CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Love, marriage and sex are three vital spheres of human relationship. Social-scientific researches show that in changing socio-economic set up some remarkable changes have already occurred in the life of the people.

With all the politico-cultural and socio-psychological changes in the country and with the growing impact of the foreign influences love, marriage and sex have altered their meaning in the minds of people. If we look at the works by various social scientists we find love and marriage are losing their hold upon society while sex is constantly growing in importance.

Previously, love was considered spiritual and was permitted in the context of marriage only. And marriage was respected as a sacred union of two souls to promote the well being of the family and ultimately of the society. Except divine and spiritual love other kinds of love and specially sex were shrouded in sanctimonious prudery and sentimentality. They were branded with undivided censure and to talk about or to discuss them frankly was almost unthinkable.

The studies made by different sources in the chapter II The Attitude of Modern Society Towards Love, Marriage and Sex show a vast difference in the thinking and behavioural pattern of modern people. The study finds rather an uninhibited behaviour of people towards love and sex. The increasing emphasis on materialism and externalism and the growing tendency of making a down-to-earth and calculating approach in ever
matter, prevailing in modern society, have also influenced their attitudes towards love, marriage and sex. These tendencies emphasise the principle that a person gives something in order to receive something in return. And this attitude has worked negatively in the development of the capacity to love maturely. There is found to be an increasing tendency among people to live superficially without a deep commitment to society in general, which makes it difficult for a person to live fully and deeply. This in turn makes them more materialistic and superficial.

As on other social institutions economic, socio-political and legal forces have made their impact on the institution of marriage as well. Woman's education, her gainful employment and economic independence have tremendously influenced her conceptions and ideas, including her outlook on conjugal relationship and attitude towards marriage. The Hindu marriage Act of 1955 has almost brought about a revolution by providing the element of contract in the institution of marriage. It fixes the minimum age for marriage. It provides for divorce and separation. It permits inter-gotra and inter-caste marriages. As a consequence marriage, the union of two souls, is turning to be the contract of two bodies. People are taking liberty to live together upto their benefits only. They are looking at this general institution from the individual point of view and whenever they feel dissatisfaction, without giving second thought to their problem they sue for divorce. Strangely they are ladies mostly who are suing for divorce.

Sex, though is a biological phenomenon, the attitudes towards it are acquired in the process of growing up in a culture. Whereas in a primitive society it was learned through imitation of adults and rituals; in more civilized society they are learned through parents, friends and other social groups and by the communication media news.
- papers, magazines, books and movies. Society is becoming more and more erotic minded through erotic mass-media, movies and even style of dressing and it is becoming increasingly difficult to inhibit the sex desire. Following the women's liberation in the West women in India do not seem to disapprove pre-marital and extra-marital sex for both the sexes. People's attitude towards sex are also affected by the over all effects of industrialization, urbanization, democratisation of culture, the fading away of the influence of religion and growing favour for scientific and rational criteria and approach. Many sociologists believe that, a major factor in recent shifts of attitudes towards sex behaviour has been the breakdown of religious control and partially worked out attempts to substitute scientific criteria.

Permissiveness is a measure not only of what a person will accept for himself and his own sex, but of what behaviour he is willing to allow the opposite sex. The study tells that a woman's education, occupation and more so her economic independence promote a certain degree of permissiveness in her attitude. Women subscribing to permissiveness admit that economic independence has inculcated in them independence of thought and action and enable them to view themselves as well as others as individuals, who have every right to self fulfilment.

This study has attempted to explore the socio-psychological dimension of love, marriage and sex in the novels of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. Anita Desai has been writing since 1963 while Shashi Deshpande started writing novels as late as 1983. Though there is difference in the age and experiences of the authors, and also in their parentage and upbringing yet there are many similarities between them in the field of novel. Both are sensitive members of the modern Indian Society and deal
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not with socio-physical but socio-psychological dimension of the problems of women in the society. Both raise women's problem and believe in the development of inner character instead of believing in outer actions. From their novels it appears evident that their thoughts resemble various socio-psychological scientific researches done by various sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists of the day. Besides this, being creative artists their novels not only witness the recent trends of society but they also show right paths to the members of modern Indian society and sometimes set models before us to follow in order to achieve equilibrium in the field of love, marriage and sex. Literature as we know is a direct reflection of various facets of social structure, family relationships, class conflicts and divorce trends, and it is the task of the sociologist of literature to relate the experience of the writer's imaginary characters and situations to the historical climate from which they derive. He has to transform the private equation of themes and stylistic means into social equations.

