CONCLUSION

After studying in some detail the depiction of human relationship in the novels of Shashi Despande and considering the various kinds of human relationships forged at different stages of life depending on so many individual, family and social circumstances, it is time now to reflect back and observe something by way of conclusion by simplifying and generalising the various issues and aspects discussed separately in the preceding chapters.

Human relationship is the unit of individual and social life and hence it has been the central theme of literature all over the world. Literature is the compendium of human behaviour and relationship and, therefore, literature of all hue and colour describes and explains the experiences of these very relationships which are by and large man-woman relationships e.g. Shradha-Manu relationship in Jaishankar Prasad’s *Kamayani* and Eve-Adam relationship in the *Paradise Lost*. Human relationships hold the interest of the writers and the readers cutting across cultures, countries and continents.

A study of Deshpande’s novels in the context of human relationship shows that her novels generally centre around family relationships, particularly parent-child relationship, husband–wife relationship, extra-marital relationship, professional relationship and some other relationships. The families which she chooses to represent are the Indian urban middle class families, mostly joint families incorporating even the extended families, and she deals with their actions and reactions in personal interactions and relationships rather than looking at their external life. However, she often transcends the self-imposed limits and reaches out to include human relationships outside the family e.g. the relationship between Urmii and Kalpana in *The Binding Vine* is forged outside family. She does so because she believes that the relationships which exist within the family are to an extent parallel to the relationships which exist between human beings outside. The dilemmas and conflicts that occur in these relationships are realistically presented offering viable solutions as well. Through these novels, the novelist shows that her primary concern is human relationship and she expresses her firm view that every human being has to live within relationships and there is no other way.
Almost all the novels of Shashi Deshpande written and published so far reveal certain recurring patterns of human relationships despite significant changes taking place at fast pace in individual, family and community life under various political, economic, social and cultural influences in the volatile era of Post-Globalization. Her novels portray various kinds of human relationships and each novel looks at these relationships from a different perspective. Altogether her novels offer a wide spectrum of human relationships and portray them in all their depth and complexity: how relationships are forged? how people struggle to cling to them or get out of them? and how different relationships add value and significance to their lives? She shows a deep insight into human nature based on her keen perception, sharp sensibility, accurate observation and fine sensitivity.

Deshpande’s men and women, who forge different kinds of relationships at different stages of their life, are caught in the crisis of transitional society where the shift is taking place from conventional to unconventional. Therefore, human relationships depicted in these novels are not normal but problematic. In most of her novels the story begins with an unconventional marriage and problem of adjustment and conflict between male ego and female resistance follow. The problems in human relationships arise mostly because of the gravitational pull of tradition which binds in its invisible threads even those men and women who are modern, educated and financially independent. Despite political freedom, social equality and economic independence, they tend to play their constructed gender roles. Sarbjit K. Sandhu in *The Image of Woman in the Novels of Shashi Deshpande* points out that the ideal man-woman relationship in the Indian context is so prominent that even the most brilliant and so called forward male is incapable of looking at woman in terms of equality and the modern and progressive women, even after resisting the social taboos, want to submit themselves to the traditional roles. Jaya Chakravorty in her article “A Post-Colonial Analysis of a few Novels of Shashi Deshpande” (*Perspectives on Indian English Fiction*, 2006) also subscribes to the view saying that the pendulumistic notion of the good-bad-good feelings pervades the various relationships in nearly all the novels of Shashi Deshpande.

A study of human relationships in Deshpande’s novels reiterates the fact that human relationship is not static but dynamic: it keeps on changing in response to changing circumstances and it may become
unconditional or demanding after a length of time depending on circumstances. Studies in psychology, sociology and anthropology underline the facts that human beings are fundamentally social creatures; they depend on one another for survival and well-being; they have a powerful need for love, friendship and belonging; they are afraid of disapproval, rejection and loneliness; and they have a tendency to understand, influence and manipulate their environment, but their nature and behaviour is unpredictable in isolation as well as in group. Man’s ever-changing nature and behaviour fuels the dynamics of human relationships in its onward march with human civilization. We are civilized because of our reciprocal relationship with each other. As human beings have developed through mutation of cells, humanity has developed through human relationships and human relationships have developed through emotions and holy sentiments like love, fellow-feeling, sympathy, empathy, etc. Women who are supremely emotional beings breathe relationships which encompass their entire life. Obviously, Deshpande’s woman-centric novels hold special significance in this respect. Though her primary concern is human beings, her novels tend to give an indication that a woman can maintain different relationships better than a man can. However, she only tries to highlight women’s potential in a state of freedom and equality and never seeks to idealise them.

