Chapter Three

Self and the Other

Human society has been the whole, sole property of man, running on his orders, changing to his will from times immemorial. Woman has been a part of this property, serving in whatever way possible to him. When the distinctions between genders came into being is not sure, but it is definitely a concept of some rudimentary science which wronged woman for the first time and man followed it then after, having continuously deprived her of equality on this earth. The deprivation has suffused her with so many responsibilities in the name of love, duty and devotion that she can never stand up on her own and she has to plead man to provide her sustenance and security. It is mostly well identified in the husband-wife relationship. Kumar Das says, “Indian couple, like Donne’s 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 not certainty regarding their mutual love for each other” (126). The statement exposes the reality behind the success and failure of man-woman relationship in married life.

With the advent of twentieth century, identity and awareness have become very popular and the major concern for the creative artists. They are trying to explore the spiritual malaise of modern life, reflecting in one’s personal struggle to discover one’s own “Self” against the ordeals of life. Harish Chand Singh writes about Dennis Wrong’s ideas on “identity” and “identity crisis” as follows:
Dennis Wrong rightly suggests that the terms ‘Identity’ and ‘Identity crisis’ have become the “Semantic beacons of our time,” for these “Verbal emblems express our discontent with modern life and modern society.” Wrong also observes that the term ‘identity’ has become a value-charged, almost a charismatic term, with its secure achievement regarded as equivalent to personal salvation. (199)

When an individual finds himself or herself in the fullness of capacity, having satisfied all needs, and plays consistent roles in society, his or her identity can be said to have been established. Actually identity crisis results from negation of the sense of identification with the social, cultural and personal surroundings. Erikson rightly remarks, “Identity is a configuration arising out of “constitutional givens” idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favored capacities, significant identification, effective defences, successful sublimations and consistent roles” (106).

Quest for identity is a global issue and it encompasses the voice of all those sections of society who are passing their time in the slumber of subjugation, suppression and suffering. It includes socially backward, economically weaker and the victims of gender discrimination also. Quest for identity occurs in the life of man or woman to achieve the sense of security, the sense of harmony and the sense of belongingness. When it takes place in the life of husband and wife, whether it is husband’s quest for “Self” or wife’s quest for “Self,” it needs immediate attention to get it fulfilled for the betterment of their life. Otherwise it creates problems in the husband and wife relationship.
Undoubtedly, identity can be the integrating force that brings closer the various aspects of the individual, unites individuals in community establishing harmony. “Self” and the “Other” concepts only pave the way for “identity” or “identity crisis.”

Self-concept can be identified in self-construction, self-identity or self-perspective. It is actually a multi-dimensional construct that refers to an individual’s perception of “Self” in relation to any number of characteristics, such as academics and non-academics, gender roles and sexuality, racial identity and many others. The self-concept is an internal model which comprises self-assessments. A person’s self-concept may change with time as reassessment occurs, which in extreme cases can lead to identity crisis. The psychologists who paved the way for this concept are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. According to Rogers, everyone strives to become more like an “ideal self.” The closer one is to their ideal self, the happier one will be. And an important theory relating to self-concept is the self-categorization theory which states that the self-concept consists of at least two levels – a personal identity and social identity. In other words, people’s self-evaluations rely on both, one’s self-perceptions and how one fits in socially. The self-concept can alternate rapidly between the personal and social identity.

Gender has also been manifested to be an important factor in the formation of self-concept. Psychologists have postulated that men display an independent concept while women display an interdependent self-concept. In Jungian theory, the self signifies the coherent whole unifying both the conscious
and unconscious mind of a person. The self, according to Jung, is realized as the product of individuation, which is defined as the process of integrating one’s personality. Jung has believed that the self besides being the centre of the psyche is also autonomous, meaning that it exists outside of time and space. D.W. Winnicott has distinguished what he has called the “true self” from the “false self” in the human personality, considering the true self as based on a sense of being in the experiencing body, for Winnicott, the sense of being is primary, the sense of doing an outgrowth of it. As per the common knowledge and understanding, the traditional conception of the subject is virtually synonymous with the notion of self or ego as an autonomous and self-actuating agent capable of valid knowledge. Liberal humanism views the “Subject” as endowed with the power of reason and thus a conscious and unified self, possessing a unique core of identity. Feminist theorists have expressed the notion of alienated female subjectivity, as the female is determined socially, linguistically and biologically by patriarchy.

A person’s idea of the “Other” is part of what defines or even constitutes the self in both a psychological and philosophical and other phenomena and cultural units. In social science, it has been used to understand the processes by which groups exclude “Others” whom they want to subordinate or who do not fit into their society. Like the concept of “Self,” the concept of “Otherness” can be applied in various ways. The idea of the “Other” was first philosophically conceived by the Lithuanian – French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas and later made popular by Edward Said in his well-known book *Orientalism*. Despite
being a philosophical concept, “Othering” has political, economic, social and psychological connotations and implications.

Hegel was among the first to introduce the idea of the “Other” as constituent in self-consciousness. He has written of pre-self-conscious man and stressed that each consciousness continues the death of the other. It means that in seeing separateness between one and another, a feeling of alienation is created which one tries to resolve by synthesis. The resolution is depicted in Hegel’s famous parable of the master-slave dialectic. Sartre also has made use of such a dialectic in “Being and Nothingness” when describing how the world is altered at the appearance of another person, how the world now appears to orient itself around this other person. Simone De Beauvoir refers to Hegel’s master–slave dialectic as analogues, in many respects to the relationship of man and woman. The French psychologist, Jaques Lacan has associated the “Other” with the symbolic order and language. Thus the “Other” as a general term in philosophy can also be used to mean the unconscious, silence, insanity, the other of language.