Since our aim is to study literature more in comparison to sociology we have not gone into sociological researches ourselves but for the purpose of study we have depended mostly on the works of various social-scientific researchers. The study approves the dictum "Literature is the mirror of society" and "Reading of any nation's literature one could tell what these people had been", because whatever is happening in the society in the vital field of love, marriage and sex can be seen in and through the novels of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. Their works also witness the statement that relation between literature and society is reciprocal. Each serves as cause and effect to the other. While literature in its attempt to arrive at the meaning of life as a whole, influences society, the society pre-eminently concerned with the ways of living which govern our attitudes, social norms and behaviour patterns, is influenced by literature.
to know the very factors behind this change. The characters portrayed in the novels, though imaginary creations, are rooted deep in a socio-psychological context of Indian Society. These characters have succeeded in presenting the meaning and spirit of the time, the transformation of values, norms, principles and ideologies. While sociological data indicate the changes in the value of love, its emotional aspect, value of marriage, age at marriage, inter-caste marriage, divorce, widow-remarriage, group marriage, values of sex and wife-swapping, creative writings of Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande present before us the reasons behind changing emotional aspects of love, the declining values of the institution of marriage and growing tolerance for permissiveness, through their life-like characters.

Specially, the novels of Anita Desai deal with the mental process of human beings in relation to love, marriage and sex. Her characters Maya, Monisha, Sita and Nanda Kaul constituting different personality types are so drawn that each becomes the symbol of a particular segment of her class. They tell us the reasons for declining matrimonial relationships. These reasons vary—from their being hyper-sensitive in nature to the temperamental incompatibility and lack of communication between the spouses. Anita desai shows through her characters that people do not achieve harmony in their inter-personal relationship because they lack involvement and surrender, acceptance and resignation. Maya, Monisha, Nanda Kaul, Nirode and Sita—all fail to accept their limitations. They are always in search of a more authentic existence than what is provided to them.

Anita Desai’s characters try to achieve harmony and peace by alienating themselves, by escaping from the demands and expectations inherent in human ties.
They do not know that adapting and adopting make one drive real pleasure, genuine joy and cover a fulfillment anywhere and with anyone. Her characters find themselves stuck up at a particular point in their growth and have no clear idea of their destination. This is the case with the characters of Deshpande too, but with slight difference. They too do not know their destination but they never stop at one point. Growing forward is their recognition, though they do not know the proper way for happiness in life.

Desai's characters mostly belong to upperclass society, which lessens their capacity to contend with the circumstances of life. They give up very easily and develop negative approach towards any problem in their life. While Deshpande's characters are from middle class society, they are full of vigour enough to conflict with the problems of life. Her Urmil, Saru, Jaya and Indu are capable enough to take bold steps in their life and then change the way of life too, if their decision is proved false. Their continuous growth helps them to understand the essence of life and everyone of them reconciles in the end to lead a healthy, normal life.

The portrayal of filial ties has its own fascination, its own intriguing charm in the novels of Anita Desai. She focuses upon the abiding nature and far-reaching influences of these tenuous links between parents and children. It also tells us the resultant dissatisfaction in marital ties and some times failure, even to reach the stage of marriage. She suggests that the seeds of neurotic drives are sown during one's childhood. The personality pattern of the parents and children, the quality of their interaction and the disturbing or, unwholesome home environment all combine together to exert a lasting influence on the tender psyche of a growing child.
While depicting the intricate filial ties, Desai suggests that one cannot get inner peace and a sense of fulfilment and emotional security without having an ideal to admire and follow. Hero-worship is a psychological need. A child loses his sense of direction without some great man acting as his pole-star. A child cannot grow without the strong support of an inspiring adult. While on the one hand, the father figures, in *Voices in the City, Fire on the Mountain and Where Shall We Go This Summer?* suffer from a tragic lack of heroic qualities and children fail to inculcate a sense of direction, on the other hand Maya's father's over pampering in *Cry, the Peacock* becomes a stumbling block in her way to maturity. She suffers from father fixation that becomes the root cause of disillusionment in her marital ties. Thus, for Desai, the parent-child relationship is not a mechanical one. It has deep roots and far reaching consequences in life.

All female characters of Anita Desai are housewives who live in their homes and expect perpetual love and understanding from their husbands. Their over expectation leads them to marital-dissatisfaction while all Deshpande heroines are working women and are busy enough to spend their time in activities other than house -keeping and waiting for their husbands. But they too, are not happy with their life and suffer marital-dissatisfaction. As Desai finds the cause of failing marriages in the abnormal upbringng of child and his/her own personality traits, Deshpande finds the reason in the changing attitude towards love, marriage and sex in the views of emancipated women.

The novels of Shashi Deshpande portray how in the post-independence era due to growing industrialisation and urbanization, women are breaking through the hard shell of traditionalism and are being inner-directed instead of being directed.
directed. They are influenced by the principles of equalitarianism and egalitarianism.

In the field of sex, we find that the contemporary attitude of the educated working women like Saru, Indu, Jaya and Urmi towards sex is rather ambivalent. They have started realising that sex is a marvellous source of joy and satisfaction. But at the same time they have not been able to shake off completely the established belief that it is a base instinct, that it is a thing not worthy of being openly desired and pursued and that it should be kept suppressed and not given free expression, even within marriage.