Shashi Deshpande’s novels deal with human relationships operating in modern Indian context with its well established socio-cultural norms and eternal moral and ethical values. They are also concerned with the changing context bringing in its train moral and psychic dilemmas and challenges in achieving a new harmony in human relationships with the people of preceding and succeeding generations with different surroundings and environments. Obviously, they present a marked change from traditional human relationships to modern human relationships. The protagonists in these novels, who belong to the middle class—the class which ever aspires to reach the zenith and is always afraid of falling into the abyss and which consigns its members to eternal struggle—have to struggle against the forces of tradition and modernity. Deshpande’s novels present various aspects of women’s lives and their roles as daughters, wives and mothers but she is mainly interested in the lives of modern Indian women who have come out in the open raising their voice and forming a community. But unlike the women of Nayantara Sahgal, R. P. Jhabwala and Anita Desai, not all but only a handful of her women are privileged to have modern education. She has constantly used the term ‘relationship’ in the context
that an Indian woman has to play various roles in the family according to the nature of her relationship and she is seldom allowed to venture out of her relationship to make contribution to the public life of the nation. She is also unique in the sense that she writes about the customs and traditions of Maharashtra and Karnataka and very skilfully uses local words and terms like ‘Akka’, ‘Ajji’, ‘Ai’, ‘Kaka’, ‘Kaki’, ‘Mama’, ‘Mami’, ‘Bai’ to indicate relationships. However, the treatment of human relationship in her novels is both Indian and universal.

Deshpande’s female protagonists, who play a pivotal role in human relationships portrayed in these novels, are not only from the middle class society but also in the middle of their life. They are roughly between the age of thirty and thirty-five. Most of them are married women in search of some kind of freedom, self-identity, economic independence and individual autonomy, even though they do not always succeed. Being adults, their relationships mainly concern the partner, spouse, lover and husband whoever it may be. Presenting these women as wives seems to be the dominant concern of the novelist but almost all the protagonists like Sarita, Devyani, Indu, Jaya, Urmila, Sumi, Madhu, Manjari and Devi turn to their past at some critical moments to reflect on their relationships with their parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, friends and neighbours and redefine their relationships in the changed context. In this way the novelist extends the scope of human relationships and gives due importance to the role of other characters, male or female. Husband and wife are quite important as they play the most dominant role in the traditional structure of Indian families, but the older persons in the category of grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts not only play a significant role in shaping their personality in their early years but also represent the traditional value system prevailing in different generations. Siblings, cousins, other relatives, neighbours, colleagues, etc. are minor figures but they also play a significant role in shaping the lives of the major characters as friends and companions and rivals and supporters and provide foils to them. Moreover, there are children of the protagonists, their sons and daughters, to add the needed dimension to their lives and relationships and complete the picture of human relationships.
Filial Relationship in Deshpande’s novels is one of two basic human relationships, the other being conjugal relationship. Childhood is a fascinating experience and one’s experience as a child is often responsible for the later developments in life. Experience at this stage, are raw, emotional, incoherent and inarticulate. But the same experience takes larger meanings after a few years when they are ruminated, understood and expressed. It is said that the growth and development of human brain stops only after the age of 28 and till then one’s perception of relationship may keep changing and one may not have stability in relationships. Filial relationship is quite important because of this constant flux in relationship between the parents and the child.

The mother-daughter relationship between Kamla and Saru in The Dark Holds No Terrors convey an important message that suppression, subjugation and exploitation are not confined to the male-female relationship but exist between female-female relationships as well. The relationship between mother and daughter in Shashi Deshpande’s novels, like that in Manju Kapur’s Difficult Daughters, is not of identification but of alienation. The daughters try to break free of their mothers only to discover later on that they are merely extensions of their mothers. Saru is akin to her mother, Kamala in her attitude to her husband and her daughter in The Dark Holds No Terrors and Indu is akin to her foster mother, Akka, in Roots and Shadows. As they gather information about their mothers and analyse their relationship with their mothers with retrospective maturity, they realise that their mothers too had been victims of patriarchal socialisation and gender based oppression. But they do not regret their rebellion against their mothers’ control because they need to be themselves. In Deshpande’s later novels, however, there is less bitterness between mother and daughter. Manjari’s relationship with her mother suffers a setback only when she decides to marry Shyam against her wishes. Devi in In the Country of Deceit has a harmonious relationship with her mother.