Simone De Beauvoir has changed the Hegelian notion of the “Other,” for use in her description of male-dominated culture. This treats woman as the “Other” in relation to man. Thus the “Other” has become an important concept for studies of the sex-gender system. Boon and Cadden quote Michael Warner’s words in the book entitled Endangering Men:
the modern system of sex and gender would not be possible without a disposition to interpret the difference between genders as the difference between Self and Other. . . . having a sexual object of the opposite gender is taken to be the normal and paradigmatic form of an interest with other or more generally, others. (191)

Simone De Beauvoir calls the “Other” the minority; the least favoured one and often a woman, when compared to a man.

Thus the “Self” is the subject, the “I” that craves for recognition and individuality. The term “Other” revolves around the notion of difference. More generally, it is a way of defining oneself by designating a person as the “Other” by placing him outside or in opposition to a norm. For Simone De Beauvoir, throughout the history, women have been reduced to objects by men, constructed as the “Other” of man, the negative or the abnormal, hence, her famous phrase in *The Second Sex* – “One is not born a woman; but becomes one” (267). The category of the “Other,” she argues, is fundamental in the formation of all human subjectivity, since our sense of “Self” can be produced only in opposition to something that is not “Self.” But men have claimed the category of “Self” exclusively for themselves, and relegated women to the status of the “Other” traditionally.

The identity question is as old as human nature. Ever since man became aware of his “Self,” he took rapid and insightful strides towards realizing it; there has been an ongoing search for the unattainably attainable. Of the two
aspects of this question, the crisis of identity implies the overbearing inflated ego covering up the “Self.” Here the quest for the “Self” means moving in the direction of diluting the ego or the “I” in realizing the “Self.” It is reflected in various shades and modes. For the first, it is an individual question, but sometimes it acquires the extent and significance of being social or natural, wherein the individual just recedes into the background. Obviously, the identity question has been the basic paradox of life and so will it ever be. When individuals come into contact and confrontation with others there arises in them a need for the quest, and the inevitable striving begins in their life. To Martina Michel, “. . . the relationship between the imperial centre and the various (semi) peripherals continues to be a hierarchical one. At the same time, however, . . . the marginalized Other has her or his own voice, which works towards subverting essentialist and unifying classifications” (93).

The question of women’s equality has been on the political agenda ever since Independence. After 1980s with the emergence of the women novelists on the horizon of Indian English fiction, the awareness of the female identity both as an individual and as a female has become a favourite subject. It has been influenced by the collective changes in the social order like the rise of feminist movement at the global level, expansion of the avenues of progressive education, professional self-sufficiency and the growing impact of western culture and civilization. The impact of the above changing social forces has started cracking the traditional myths of some divine entity and an idealized creation of male fantasy. The new feminine consciousness has slowly modified
the conventional role models of female images. All these changes have further modified the pattern of man and woman relationship. Gayatri Spivak, the prolific post-colonial thinker has extensively discussed the issue of identity crisis and admitted that in the burden of patriarchy, woman is not permitted to speak or to express her views in the policy making. The liberal feminists have fought for the individualism for women. Hence the writers have collectively agreed that the idealized images of women are not sufficient to restore the dignified status given to women in patriarchy. To break the long silence of women and lead them to speak of their own individuality, women writers have become conscious of writing about women for the sake of achieving women’s identity.

Deshpande is prominent among the galaxy of the writers who have followed the pragmatic approach for redressing the balance of middle-class working women. Deshpande’s novels represent the contemporary modern, educated women’s struggle to define and attain an autonomous selfhood. Her main concern is to explore the root cause of the fragmentation which leads to conflicts and problems in the life of the heroines of her novels in the process of individuation. As a talented writer, Deshpande has successfully delineated their problems and plights, yearnings and aspirations, failures and sufferings, dreams and disillusionments. Her protagonists are frustrated either sexually or professionally. Deshpande’s novels generally centre on family relationship particularly between husband and wife and the latter’s dilemmas and conflicts in the patriarchal society. Deshpande has expressed that she is much involved with human relationship and her preoccupation is with interpersonal relationships and
human emotions. It is these relationships which are responsible for human bonds and bondages. Unlike the traditional woman, the new modern woman today challenges the traditional notion of “Angel in the house,” a pestering subconscious image. The “New Woman” is essentially a woman aware and conscious of her low position in family and society. In their relationship with their fathers or brothers, Deshpande’s heroines as well as “New Women” do not have that much problem. But when these women are treated as the “Other” by their husbands, conflicts arise as they become conscious that they are treated inferior to their husbands in marriage.

Women are treated as the “Other” not only by men but also by women. Deshpande’s protagonists are treated as the “Other” even by their own mothers or mothers-in-law or by other women. These mothers or mothers-in-law have already been the sufferers and the victims of male domination. The advice of these traditional mothers restricts their daughters, the protagonists of Deshpande, not to move forward towards their quest of identity. As a result, these “New Women” are frustrated and they feel that their feelings are suppressed. These suppressed desires or feelings often make them angry and they struggle to achieve their identity that result in troubles in their married life.