By way of summing up it should be said that Anita Desai is occupied with the psychological impact on the children of the parents whose marriages have failed or lack in harmony for one reason or the other. Shashi Deshpande depicts greater freedom for her characters. She does protest against the values dictated by tradition. But she does not protest as vociferously and as forcefully as we wish it to be. Her women characters after brief extra-marital sex return to legally wedded life. Thus the values of marriage are implicitly accepted and restored. The two novelists under study have viewed and depicted life not as outright agitational feminists, but certainly with unfailing modern Indian feminine sensibility within the framework of the tradition. They feel uncomfortable with the constraints that tradition imposes. But they are too Indian and too feminine to shout for open revolt against it.

Their reticent respect for the norms laid down by tradition is also evident in their shying off from the detailed description of human body or sexual intercourse. It is the feminine modesty combined with the respect for tradition that makes them avoid erotic scenes. In other words both the novelists have dealt with love and sex with the utmost feminine restraint. In contrast we find in Shobha De and Kamala Das a sense
of revolt against tradition expressed in their defiance of the norms and candidly bold
descriptions of the naked human body and the intricacies and of the act of sexual inter-
course. If we classify Indian women novelists into two groups, one caring for modesty,
restraint and tradition and the other for candidness and defiance, Anita Desai and Shashi
Deshpande belong to the former while Shobha De and Kamala Das find their place in
the latter.

In this era of transition, when educated women demand more sexual freedom but are not sure what they should do with their freedom and independence, they face confusion and anxiety in the new atmosphere. The educated women are confused, tense and anxious, because their belief in the old standards of morality is decreasing, but they have not found as yet the new standards which they could follow with ease and security. So they are always wondering how to behave and in what to believe. Confusion is experienced because, while the logic of equality overwhelms them, their own faith is still wedded to tradition. They have started recognising the need for a change, but at the same time they continue to cling to old values because they were brought up with them and more so because they are not sure by what to replace them. This depicts the process of "double think" in them and of ambivalence in their attitudes.

The importance which a woman attaches to sexual activity depends to greater extent upon her other values and goals. Since these values and goals are changing, her attitude towards sexual activity is also changing. There is an emerging streak of a new attitude towards sex in which sex is being taken as a positive value of life, and as Janies Fleming observes it is a creative influence in the human search for wholeness, fulfillment, and mutuality, a human relationship amenable to human values.
The attitude that is now found to be emerging among the educated women of India, as depicted in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, is in a way re-emerging of an attitude that somewhat existed in ancient India. According to ancient Indian Literature, even in the glory of sexual exultation, the practical side of life was never rigidly excluded. Vatsyayana's Kam-Sutra which was written between 400-500 A. D. is a serious and scientific composition which approves that sex is not only meant for procreation, but is also a source and means of driving one of the greatest earthly pleasures, and which every individual has a right to experience and enjoy. Prior to it in Rig-Veda and Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we find that sex desire stands on the same level as any other desire, and it is a passionate expression of the emotion of love.

In spite of this healthy attitude we find that neither men nor women are happy with the present state of love, marriage and sex in the society. In this situation a creative writer can play a vital and effective role in the presentation of culture and in the reconstruction of society by expressing and depicting the thoughts and ideologies which would speak of new values. We find, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande are not mere mouth-pieces of ideas and thoughts, but their writings are not created in a vacuum. They are the outcome of sensitive minds and therefore, there is a deeper involvement in projecting the social change in the form of love, marriage and sex. These women novelists, by presenting the values of freedom and equality and by harmonising them with other values are trying to induce an awareness in the society. They have depicted the deteriorating values of marriage and love in society and the resultant frustration of man and woman in marital relationship. Probing deep into the minds of unhappy married couple they have also depicted the negative effect of failing marriages in the form of the development of neurotic personalities.
Besides representing the true picture of society, they have also tried to project evolutionary ideas and ideologies in their writings. They have tried to remove the confusion of modern women by presenting the model of Sita, Sarah, Urmia, Indu, Jaya and Saru. Maya and Monisha fail to understand the value of reciprocal love and yielding in true love, they fail in their marriages too. While Sita, Sarah and all Deshpande heroines-Urmia, Indu, Jaya and Saru understand the essence of life - that lies in giving rather than receiving - and ultimately lead happy married lives. These novelists have made an effort to educate people in order to change the social framework and replace it by a new and more meaningful one. Though all the novels of these novelists, do not meet with success in presenting a particular solution to every problem, yet we find an optimism in them and it is this hope that we receive through their life-like characters.

By convincingly projecting the ideal of "total humanism", the novelists present the ultimate test of their work which, we hope, would bring about a transformation in the right direction to suit the Indian culture regarding love, marriage and sex. Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande, depicting social transformation through the evolutionary ideologies, through emancipated women of the modern society, attempt to convince us that sometimes human society remains undisturbed, but the culture changes; as the tastes, attitudes, aspirations, ideologies and outlook. Sometimes the institutional values remain rigid, but the new generation comes forward to construct new values, to bring about radical changes in the society.

Thus, we find, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande are committed novelists who, while projecting existing social conditions, provide a new framework, ideology, ethos and world view to create a new social consciousness in the minds of the modern members of the society.