frightened of displaying it.

(A Matter, P. 191.)

Sumi says in this context that in ancient time it was bad to express sexual desire if anyone did this, she was punished. But in modern time, women are educated and they do not hesitate to express their desire because they think that it is natural necessity of life. When Gopal deserts house without obvious reason, this monstrous tragedy is so undeserving to Sumi. Sumi suppresses all her physical feeling within herself. When Sumi and Gopal, for the first time meet after their separation, there are no tears, no abuses, question or explanations except tentional relationship. Gopal
also feels distressed because he could not get of from life as Subhash K. Jha writes:

Gopal is not our average cardboard cad but a distressed guilt – ridden husband and father baffled by his own sudden withdraw from active domesticity.


Sumi reminds that day when she enters his room, Gopal is having his lunch and reading a book of poem. Asking sumi to wait, he goes out to wash his hand. When she is looking out of the window into the courtyard,

She hears his voice. He is resposnding to someone, perhaps a servant women, offering to washup for him. The children call out to him and she hears his laugh.

And as if his voice knit everything together, she can suddenly see the substance, the reality of his life apart from her and their children. All these lives, contiguous to his, spellout the actuality of their separation.

(A Matter P. 84. 85.)

It occurs to her that they can never be together again. All her views about him break. She thinks that he left her for achieving moral things in life but she is wrong because he has gone on living, his life has moved on, it will go on without me. They live separately because he has gone on living, his life has moved on, it will go on without me. They live separately because they have lack of communication and understanding so Sumi understands and accept it. Shashi Deshpande comments the changing condition of Sumi:

Sumi’s acceptance is not passive. She blockout the unpleasantness. She has a good opinion of herself, she is more concerned with getting on with life. She does not want pity, she would do anything for pride. She distances
even her husband. The point is, they are both unusual.

(Vimala Rama Rao. In Conversation With Shashi Deshpanda, ed By R.S. Pathak. P.258.)

Deshpande’s this novel is different from other because in earlier novel we find that her female protagonists leave their home in search of the peace of mind, but in Matter of Time, Gopal, Sumi’s husband deserts home to find peace but he comes back when does not succeeded in his aim. But lack of understanding becomes the cause of their marital discord. But Sumi does not loss her courage and finds individuality in spite of many problems in her life.

On the other hand, married life of Sumi’s parents Kalyani and Shripati is not much satisfactory. She is obsessed with the fear of her husband. The cause of their marital discord is the missing of their mentally retarded son at a railway station. Shripati can not forgive his wife for her negligence of child and sends her back to her parents. A thirty – odd years of silence in marriage of Kalyani and Shripati is at the centre of this novel. But a question arises in the mind that only one mistake that is not done deliberately by Kalyani, should be her whole life’s punishment? Shripati has inflicted this silence as ‘a wepon and a punishment’ on Kalyani, and she endures it silently. Yet she is able to surround others by love, caring, joy, warmth and happiness. Kalyani is the anchor of ‘Bighouse’ and is the invisible support for Sumi, a keen observes and a close friend to Aru, a kind of grandma to Seema and anally to Charu.

Thus, we find that the reason of material discord in A Matter of Time is due to Gopal’s renunciation; as in earlier novels, to find individuality of the protagonists. But his desertion of the family signifies the vedic renunciation freeing himself from all bondage. After a careful examination of the whole issue, R.S. Pathak. pointsout that

Gopal’s way of life and thinking do not have a close similarity with the Indian ideal of sanyasa. Gopal cuts
himself off from worldly pleasure and reduces his needs bare minimum. Like a yogin, he can have the 
“feeling of stepping out his body, out of this plan of existence.”

(Pathak, The Fiction of Deshpande, P. 174.)

Two things, however are not in keeping with the genuine Indian concept and practice of sanyasa. A person, according to Indian scriptures, could renounce the world only when he had discharged all his responsibilities towards his family. Gopal himself knows that

Marriage is not for everyone. The demand it makes – a lifetime commitment is not possible for all of us.

(A Matter, P. 69.)

He knows if he will stay at home, he can not control his desire. He remembers that he touched Sumi’s “bare flesh” in the river and “could feel it respond” to his touch. It is for “this losing yourself, in another human being that men give up their dreams of freedom.” Coming face to face with Sumi later, he feels that

the space between them in the room is filled with desire, his desire, (and knows) that his body.... is awake.

(A Matter, P. 223.)