Not only women, men are also treated by women as the “Other.” Though it is uncommon in the patriarchal society, it also happens at times in man-woman relationship and especially in the husband and wife relationship. When a husband is treated as the “Other” by his own wife, he feels alienated. This
rejection makes him frustrated of course and he becomes anxious to fulfil his desire in some other ways. He tries to dominate his wife and his efforts create various difficulties in their married life. Like women, Deshpande’s men also suffer due to their wives’ or lovers’ treatment of them as the “Other.”

Apart from all these, women are known for their split personalities. A woman has the “Other” even within her “Self.” Actually what she likes to do is different from what she is forced to do just to satisfy the societal norms of a patriarchal society. Their innate desires are suppressed at the unconscious level. These original feelings or actual desires of a woman are considered as the “Other” of the woman’s “Self.” Deshpande’s heroines are also known for split personalities as they also carry the “Other” within their “Self.” As they are educated and experienced, sometimes they try to manifest their original desires treated as the “Other” and would like to get it fulfilled. When they try to expose the “Other” of their “Self,” it results in dilemmas and conflicts in their relationship with men, especially in their relationship with their husbands.

The profound interpretation of the concept of the quest for identity integrated in the novels of Deshpande extends the impression in the mind of readers that she contemplates on this issue as a partaker in the phenomenon of male and female relationship. It has been evident and understood that male and female relationship is no longer based on well-defined mathematical calculations but it is conditioned by the real experiences that are dynamic and is in a state of consistent flux. Usually in the relationships between father and daughter or
brother and sister or mother and son, problems do not arise much. But when it comes to the husband and wife relationship, problems abound as these two people belong to different families known for different traditions and characteristic features and they live together in the confined space. The main reason for the dilemma and conflicts in the husband and wife relationship is the wife’s quest for identity as she has been treated as the “Other,” inferior to husband from the beginning of their married life.

Naturally, Deshpande’s women are archetypal as they are influenced by preformal ideas which are strongly infused in their psyche. When they become educated and experienced, they become quite conscious of their “identity.” But even education and their knowledge do not help them come out of tradition utterly. Of course the changed postmodern society creates an urge in these women for achieving their “Self.” These women are known for their adjustments too and the adjustments that women have to make to fit into the paradigm with a comparatively traditional cultural outlook in the postmodern society are wonderfully presented by Deshpande in her creative writing. As they are acutely aware of their inferior status and as they are unable to bear with their smothered and faltered existence in an orthodox, male-dominated society, Deshpande’s protagonists continually strive for their autonomous “Self.” Few men who are relegated to the status of the “Other” also struggle to attain their identity in Deshpande’s novels. Both these men and women’s quest for selfhood automatically creates problems in their life as achieving selfhood is quite a difficult task.
This chapter deals with how men treat themselves as “Self” and women as the “Other,” how men are treated as “Self” whereas women are treated as the “Other” by the male-dominated society and how women are treated as the “Other” by women themselves and how women treat themselves as “Self” and men as the “Other” in some occasions and also the dilemma and conflicts in the relationship between man and woman particularly in the husband and wife relationship. The chapter aims to explicate the fact that in their quest for identity, both Deshpande’s men and women struggle to attain happiness, overcome the resentment against inhibitions, achieve the possibility of the fullest development of faculties and infinite zest of life but they encounter conflicts only and suffer a lot as it is indeed a task to bring about a competent compatibility between man and woman in the patriarchal society.

The patriarchal customs, several restraints of gender, traditions, orthodoxy of religion, etc. are such values which are instrumental in subordinating and subjugating the woman even in the twenty first century when woman is hailed as an equal partner of the man, possessing and enjoying all the rights and privileges enjoyed by the male. The role assigned to woman, especially a middle-class woman by the Indian society, is nothing but, the mythical role of ever caring, ever-sacrificing, ever-dormant, ever-present and ever-silent person. Now a change has been identified in the life of Indian women as education has empowered them. They feel that they cannot bear their status of the “Other” any more and they continue to struggle against the patriarchal structure to get their identity as Clara Nubile rightly observes, “In modern India,
the situation is far from an ideal, liberated, democratic model. Indian women keep on struggling against the burden of tradition, against the legacy of the part and the orthodoxy of patriarchal system” (27). But the pitiful deed is that these women are continuously being treated as the “Other” by men – fathers, brothers and mostly by their husbands. This status of the “Other” or “Object” leads these women to alienation, rejection, total chaos and also psychological problems. These suppressed women are denied the space to realize themselves and they do not have opportunity to express themselves or even a language which can give words to express their feelings and aspirations. Though they refuse to be subjugated by men and are aware of their social responsibility as human beings, these women are still treated as the “Other” by men in various ways in the patriarchal society.