If we make contrast between mother-daughter relationship and father-daughter relationship, clearly the latter comes better. The relationship of Saru with her mother, Kamala in The Dark Holds No Terrors, of Indu with
her foster mother, Akka in *Roots and Shadows*, of Jaya with her Ai in *That Long Silence*, of Urmi with her mother, Inni in *The Binding Vine*, and of Manjari with her mother, Vasu in *Moving On* is not good but stormy. The mothers discriminate against their daughters, impose restrictions on them and make their lives hell. But the daughters struggle to cope with their trauma and move on to resolve their dilemma through their own efforts. The fathers in her novels are progressive, broad-minded and liberal and they allow their daughter to get proper education and marry the man of their choice and also help them in resolving their problems. Their authority is not openly challenged and they are always loved and trusted more than mothers.

Mother-son and father-son relationships have not been portrayed on wide canvas in these novels. The mother-son relationship is the most harmonious and fulfilling filial relationship. A mother is emotionally attached to her son and often she is partial to him at the risk of offending her daughter. The father-son relationship is less problematic than mother-daughter relationship. Sons in Deshpande’s novels often tend to be resistant to their fathers and respond negatively to the authority exercised by them. In same case Father-son relationship becomes bitter because of the father’s extra-marital relationship as it happens in K. N’s relationship with his father in *In the Country of Deceit*.

**Conjugal Relationship** is another basic human relationship depicted in Deshpande’s novels. She treats conjugal relationships in their complexities, portraying the conflict between convention and modernity and pleading adjustment and compromises but not total submission to the traditional roles of husband and wife. She takes up couples from both conventional and unconventional marriages with aggressive husbands and assertive wives living in a developing society under peer pressure, filial demands, dark materialism and a fierce quest for success and identity.

While *The Dark Holds No Terrors* deals with the genuine problems that a sensitive, refined and working middle class housewife faces in her conjugal life, there is not much development in the depiction of human relationships. At its best the novel only conforms to the general pattern of the strained relationship between husband and wife leading to suffering and uncertainty in life amidst hope and despair. The main reason of conjugal discord
is the unchanged attitude of man who, despite his education and western thought, wishes his wife to be smart and cultured but inferior and submissive to him. Saru is aware of this inequality and she suffers marital rape for being the bread earner of the family. But she sees no way out of it. Her escape into her natal home, away from husband and children, brings no relief. Ultimately, she realises that only she and nobody else is responsible for her miseries and only she can set the things right for herself. So, she decides to live her own life.

*Roots and Shadows*, however, presents a different kind of crisis in conjugal relationship through its protagonist, Indu, the new modern Indian Woman, economically independent and married to a man of her choice. Initially her relationship with her husband, Jayant, suffers from a self delusion as she compromises on several occasions and issues seemingly under a mistaken belief that she was making adjustments out of love for him. It is only in the end that she discovers her self-deception and realises that her marriage was a trap. But she does not take any emotional and extreme step and, instead of leaving Jayant, she decides to hold on to both the ends- to retain her identity as well as her traditional role of a housewife. The ending of the novel may not be found satisfactory by modern readers and critics, but as a work of art grappling with the complexity of conjugal life it has a definite edge.

*That Long Silence* marks further development in the depiction of conjugal relationship as Jaya, the female protagonist, wants to break the silence imposed upon the women and their experiences by patriarchal setup in India through centuries, and give voice to longings, aspirations, and silent protests of women since time immemorial. Jaya’s career and growth suggest myriad possibilities within the framework of the institution of marriage.