Even if it is “the last flare” and he makes a successful effort to subdue his body, the fact remain that Gopal is neither physically nor mentally fit to renounce the world. Thus, Gopal’s renunciations appears to be skin-deep and a beginner’s attempt to attain a kind of self – knowledge. In her earlier novels, Shashi Deshpande shows that, in achieving their self hood, heroines’ married life gets disturbed. But in A Matter of Time Gopal wants to explore self-knowledge and in doing so he has marital discord in his life. The following words of Gopal’s sumup the finding of the novel:

If it is indeed true that we are bound to our destinies, that there is no point struggling against them, even
then this remains – that we do not submit passively or
cravenly, but with dignity and strength. Surely, this, to
some extent, frees us from our bonds.

(A Matter, P. 246.)

Shashi Deshpande’s latest novel *Small Remedies* explores the lives
of two women, one obsessed with music and other a passionate believer in
communism, who break away from their families to seek fulfillment in
public life. Savitribai Idorekar, born into an orthodox Hindu family, elopes
with her music lover and accompanist, Ghulam Saab, to pursue a career in
music. She does not hesitate to leave her husband because Deshpande fills
her with courage and she does not have fear of any discord in the way of
achieving her goal in life. Gentle, strong-willed Leela, on the other hand,
gives her life to the party, and to working with the factory workers of
Bombay. She achieves an eminent position in her party through her hard-
work. Madhu who is writing biography of Savitribai also caught in despair
over the death of her son and separation from her husband. In this novel,
Deshpande fills the courage in her protagonists who do not get suppressed
from their husband but revolt against them and go forward to achieve their
Individuality.

In this novel protagonists believe in thinking as well
as in working. As they think so they do and prove themselves successful
women in society. Savitribai is criticized for having love for music because
those days it was not good to be a lady singer. Madhu also recollects how
Bai was supposed:

In Neemgaon she was ‘the singer woman’ and there
was something derogatory about the words yes, I can
see that now, about the way they said them.

(Deshpande, Small Remedies, P. 29.)

For a woman with such orthodox background to elope with Muslim
Tabla Player and live in a strange town among total strangers must have
required immense courage. In this novel, Deshpande described such
protagonists who do not disturb with the idea that what will happened in their future when they do so. Savitribai leave music because she wants to secure name and fame in this field. Madhu remembers the position of family in neemgaon: "each family had its place marked out for it according to religion caste money family background etc". (138)

Savitribai is not afraid of caste or religion but it is the misfortune of Indian society that man and woman has differentiated by their roles. Men can do anything according to their desire but women are bound by culture and tradition of society. Savitribai’s father-in-law had a mistress, a singer famous for her Thumri Singer. It is a thing of common knowledge that he visits her regularly. The family members wonder at his choice of a mistress but there is never any outrage over the fact:

That he had a mistress was accepted, a wife from one’s own class, a mistress from another – this was normal.

( Remedies, P. 139.)

For a man to indulge in his love of music and ever to have a singer for a mistress is alright. But for a daughter-in-law’s learning of music seriously, as if she is going to be professional was scandalous and unthinkable. But Bai has support and encouragement of her father-in-law. In this novel, Deshpande’s theme of discord is widen because in all her earlier novels, protagonists have faced the revolt against their husbands but Bai has faced the revolt of whole society with her confidence and comes out of it to achieve her self-hood.

As Deshpande’s female protagonists do not hesitate to have extra-marital relation so is the case with Bai that in achieving her individuality, she also has relationship with Ghulam Saab who helps her to get whatever she wants. Bai says that her Guruji is the only one who shapes her, but Ghulam Saab does more, much more. Hasina, Ghulam Saab’s granddaughter says:
Bai’s bangles may have paid Guruji’s fees, but it was Ghulam Saab who earned the money for their survival for their living. He worked as an accompanist, he worked for a while in a professional drama troupe, he worked with a music director for films, he gave music lessons.

*(Remedies, P. 273.)*

Ghulam Saab is the one who arranges her programmes, and contacts for her. Without him, Bai would never have been able to manage this part of her professional life. But it seems that she has one sided relationship like. Earlier novels of Deshpande. Deshpande’s protagonists leave their husbands only to achieve their self-hood, not for other relations. This bold assertion of the heroines have sparked off contradictory remarks from the reviewers. Commenting on Bai’s decision not to reveal this to anyone, P. Ramommoorthy says:

This sheds a brilliant light on Bai’s awareness of her autonomy and her realization that she is a being, and not a dependent on anyone. The novel gains its feminist stance in Bai’s exploration into herself but it also moves beyond the boundaries of feminism into a perception of the very predicament of human existence.