In *The Binding Vine*, Urmila, Vanaa, Shakutai, Sulu and Mira are all victims who are treated as “Object” in their married life. Marriage which was a spiritual bond considered sacred in the olden times is seen only as a sexual, legal bond nowadays. The marriage in male-oriented societies sometimes makes the female partner feel dissatisfied and rejected both physically and spiritually. Sulu, Shakutai’s sister and the perfect house keeper faces unhappiness in marriage as her husband Prabhakar refuses to touch her because of her skin disease. Prabhakar’s desire for Kalpana troubles Sulu more. But the so-called security of marriage makes Sulu compromise with the situation and agrees to get Kalpana married to her husband. Her acceptance to such a life of humiliation shows her desperation and lack of choice.
Shakutai’s husband, although a father of three children, has abandoned her for another woman. Had he lived with Shakutai, Prabhakar, Sulu’s husband would have never dared to touch their daughter, Kalpana. Walking out on family is permissible to men whereas women have been denied this. Though Shakutai is relegated to the status of the “Other” by her husband, she has brought up her three children alone without worrying about her inferior status. But her husband does not even think of his children and enjoys his life with some other woman. As he is being an irresponsible father, the responsibility of taking care of the family falls on the shoulder of the responsible mother, Shakutai. Though she has realized her inferior position in her married life and though her marriage to that man is the greatest misfortune of her life, she likes to remain as the wife of the same man for the sake of her children and marriage.

Inni, Urmila’s mother is also demoted to the status of the “Other” when she is denied the right to bring up her own child. Just one day’s experience has made Urmila’s father take a decision to send their daughter to his parents’ house. Urmila’s father has done this thinking that his wife cannot or will not look after Urmila properly. Above all he has apprehensions about leaving the female child to the care of a male servant. Without considering Inni’s pleas and her feelings, he stubbornly sends Urmila to his parents’ house. Here the right of bringing up her own daughter is denied to Urmila’s mother and thereby she is forced to realise her downgraded status.
Like Shakutai, Mira too is treated by her husband harshly in sexual relationship and she is made to suffer a lot. Mira’s story raises the question of rape within marriage. Urmila reads about Mira’s struggle with her husband, a man insistent and compelling that Mira expresses in her diary, “Talk, he says to me, why don’t you speak to me? what shall I talk about, I ask him stupidly . . . and so he goes on, dragging my day, my whole self, out of me . . . if this is love it is a terrible thing. . . . why can’t he leave me alone?” (67). Urmila is made aware that Mira’s husband tries to “possess another human being against her will” (83). Mira’s aversion to her husband is revealed here, which is at odds with the age-old tradition of “Pativrata dharma” instilled and internalized in women through myth. Explaining the irony of this myth in the context of Mira’s life, Deshpande reveals, that to Mira, who has to live with a husband she does not love, who has to submit herself unwillingly to sex with him almost every night of her married life, the image of “Pativrata” is transformed into something different of course. It is not merely a possibility for a meaningful reinterpretation of the myths but the possibility for a development in the status of women like Mira to expose their aversion at least in their writings.

Another incident in the life of Mira that illustrates the psychological infliction meted out to women by men is Venu’s, a popular poet’s disparaging remarks on the poetic talent of Mira. When Mira hands over some of her poems to Venu to read, the latter comments, “‘why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men’ ” (127). This harsh disparagement on
Mira agonises her and dampens her creative talent. Men like Venu do not want to give space for woman’s identity in the society.

In *A Matter of Time*, the “schizophrenic” existence of Shripati and Kalyani is mainly due to the loss of the male-heir of the family. For thirty five years, Shripati has been conscious only of his lost son, Madhav. He has not thought of his two daughters – Premi and Sumi. He is living in a solitary room on the floor above – “the room seems to have taken on the personality of the man inhabiting it, so that there is something guarded about it, an air of reserve” (71). If he had thought of the welfare of his daughters, Shripati could have come back to normalcy. Hence, in Shripati’s punishment for his wife for the loss of the son, his wife as well as his daughters suffers miserably.

Likewise, Gopal, Sumi’s husband is indifferent to his own daughters without considering their feelings and expectations. When Surekha, a lawyer is at the peak of her argument with Gopal enquiring him about the reason for his walking out on his family, Gopal gives his own reply to the lawyer in this manner, “‘For the desire for sons is the desire for wealth and the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds. No, no, not my words, it’s from the Upanishads,’ he says in reply to her look of mute inquiry. ‘I’ve always thought that the love for daughters is less tainted, more disinterested’ ” (214-15). Gopal’s reply shows that the desire for sons is always given the primary acceptance and the desire for daughters is less in the Indian society.
Similarly, in *Small Remedies*, Leela, Madhu’s aunt is a freedom fighter and a passionate believer in the communist ideology. She works for the party and being a social activist, she has worked for the welfare of the poor women labourers afflicted with TB. She is known for her commitment beyond herself to society. In spite of her good service, being a woman, she is sidelined by the party leadership and she never reaches the position of top leadership while men who initially have worked under her, reach the high positions easily. Once the party, in order to encash the sympathy wave gives a ticket to the widow of a sitting member who has been killed. This makes Leela upset of course and provokes her, who has been a committed worker of the party. She feels and says, “‘It seems you’ve got to become a widow for them to remember that you exist’” (224). This comment actually throws light on the anti-woman patriarchal political order and the poignant status of women in politics even though they are intelligent and active.

The patriarchal society is obsessed with the virginity of women. After Madhu’s revelation of her past to her husband, Som that she has slept with an artist once when she has been fifteen, her life is transformed to a tortuous existence. Som, an otherwise good husband fails to reconcile himself with this revelation and becomes totally devastated. As a result, she is heavily beaten and sometimes sexually harassed by him. He does not try to understand her feelings and her true love towards him. Madhu can be considered as unfortunate as she fails to understand his obsession with virginity as she expresses, “But it’s the single act of sex that Som holds on to, it’s this fact that he can’t let go of, as if
it’s been welded into his palm. Purity, chastity an intact hymen – these are the things Som is thinking of, these are the truths that matter” (262).