*The Binding Vine* presents yet another aspect of conjugal life: it depicts the strains and stress faced by a wife whose husband lives away from home because of his job. Urmi, the female protagonist, is quite aggressive, economically independent and autonomous in taking decisions but in the process she breeds bitterness and harshness in her relations with others. Strong-built, strong-willed and rigid Urmi is heart broken when her one year old daughter, Anu, dies. Her courage in the face of the crisis, her relationship with her husband, her sense of value and her capacity for taking independent decisions are all tested in the process of coming to terms with the loss. Her reactions to life situations are normally human but she is quite vocal in expressing her sense of liberty and equality. She is harsh in accusing her
mother, Inni. She calls her sister-in-law, Vanna, stupid because the latter is submissive and docile to her husband and, therefore, unhappy with him. But, in fact, this shows her own sense of inadequacy and insecurity with Kishore. Through Urmi, Deshpande seeks to point out that a wife may appear to be quite strong outwardly but inwardly she is vulnerable and suggest that suffering wives should have a community and bonding that will help them find a remedy to their problems and seek fulfilment. Thus Urmi, as a protagonist, is a New Woman quite different from her predecessors who are initially passive and whose evolution towards self-assertion records their growth. Besides, the novel shows that women belonging to lower sections often show more courage and solidarity than their privileged counterparts; they may be more vulnerable but they can stand together.

*A Matter of Time* is a further exploration of conjugal relationship. It deals with the dilemma of the wife who has been deserted by her husband because she fails to produce a male child for the family. Gopal’s desertion of his wife, Sumi, and three daughters, is an act of betrayal and cruelty which lead to the complete breakup of the family. It is a matter of ‘shame’ and ‘disgrace’ but the disgrace falls not on the husband but on the wife because she had not been able to contain the husband. Manorama, Kalyani and Urmi who belong to the three generations of the same family—represent a specific kind of reaction and experience to their marital problem of almost similar nature, but it is Sumi who represents the principle of survival with dignity and suggests that the success of the women lies in their learning to come to terms with the reality and to struggle properly which will enable them to live with dignity and strength and join the mainstream of life. However, the novel presents a unique conjugal relationship between Sumi and Gopal whose love and regards for each other is not much affected after separation. They go quietly in their own way without accusations or justifications. Gopal shows none of the aggressive pursuit of material wealth that characterises the husbands of other protagonists. Sumi, unlike other wives who rebel and reconcile, is an epitome of silent suffering, passive resistance and positive acceptance of her husband’s individuality and his right to be at his own. This is an example of a sound if not an ideal relationship.

One of the most visible aspects of conjugal relationships in these novels is that husbands are dominating, ambitious and even calculating. They are educated and modern and claim to be liberated but they expect their
educated and modern wives to be submissive to them and they most often try to impose their will upon them. Manu forces his sadistic impulse on Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Jayant imposes his will on Indu not only in the matter of sex but also on her career as a journalist in *Roots and Shadows*, Mohan dominates Jaya’s sexuality and writing profession in *That Long Silence*, Urmi’s father sends Urmi to her grandparents without consulting his wife in *The Binding Vine*, Gopal abandons Sumi along with children in the midst her life in *A Matter of Time*, Som subjects Madhu to his violent love-making and tortures her for having pre-marital sex with her father’s friend, Dalvi in *Small Remedies* and Shyam often walks out on Manjari in a fit of anger and ultimately commits suicide in *Moving On*. Their authoritarian attitude and their insensitivity increase the agony of their struggling wives. Urmi’s husband, Kishore is a notable exception, who treats his wife as an equal, as a person with a mind and will of her own.

Shashi Deshpande differs from her contemporaries in ending her novels. All her novels except *A Matter of Time, Moving On* and *In the Country of Deceit*, end with the possibility of reconciliation and retreat to home, family and spouse and the message is that solution of problems lies in acceptance of life, not in its rejection. However, those seemingly reconciliatory endings accept the fact of human imperfectability and dislocate both men and women from idolized mythical positions. The retreat is not because of the patriarchal trap, socio-cultural conditioning, matrimonial bondage, etc. but because of self-realisation and feeling of necessity following a change in outlook. Their acceptance is not passive but active. The persons who make a retreat are not the same. Rather they are transformed persons and human relationships play an important role in their transformation. They discover their ‘self’ or recover their ‘self’ and gain new insight into their relationship with the help of an association with their parents, family and friends and they return with a new perspective to rework their relationship and make the best of it. Ultimately, human relationship itself becomes the saviour of human relationship. Even those who do not achieve reconciliation and remain apart as Sumi in *A Matter of Time*, Manjari in *Moving On* and Devi in *In the Country of Deceit*, acquire a fresh perspective to reconcile themselves to the situations in their life and move on to live on their own terms without any feeling of guilt or regret. In this way, Deshpande’s protagonists differ from Jai Nimbkar’s Vineeta in *Temporary Answers*, Arundhati Roy’s Amu in *The God of Small Things*, Sobha De’s Karuna in *Socialite Evenings* and Manju Kapur’s Viramati in
Difficult Daughters, who retreat either into victimhood or loneliness or conventional roles. Her protagonists face the confusions and disturbances caused by the opposite pulls and pressures of tradition and modernity, look within to comprehend the situation and emerge as empowered persons to resolve the crisis. They rebel against male domination but they do not carry their rebellion to a bitter end.