*(Ramamoorthy, Feminism and Recent Fiction, P. 124.)*

Apart from Savitribai Madhu’s narrative includes the story of Leela, another independent women who gives up her respectability in order to gain love and unhappiness in equal measure. She lives in a crowded chawls and works for the welfare of the women afflicted with T.B., Leela is a lady who has lived for others’ sake. She also does not believe in caste-system and marries with a Christian. For other’s happiness she has committed to the communist party. She has no fear and fight for an eminent position in
her party which is mostly occupied by males while in Indian Society, it is too difficult for a woman to rise to the top when compared to man. But Savitribai and Leela prove it through their courage that women can do anything only if they decide to do so. Madhu remembers how Bai has once commented caustically speaking of a young instrumentalist who had reached the pinnacle in no time: “Now a day they become Ustads and Pandits even before they have proper moustaches”. (224)

At the centre of this sprawling narrative is Madhu herself. In the novel, she is also caught in her own despair over the loss of her son and her discord with her husband. Madhu has lost her child, Aditya, in a bomb blast. So her husband, Som, never forgives her like Binding vine’s Kalyani. Madhu herself is victim of sorts which are revealed in the end of the novel. She has been brought up as a child by two men—her father and Babu, a male servant but she has no complaints. When her father dies in Bombay at leela’s home, she is in Neemgaon. Godu comes to console her but she is rapped by him. In her marital life when one day Som asks her about her affairs before marriage, she reveals her secret which she has locked up in the innermost recesses of her mind. She tells that she has slept with a man when she was only fifteen, a man who later committed suicide. Som is unable to accept this truth of her life. As one who has been a good husband by any standard and shared a wonderful relationship with his wife, is now unable to come to terms with this news. He is totally devastated. Madhu is unable to comprehend this:

But it’s the single act of sex that Som holds on to, it’s this fact that he can’t let go off, as if it’s been welded into his palm. Purity, chastity, an intact hymen – these are the truths that matter. I know this when I see his face, when I feel the hurting grip of his hand, when he says, Tell me, go on, go on.

*(Small Remedies, P. 262.)*
Som could not swallow the facts of Madhu’s life. Perhaps no husband can tolerate this fact in Indian Society. He holds his relation back. When Madhu says it’s all very vague, he thinks, she is evading him. When she tells that she has forgotten about it, he becomes rigid with disbelief and anger. It becomes too difficult to assure him that she has no relationship with that man. It does not matter that Som himself had a full fledged relationship with another woman before his marriage. It is a typical situation in Indian Society where a man may have any number of affairs but expects his wife to be a virgin. It’s all the more undigestable to Som that his wife had been a willing partner. Madhu thinks:

that he could perhaps, have born: that I had been raped,
forced into the act, that I was a victim not a participant.

(\textit{Small Remedies}, P.260.)

In Indian Society, extramarital affairs and man-woman relationship except marriage are never allowed or accepted. But it is misfortune of Indian women as R. Mala’s presumption that,

an educated woman, who tries to assert herself as an individual, must necessarily be promiscuous is typical of the thinking of most of the Indians. (Indian Women Novelist, P128.)

Madhu observed how Hari and Lata looked at her when she returned after inadvertently spending a night in a hotel room with Chandru she thinks:

It does not matter that Chandru is Som’s friend and Chandru and I had been friends as well for nearly 25 years. I remember the waiter’s look at last night, when he brought us our dinner, the gleam in his eyes when they rested on me. Men and women can never be
friends. Men can be brothers, fathers, lovers, husband, but never friends—is that how it is?

(Deshpande, Small Remedies, P. 254.)

In her novels, Deshpande’s protagonists assert themselves in future; they will no longer allow their ‘She’ to get deceased whether they are blamed. By this assertion of the self, Deshpande certainly takes her heroines to the pole of feminism though she may not have aimed at propounding such as “ism”. When Som leaves her, Madhu decides to be an independent and she begins to write the biography of Savitrivai and becomes successful in her life. Later on, she also solves the complexities in her relationship with Som. Thus, Shashi Deshpande offers an intimate and domestic chronicle of the subtle tyrannies suffered by women and the pain of coming to self-knowledge. Her novels are the story of personal journey; where the heroines learn as they undergoes the mental torture and suffering at the hands of their husbands. The novels of Shashi Deshpande depicts effectively a disturb marital life of middle-class educated women but, finally, they come out from their marital discord with optimistic attitude. Thus, the age-old institution of marriage has gone a tremendous change in the modern time and the emergence of the feminist movement has brought awareness and self-enlightenment in the life of women.