When Madhu interviews Savitribai, she narrates her past as to how she has struggled to learn music. Savitribai is rejected by her Guruji at first. The reason for the rejection is that “Because he thought music was no profession for a respectably married woman” (130). Savitribai is harassed a lot about this as she says, “it became a curse, my being a Brahmin woman. My belonging to a respectable family” (130). Here Savitribai is assigned an inferior rank by her Guruji for being a woman belonging to a respectable Brahmin family as Brahmin women are not supposed to prefer music as their profession.

Similarly, in Moving On, as her parents are dead and her grown-up children are away, Manjari, a young widow is left alone with her own world and her own sexuality. Manjari resolves to face life alone without anybody’s support either morally or financially. But poor Manjari has to face a painful period of struggle and strain. Raja, Manjari’s childhood friend, actually a widower, wants to enjoy the bliss of married life once again by marrying Manjari. But Manjari refuses to accept his proposals as to her, it seems to be for the sake of marriage rather than for love. He does not try to understand Manjari’s feelings. Manjari is of course not a toy to provide instant nodding to accept Raja’s proposals. She has her own experiences in her life. But Raja treats her differently because she is a woman.
When Manjari wants to buy a car to fulfil one of her “middle-class dreams,” (65) Raja raises questions to her and she answers him as follows:

‘But do you have any idea how much it costs to maintain a car?’
‘And you don’t even know how to drive.’
‘I’ll learn. It’s not impossible. It’s been done before. And let me fulfil at least one of my middle-class dreams, Raja. Having a car of my own – you privileged men who take these things for granted can’t imagine what it means to people like me.’
‘But why do you need a car?’
‘What do you mean why? I bet if I were a man, you’d never have asked that question.’ (65)

Raja speaks in a way that he is worried about the present and future economic condition of Manjari and raises questions on her buying a car. But Manjari does not bother about Raja’s advice and she hopes that she will get a job in future. Manjari feels that if a man is in her place, Raja will never ask such questions, as car is usually considered a primary possession to man but secondary to woman in the Indian society.

Manjari faces a real test of her life, when she is visited by strangers and receives anonymous phone calls from the mafia gang in her ancestral house. When she does not respond to the threat of the mafia underworld, she is physically assaulted, and is almost on the verge of being raped. She gets a phone call in the afternoon. The male voice warns her, “‘we don’t want to hurt you, but ‘you’re a woman, don’t forget that’ ” (167). And Manjari realizes the
warning like this, “... this is a threat to my body ... they are warning me of my greater vulnerability” (167). Likewise, when Manjari decides to marry Shyam, a person much below the status of Manjari’s family, Manjari’s parents protest against it. Her father opposes their love and says to Manjari, “ ‘You’re too young’ ” (186). Manjari retorts, “ ‘So was Mai when you married her’ ” (187). But Manjari’s father explains that marriage has not interrupted Manjari’s mother, Vasu’s education but if Manjari marries Shyam, her studies will be spoiled. He gives his own explanations to satisfy Manjari. Actually, Vasu’s young age has not been a big matter to Badrinarayan when he marries her. But then, when it is the case of his daughter’s marriage, it seems to be a big matter to him. Manjari has been forced to endure her awful status, created not only by her father but also by different men in different manners.

Similarly in In the Country of Deceit, Ashok, a middle aged, married man, the father of a ten-year old girl, proposes a call for love to Devayani, a spinster living alone in a small town called Rajnur. Devayani actually is a woman with many potential shades. She is highly thoughtful. She does not accept or reject Ashok’s proposal immediately. Instead, she thinks over it for several days and then proceeds. She struggles to take a decision at the beginning. But libido, the psychic energy drives her towards Ashok to accept his love. And she goes to the extent of yielding herself to Ashok wholeheartedly. But Ashok does not worry about Devayani’s future and he seems to give importance to sensual pleasures. Even in their first private meet, Ashok declares his status distinctly to Devayani as follows:
‘I’m a married man. I have a daughter, she’s nine, no, she’ll be ten this year. I don’t know your age, but, I know you are much younger . . .’ . . . ‘I can promise you nothing. Nothing.’ . . . ‘I know I have no right to say any of this to you, I know this is very wrong. I’ve tried to control myself, but . . . let me say this just once, just this once. (91)

Ashok is very conscious of his own family. And he is too selfish to think of Devayani’s future. When she realizes the ugliness of this adulterous relationship, she becomes conscious of her status of the “Other” and she reveals her anger to Ashok in this way, “‘. . . you had, you have, no right to put me in this position’ ”(130). This provides Devayani the necessary resilience for her life.