As regards the man-woman relationship, Deshpande is not in favour of the sacrificial model of relationship or the power relationship based on dominance and submission, but in that of a harmonious and meaningful relationship between man and woman. Simone de Beauvoir, in her seminal work The Second Sex (1949), analysed the relationship between man and woman in terms of ‘subject’ and ‘object’ model and argued that man’s subjectivity—his self-assertion as a free, autonomous and independent being—is established only through opposition to and dependence upon woman’s absolute and eternal otherness and imbalance in man-woman relationship can be remedied only by woman’s assumption of the position of subject against an object. But Deshpande is not for the reversal of role. She believes that neither a man nor a woman is complete in himself or herself and biologically and emotionally they need each other. So, harmony in their relationship is most desirable. Assuming that both men and women can fulfil themselves only when they are free and independent, she advocates an ideal family set-up where both men and women avail equal opportunities and privileges, where co-operation, compromises and companionship prevail. She is not in favour of autonomy but interdependence. What she wants is relational autonomy for them, their being embedded in family yet independent enough to realise their true self; and their being able to nourish ambitions and pursue goals for self-fulfilment. Chanchala K. Naik, in her scholarly article “Moving On: In Search of Individual Autonomy and Self-Realisation” (Writing Difference, 2005) appreciates her endeavour in the following words: “In the context of the changing world we live in, it has become imperative to do away with separate domains for woman and man and to redefine man-woman relationship as equal and complementary and not on terms of domination and subordination.”(225)
Extra-marital Relationship is not a sanctioned relationship and is not a part of the social structure. It is, in fact, older than the institution of marriage and social customs either in the Eastern or in the Western society. It has always thrilled and attracted the creative writers and literature of any language is full of the delineation of extra-marital relationship, even involving gods and goddesses: Lord Krishna had love affair with Radha and innumerable village girls married or unmarried and still people worship him and no one cares to call him a womanizer. It is a bypass in the pilgrimage of life into which it is not at all unusual to stray if partners lack mutual love, trust and understanding. It is fundamentally different from conjugal relationship by being a relationship of pleasure, not that of power.

The conjugal life of the protagonists in Despande’s novels is not happy and some of them like Saru and Indu experience disillusionment in sex. They suffer a silent sexual humiliation and terror awaits them in the bedrooms. Their marriage is a trap for them and they feel like caged animals and crave for love and care from their male friends. The persons with whom they forge extra-marital relationship help them in their career, in their search of selfhood and in their entire development and provide foils to their husbands. Saru’s relationship with Boozie’ in The Dark Holds No Terrors does not lead to sexual fulfilment but it boosts Saru’s career. Naren in Roots and Shadows acts as a conscience keeper of Indu and provides her not only with a sexual outlet but also with an opportunity to recover her self-worth as vibrant and emotionally alive person. He raises the expectations of a benevolent and supporting friend but he appears to be a bohemian and nonconformist person just careless and casual, unwilling to take any responsibility. Hence, he is unconvincing. Kamath in That Long Silence makes Jaya realise her true potentiality which is a pleasant discovery to her. Bhaskar Jain in The Binding Vine consoles Urm in her grief and contributes to her development as Kamat does to Jaya. Madhu’s relationship with Chandru and Savitribai’s relationship with Ghulam Saab in Small Remedies are for revitalisation and for professional achievement respectively. Manjari’s relationship with her tenant, Raman, in Moving On and Devi’s relationship with Ashok in In the Country of Deceit are for biological need, for satisfying the cravings of their bodies. Sexual situations of the most of these protagonists drive them to extra-marital relationships. They experience a sense of sexual autonomy in these relationships and most of them do not suffer from guilt consciousness. It is not a solution to their problems, but it shows their craving to assert themselves whether inside or outside marriage. It
is not an expression of purely a physical desire, but of something more than that, a feeling of understanding, acceptance and belonging, of a shared experience. Their relationships do not imply the rejection of marriage but the rejection of the bondages of marriage.

The effect of these extra-marital relationships depends upon the status of the individuals involved and the social situations they are in. If it happens when love supersedes possessiveness and freedom supersedes restrictions to express oneself to the opposite sex, it is life-giving as it brings freshness and newness, better psychological growth and maturity, healthy biological system, sharp and strong neurons, broader understanding of love, in-depth happiness, inner flexibility and ultimate bliss. Otherwise, if it is for lust or career advantage or deception under the cover of secrecy, it may lead to harsh and miserable culmination as it happens in Mahesh-Rani relationship in *In the Country of Deceit*.

Just as families are knit together through filial and conjugal relationships, they are disrupted and broken by extra-marital relationships. Now-a-day, a large number of families are affected by extra-marital affairs owing to increasing social and economic integration, and persons living out of home or away from spouse because of profession. Extra-marital relationships put conjugal relationship in a state of crisis. Extra-marital affairs of individual adults are less damaging than those of parents whose relationships have a bearing on their children and expose them to perplexed state of mind and disturb their emotional stability as seen in case of Munni in *Small Remedies* and in case of Roshni in *In the Country of Deceit*. Extra-marital relationships involve the transfer and diversion of emotional energy, which is directed to the marital harmony, the well-being of the family and children and promoting careers and social bonding, towards forging and fostering forbidden relationships. Such relationships bring self-satisfaction for a short time but that short and temporary pleasure may finally lead to isolation and craving for someone who may become out of reach or unresponsive.

Deshpande’s delineation of extra-marital relationships in her novels is quite relevant in modern Indian context as these are no longer taboos or secrets; they have come out in the open and become a subject of public discussion and subsequently have made their way to contemporary literature.
Khushwant Singh’s characters—male or female—are always on the prowl without thinking whether their partner is of father’s age or daughter’s. In Chetan Bhagat’s *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, Vidya feels delighted to lose her virginity to her brother’s friend, Govind, and thanks God that it happened to her. In Nargis Dalal’s *Millionaire*, Zora, a female character, tells her male friend, Tejpore, that sleeping only with one person is very odd and it must be boring after sometime.

But people have strong reservation against extra-marital relationship even today. Marriage is still an enduring relationship between male and female as husband and wife which gains religious, social and legal recognition. If marriage is a universal system to regulate sex life towards the fulfilment of biological needs, extra-marital relationship is a forbidden relationship involving physical, mental and emotional infidelity. Men and women are equal partners in initiating an extra-marital relationship for their need arising out of their nonresponsive spouse and boredom of their routine life. It cannot be assigned to the Western Culture as it had been there before the Western influences came in and India has its own culture of celebrating the extra-marital love of Radha and Krishna. Likewise, it cannot be assigned to pheromones, the hormone of romance, as the secretion of hormones succeeds our thoughts and actions and not precedes them the other way round.

Extra-marital relationship is often described as unsaturated soul’s business in quest of love and lust; both of these do not follow social restrictions and keep on reincarnating till they reach physical and spiritual satisfaction. Honesty is the key to a relationship. So, if there is dishonesty in it— if extra-marital relationship is kept secret from the spouse—then it is not fair. It must honestly be shared with or revealed to the spouse as Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, the co-founder of *Les Temps moderns* in 1945, did to each other. But such a move is fraught with the all possibility of hurting the spouse and well-wishers. Indu in *Roots and Shadows*, Jaya in *That Long Silence*, Madhu in *Small Remedies*, Manjari in *Moving On* and Devi in *In the Country of Deceit* keep their affairs secret for this reason. Then there is element of hypocrisy in this relationship as even those who betray their spouse, wants their spouse to be honest as is evident from Som-Madhu relationship in *Small Remedies*. All these make extra-marital relationship to be considered an unfair relationship and the discovery of spouse involvement in an extra-marital relationship may be perceived as a loss of the other’s love, loss of the image of
the happy family, loss of self worth, loss of income or any combination of these and even dissolution of family.