Not only Devayani but Ashok’s wife’s stature is also miserable. Being disloyal to marriage, Ashok enjoys his time with Devayani. And he does not think of his wife’s feelings and deserts her as Devayani raises questions within her, “Is he not betraying them, anyway, with each minute he spends with me, with each word of love he speaks to me, each time he makes love to me?” (164). Devayani’s words show that Ashok’s wife has been betrayed by him. As a sex partner, Ashok’s wife has every right to make love to him. But here, she has been rejected to avail her husband’s love. Ashok fails to prove full loyalty to his wife by breeching the sanctity of his marriage.
At the end of the novel, *In the Country of Deceit*, Devayani is also rejected by Ashok though their love moves smooth and perfect. Ashok is always known for his perfect revelation of love to Devayani as he says to her, “Believe me, Divya, you are precious to me. It’s not only that I love you, I respect you, I respect you deeply. I would never do anything that would make you feel cheap’ ” (234). In spite of all these, Ashok is ready to leave Devayani when he is transferred to some other place. He says, “‘I’m sorry, Divya, I’m sorry. I can’t lose my daughter, I can’t let her lose me’ ” (254). Though he loves Devayani very much and hopes to meet her again in future, he is not ready to stay back at Rajnur for the sake of Devayani and their love. Instead, he gives priority to his daughter and exposes his excuse as “It was the only explanation, the only apology he ever gave” (254) to Devayani.

Indian traditions, social norms, culture and customs have been leading men to feel that they are superior and different and forcing women to think that they are inferior human beings who are not expected to play any role other than the traditional ones of each being a wife to her husband, a mother to her children and almost a caretaker of the house. The patriarchal system in India is always inclined to a magnification of the roles and goals of men and to a minimization of the importance and ambitions of women in all spheres of life. Even the versatile genius and prominent figure of Indian Literature, Tagore in his lines serves the ideological intentions and expectations of patriarchy – “you are a woman, by serving you must rule,” (154) as it is highlighted by Maurus in *Something to Think of*. 
The struggle for achieving their status equal to men remains vital for women as an ideal to be achieved. Deshpande’s women are also known for their struggle to achieve the status of “Self” or “Subject.” But Simone De Beauvoir analyses in *The Second Sex*, the relationship between man and woman in terms of “Self” / “Other” or “Subject” / “Object” model and argues that man’s subjectivity is established only through opposition to and dependence upon woman’s absolute and eternal otherness and the imbalance in the man-woman relationship can be remedied only by women’s assumption of the status of “Subject” against the “Other” / “Object.”

In the patriarchal society, double standards are being maintained – one for men and the other for women. The society itself is highly partial to men that it considers men as “Self” and accepts whatever done by them without comments. But the same male-dominated society views women as the “Other” and approaches whatever the things done by them with its own critical comments. This sort of discrimination of the society on men and women makes women feel inferior and also creates conflicts in the minds of women.

In *Small Remedies*, Savitribai’s life represents exceptional strength and determination because she is born in a traditional, orthodox Brahmin family and with a great struggle she creates a space for herself in the world of classical music. When Savitribai recalls the experiences of her life, there are the distinctive shadows of resentment in her voice on the realization of the critical comments of her grandmother, of how she has scolded Savitribai for her passion
for singing. In those days, singing has been a reputable profession for men but not a respectable art to be pursued by women from a respectable family. Madhu also recalls the past that in the conventional society of Neemgaon, Savitribai is rejected by the society for her radical ways. Thus individual is a part of society and the assertion of individuality beyond social images is often condemned as blasphemy.

Likewise, Madhu’s father and Savitribai are treated differently by the society though they lead the same kind of life. Through her recollection of the past, Madhu realizes the different treatment of the society on man and woman. Madhu’s father with his unconventional ways has not been rejected by the society. Though a widower, he decides to bring up his daughter on his own with only a male servant at home and indulges in drinking every evening and has an illicit relationship. While people are willing to overlook Madhu’s father’s liberated style, in the same village, Savitribai is not permitted to choose her own ways to live. Here, society recommends different patterns of behaviour for man and woman. Madhu’s father, “. . . being a man, he could get away with much. He could live the way he wanted, without open censure or disapproval” (139). Savitribai too makes her own choice for a career as a singer. But it is radical on her part to escape the rigid hold of Brahminism and to cultivate personal relationship with a Muslim tabla player, Ghulam Saab.

An identical hostility is revealed in the background of Savitribai’s father-in-law’s relationship with a woman from a different caste and community. Her
father-in-law has a mistress, a singer famous for her thumri singing. This relationship actually is the source of gossip and amusement in the entire town. The society registers no protest for this relationship and it admits that a mistress from other caste can be accepted but the society cannot give the status of a wife to her. It is recorded “That he had a mistress, was accepted; a wife from one’s own class, a mistress from another - this was normal” (220). It is of course an ironical exposition of the duality of standards in gender based society. But in Savitribai’s life, she has to face the anger, contempt and ridicule among the people of Neemgaon due to her relationship with her lover, Ghulam Saab. Thus a woman is never free to carve out her path to assert her professional abilities.

Similarly, in Moving On, men and women are treated differently by the society. Moving On is the story of many betrayals and violations. It starts with Badrinarayan’s father a Brahmin by caste, son of a land lord, who marries an orphaned Harijan girl, brought up by his Guru who initiates him into Gandhism, betraying his family tradition and honour. Thereby, Badrinarayan’s father violates the norms of hierarchies sanctified by Vishnu stotra and Gayathri mantra and thereafter becomes an outsider. Badrinarayan himself marries outside his caste. Manjari discovers this truth by reading her father’s diary. All these acts have been accepted by Badrinarayan’s family to such an extent that Manjari’s parents have not that much trouble in getting their desires fulfilled. But when Manjari decides to marry Shyam, a person much below their social status, the family comes to the fore. One may consider Manjari’s decision a violation, but the family history is replete with such transgressions. Actually Manjari repeats
what her grandfather and father have done. In spite of this, she is humiliated with the words by the family and especially by her mother, Vasu. Her mother tries to forbid her saying “‘your body is confusing you’ ” (187). But Manjari’s steadfastness in marrying Shyam enables her to shut the doors on everyone.

Manjari recollects the marriage of both Raja and her own as both are love marriages. Raja has married Rukku despite his parents’ opposition. Both Raja and Manjari have gone against their parents’ wishes when they have chosen their life partners. According to Manjari, there is a difference in their parents’ treatment of them regarding their love marriage. Very soon “Raja’s parents got over their reluctance, they accepted Rukku, they even became fond of her” (181). In the case of Manjari, it is quite different. Compared to Raja’s status, Manjari feels “whereas I . . . Mai never forgave me” as “Mai doesn’t believe in love. . . .” (181) for a long time and Manjari has been forced to face a “fierce battle” (181) especially with her mother because of her marriage. Raja is treated with fondness by his parents after a few days of his marriage whereas Manjari is treated badly especially by her mother even after her son, Anand’s birth.

The traditional Indian society grants a woman the identity of a daughter, wife or mother. Marriage means a lot to a traditional woman. Though things have been changing for the better in the last few decades – especially for the educated middle-class women, they cannot forget the kind of life their mothers and grandmothers have led. The piteous matter is that the same kind of life which is known as suppression is being led by the majority of women in other
strata of the society even today. Apart from their personal struggles and
dilemmas, these suppressed women are responsible also for other women’s
sufferings, and this is so especially in the case of mothers and daughters. Though
these mother figures are victims of suppression, they treat other women
particularly their daughters as the “Other” in forcing them to lead the same kind
of life, which they have lived when they have become authoritative figures.
Since the traditional values are ingrained in these women’s psyche, they look
upon their miseries inflicted by their men as part of their fate. Sometimes their
sufferings lead them to power motivation and as a result they dominate other
women and reflect the same behaviour which has been inflicted on them once by
the other women who have made them suffer. These attitudes and traditional
ideas only make women to bring other women into a downgraded state.
A woman actually internalizes the patriarchal ideals and learns to accept her
condition passively. When she gets her turn, she also behaves the same with
every girl child in the family.

The mother-daughter relationship has always occupied an important place
in Deshpande’s fiction. But motherhood is not presented admirably in
Deshpande’s novels and she has not valorized the image of a mother but has
fashioned them as “fallible.” In fact mother-daughter relationship is perpetually
under question. Part of the problem arises with a mother’s preference for a male
child and part in the conflict between the need to be independent and free
vis-a-vis the totalising claims of motherhood. And in some measure, it comes to
rest on the mother-daughter relationship where domineering mothers destroy
their daughters. Through this mother-daughter relationship, the domineering mothers force their daughters to accept or follow the traditional ideas and in a way they lead them to suffer. It is of course a complex and empathising relationship.

Deshpande does not idealize “mother” in her novels as many feminist writers do. Instead she exposes the vulnerability of women, the power of women and the helplessness of women. Deshpande presents different facets of woman-woman relationship particularly mother-daughter relationship which is a bitter-sweet experience, riddled with tensions and conflicts, joy and pain. The conflict between mother and daughter can be a conflict between tradition and modernity or a clash between the claims of selfhood and the need for love in relationships. When daughters are forced to reach such a wretched condition by their mothers, it automatically leads to bitterness and estrangement between them. Finally these daughters’ rejection of their mothers takes an extreme form as Saru expresses her desire in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, “If you’re a woman, I don’t want to be one” (63) and Mira’s revelation in one of her poems in *The Binding Vine* goes like this, “To make myself in your image / Was never the goal I sought” (124). As life is a process, this rejection of the mother is necessary for a daughter to receive a change and to attain her “Self” in her life.

In *The Binding Vine*, in the case of the rape-victim, Kalpana, her mother, Shakutai is ready to blame her daughter instead of understanding the real situation and blaming the criminal and her sister’s husband, Prabhakar. As a conventional mother, Shakutai does not understand her daughter’s feelings and
she does not want her to come out of tradition. Shakutai gives priority to social stigma rather than to her daughter’s pathetic condition. That is why she laments over her family honour instead of understanding the fact that her daughter has not done any mistake as she says, “‘And I have to listen to such words because of this girl. She’s shamed us; we can never wipe off this blot’” (147).

Similarly, when Prabhakar forces his wife, Sulu to get him Kalpana, Sulu too accepts his proposal and takes a quick decision. Without thinking of the fact that there is a father-daughter relationship between Prabhakar and Kalpana, Sulu proposes the matter to Shakutai. What is more pathetic is that Shakutai is ready to make Kalpana as the mistress of Sulu’s house. Though Sulu loves Kalpana very much and treats her as her own daughter, she is unable to understand Kalpana’s feelings and desires. Shakutai exposes Sulu’s request to Urmila as follows:

‘Get me Kalpana, he kept telling her, and you can stay on here, I don’t mind. She came to me and I thought it was her idea, that’s what she told me. I have no children, she said. If Kalpu marries him, she can be mistress of the house, she doesn’t have to do anything, I’ll do all the work, everything. I thought, what’s wrong? At least he’s not a drunkard, or a wife-beater or a waster like my husband. I thought, maybe this is the best thing for her . . . .’ (193)

Sulu’s intimacy with Kalpana and Shakutai’s delusions regarding her daughter’s marriage with her sister’s husband are manifested in the above words of
Shakutai. Though this proposal is against the natural order, Shakutai falsely believes that Kalpana’s marriage with Prabhakar is the best thing for her daughter.