**Professional Relationship** has now become a distinguished aspect of human relationship since the emergence of career women on the social and economic arena. Women are more visible than ever and physical distance between men and women has narrowed considerably giving way to extreme physical proximity at work place, on roads and even on public transport. Besides these socio-cultural changes, career considerations have now upset the balance in basic human relationships-filial and conjugal relationships. Unconditional love for spouse and children has now been replaced by insatiable hunger for success, wealth, power and position. Career or working women are the most desired as wives but their husbands are yet to give up their male ego and consequently, the success and superiority of their wives become a threat to their husbands and a burden and social embarrassment to themselves as seen in Saru-Manu relationship in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Cynthia-Tony relationship in *If I Die Today*. Healthy filial relationship is also a casualty of professional life as we see in mother-children relationship depicted in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *Moving On* and *In the Country of Deceit*. If not taken care of, it creates a huge tension in conjugal relationship leading to separation and divorce, and preference for single life and live-in-relationship.

Writing is one of the professions in which major or minor characters of most of Deshpande’s novels are engaged. Their writings play an important role in forging relationship with oneself, with other persons and with the world. Manu in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* attracts Saru as a poet and writer, but he has to give up writing and become a lecturer which suits the status and prestige of his wife. For the protagonists in *Roots and Shadows* and *That Long Silence*, writing is an act of self assertion. Mira in *The Binding Vine* and Madhu in *Small Remedies*, give the profound message that writing is a way of articulating one’s struggle to resist, endure and survive. For Badri in *Moving On* writing is a kind of communication with himself and for his wife, for Vasu, it is an act of self assertion, even an act of protest. For Manjari, the protagonist, writing is a means of justifying her existence as she does not know how to make sense of her life and her own vitality in the middle phase of her life.

Another aspect of professional relationship dealt with in these novels is the compulsion of the family members or spouse to stay away from home for longer periods. *The Binding Vine* in which Kishore is away from
Urmi and Shakutai is away from her husband highlights the negative impact of the absence of spouse on conjugal relationship.

Apart from the four aforementioned prominent human relationships, the remaining relationships are treated as **Other Relationships**. Among them, the relationship between grandmothers and granddaughters is important as it affects the character and personality of the protagonists. They represent the tradition and serve as instruments of patriarchy. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya’s *ajji* and Other-*ajji* are responsible for hindering their children’s growth and fulfilment. They dominate their family and influence its decisions. Jaya calls them “powerful women” and acknowledges that she could get modern education with English medium because of the attempts of her father who supported her facing opposition from his aunts. The orthodox and traditional women like Akka and Kaki, owing to their long term socialisation and conditioning, behave like the agents of patriarchy and appear to be trouble creator even though they claim to be trouble shooters.

However, the relationship between aunts and nieces is rather normal, without any opposition and bitterness. The aunts represent the two faces of the same coin—the courage of women and the deviousness of women—and these two qualities teach the protagonists a lot of the different ways of life. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya’s aunt, Vanitamami who is neither beautiful nor efficient and who is always rejected by her husband, feels herself secure as a wife and gives Jaya a wider vision of life. In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu’s several *Kakis* suffer a lot and crave for smaller things but they strictly adhere to the customs which Indu wants to overthrow.

The relationship between cousins and friends between the extended family is also remarkable. In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu’s cousin, Padmini(Mini) is rough and uneducated and everyone looks her as burden and wants to marry her off anyhow. But instead of taking to rebellion, Padmini is eager to marry any man with her deep conviction that life would be fine after getting married. Her pragmatic view towards life and marriage compels Indu to reconsider her stand and see her own rebellion in a new light. In *The Binding Vine*, Vanna, Urmi’s friend and sister-in-law, impresses Urmi with her submissiveness towards her husband and makes Urmi discover her own insecurity despite her modern upbringing.
Brother –sister relationship is another concern of Shashi Deshpande. Most of these relationships depicted in her novels are marred by jealousy and rivalry. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru has great love for her brother, Dhruva but she is a little jealous of him because he gets more love and attention from his mother. In *That Long Silence*, Jaya’s brother does not love and respect Jaya because he gets preferential treatment from his parents, especially his mother. However, Urmì’s relationship with Amrut in *The Binding Vine* is rather warm and affectionate. Amrut understands the situations and helps Urmì. But one common factor can be noticed in all these brother-sister relationships, that the sisters love the brothers and care for them despite their annoyance because of the ill-treatment and depravation meted to them for being girls.

Apart from brother-sister relationship, Deshpande also highlights sister bonding—the relationship shared by sisters whether siblings or cousins. It is a very strong and meaningful relationship though it is the most understated one. There is less sibling rivalry between two sisters than between two brothers or between a brother and a sister. Sister bonding never wanes; rather it gets stronger with time. The fact that Shashi Deshpande has foregrounded the sister bonding in her later works like *Moving On* and *In the Country of Deceit* is a welcome move.

A study of other relationships in these novels reveals that these relationships are mostly quite comfortable as there is less expectations on either side. Relationship, it may be noted, is inversely proportionate to expectations.

The study reiterates the facts that a writer matures with every work and the visions and concepts of the writer get clearer in successive works. The study shows that there is a gradual shift and steady progress in the presentation of human relationship in the successive novels of Shashi Deshpande. Her early novels *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *If I Die Today*, *Come Up and Be Dead*, *That Long Silence* and *The Binding Vine* deal with the traditional patterns of human relationships with a possibility of certain traditions to be broken. The protagonists in these novels face crisis in their life at some point of time that necessitates a readjustment to the external world and which at the same time sets in motion introspection capable of bringing a definite change. They question traditional man-woman relationship and the protagonists like Saru, Indu, Jaya and Urmì go far and wide to reject tradition and assert their
modernity though their retreat and reconciliation at the end of the novel remains vague and baffling. But in her subsequent novels, *A Matter of Time* and *Small Remedies*, there is a shift in the perception of human relationships and the novelist is trying to evolve a balance between traditional demands and modern compulsions and to negotiate the power relations in an attempt to resolve any crisis in the wake of polarity between tradition and modernity, between relationship and character. However, some minor characters in these novels reject marriage and ring the warning bell for traditions. Aru, the elder daughter of Sumi, in *A Matter of Time* es avers to marriage. Savitribai, in *Small Remedies*, also leaves her marital home and has a live-in-relationship with her music teacher, Ghulam Saab. In her last two novels: *Moving On* and *In the Country of Deceit*, man-woman-relationship is celebrated but the institution of marriage is rejected as protagonists in both of these novels, Manjari and Devi finally decide to remain single rejecting proposal for marriage, suggestion for marriage, and the need of marriage, much to the disappointment of their relatives and well wishers. These two novels also deal with the issue of relational autonomy within the context of family relationships where a woman can enjoy autonomy in family as a daughter, a loving sister and a loving friend if she decides to remain single, and advocate the creation of such an atmosphere where she can live herself and allow others to live on their own terms, highlighting the need of redefining woman’s freedom and revisiting family relationships. Deshpande’s delineation of human relationships is not stereotype displaying frivolity, passivity and domesticity, but sensitive showing depth and universality.

The study of Shashi Deshpande’s novels is of utmost importance as it opens the mystery of human behaviour and explores the broad spectrum of human relationships which are basic to human existence like breathing, eating and sleeping and without which we cannot even imagine people and society. Devyani’s words: “Significantly, but I was neither daughter, nor wife, nor mother now. What was I then? Nothing? In a sense it was restful to be nothing. And yet there was the feeling too that, I might as well be dead.”(105), uttered in the middle of *Come Up and Be Dead*, signifies that life without human relationship is not worthy to live; rather it is better to die.

Relationships define the way in which people are connected and have dealings with each other. It is the major sustaining factor of human civilization but it is always shrouded in mystery. It is quite difficult or almost impossible to find out the truth of one’s relationship with others, be they parent,
spouse, children or whatever. In *Moving On*, Manjari, after reading her father’s dairy and mother’s fictions, feels perplexed at the complex relationship between her father and mother and says “People are complex, indefinable, protean. There is no absolute about them.”(21) The exploration of human relationship helps us unravel the mystery and resolve our debate about who we are and what we should do thereby connecting us with ideas of perennial human interest. The study highlights the fact that human relationship is an ever evolving aspect of human life and human civilization, forever raising the curiosity of the readers and the researchers in the lives of the people depicted in these novels. Obviously, there will never be any final word on ever-evolving human relationships depicted by Shashi Deshpande or any other writer, for that matter; the explorations will never be complete; and it will go on and on forever. The scientific study of relationship evolved during 1990s and come to be referred as ‘relationship science’ is a welcome step in this direction.