In *A Matter of Time*, when Vithalrao, Manorama’s husband is at his deathbed, he keeps repeating some words no one can understand. But “It was Kalyani who finally understood what it was he was trying to say, ‘put me down’ ” (152). But Manorama refuses to put him down as she is terrified that her husband may die. As a daughter, Kalyani suffers with “her father’s agonised pleas” (153) and she removes him from the bed and puts him down on the floor when her mother is away. Vithalrao “died in a short while and to Manorama, it was as if Kalyani had killed him” (153). Manorama scolds Kalyani, “‘You are my enemy, you were born to make my life miserable’ ” (153). The words echo in Kalyani’s ears every night and make her suffer a lot.

When Gopal walks out on his family, his wife, Sumi and his three daughters suffer a lot. While Gopal is not reproached for shirking his responsibilities as a husband and father, Sumi is made to suffer by disapproving comments of women like Shankar’s mother:

‘You should be with him. Look at his state! It’s all right to stay with your parents for a while, but that’s not your home. When my daughters come home, I don’t let them stay long. Go back to your husband, he’s a good man. It you’ve done wrong, he’ll forgive you. And if he has - women shouldn’t have pride.’ (161)
When women like Shankar’s mother become authoritative figures as mothers or mothers-in-law, they like to show their power over other women as they have been influenced by power motivation due to their suffering in the past and thereby, they treat other women as the “Other.” Here Shankar’s mother does not try to know the real reason behind Gopal-Sumi separation. Instead, she almost forces Sumi to return to her husband. Shankar’s mother treats her daughters with indifference and she never allows her own daughters to stay long at her home as after the marriage, women have no right to stay at their parental home for a long time and they cannot demand it as their own.

Likewise, though Aru is an admirer of Sumi’s courage and divergent thinking, she becomes suspicious about her mother, when another man intervenes in Sumi’s life. Aru is known for her own attachment to her mother. Her father Gopal’s walkout creates an unconscious fear in her mind and she does not want to lose her mother also. But her inductive reasoning makes her think like this, “I shouldn’t think this way, she tells herself, Sumi is only being friendly, she always was this way, why am I being suspicious now?” (172). But the third telephone call in a day makes Aru “share her fears with Charu” (172). And she begins to raise a question in a devious way:

‘Do you believe in step fathers, Charu?’

‘... Oh, oh, you mean Kumar.’

‘He’s called Sumi thrice today.’

‘He’s helping her with the play - her school play.’

‘I know that, but still ... Have you seen him looking at her?’ (172)
Here Aru, though understanding, is suspicious of Sumi’s friendship with Kumar without comprehending the personality of her mother.

Manorama also exposes her hatred towards her daughter, Kalyani, till her death for the want of a son. The same sort of attitude continues even after the birth of her granddaughters and great granddaughters and she is not at all interested in them. Manorama shows the extreme of gender discrimination. Kalyani later communicates her mother’s attitude to her granddaughters like this, “My mother didn’t care for my children, either. Daughters again, she said. And when you were born, a daughter, I wondered how she could have been so blind. She’s the unlucky one who didn’t know how to enjoy her children and grandchildren” (226-27). Kalyani differs from her mother and she loves her daughters and granddaughters.

Similarly, in Small Remedies, Leela, Madhu’s aunt as well as a communist party worker is relegated to the “Other” status by her own mother. After a long time, Leela’s mother asks Leela to visit home. Leela visits her parental home and witnesses no changes in her mother’s character. Deshpande beautifully describes Leela’s status in this way, “If Leela has any illusions that her mother has asked her to come home so that they can be reconciled before her death, she is soon disillusioned” (235). She does not allow Leela into the kitchen or the puja room as Leela is still a widow to her and she does not even consider Leela’s second marriage as “her marriage to Joe not redeeming, but adding rather, to her pariah status” (235). Thus Leela’s mother has changed excessively
orthodox and has no mind to treat her daughter better even after she becomes very old.

Madhu is unable to digest the fact that Savitribai has gone to the extent of hiding the details of her daughter born through her association with the tabla player, Ghulam Saab. Madhu, who is familiar with Savitribai’s past and her daughter, Munni, is shocked at Savitribai’s indifference to her daughter. She is not willing to reveal her daughter to the world. She does not want to expose her shadow to the world and she has an unconscious fear about social stigma. But Madhu feels that Savitribai can be given immortality which she desires most only if she is willing to deliver her daughter to the world – a daughter who has been rejected and whose existence she has successfully obliterated until then. She cannot understand why Savitribai hesitates to reveal the existence of her child and wonders at her behaviour:

She gave that child the name “Indorekar” – the name she adopted as a singer . . . not compromising either her maiden name or her married one. Meenakshi Indorekar. Marking her out as her child alone, not the child of her marriage, not the child of her lover. This surely is a statement I cannot ignore? (169)

Savitribai is quite satisfied with only providing the name “Indorekar” to her daughter and she does not seem to be worried about her daughter’s future. Here Savitribai lacks intimacy which is nothing but a mother’s commitment to her daughter for the sake of the future of the latter.
In *In the Country of Deceit*, Devayani is known for her delusions in her relationship with Ashok, a married man. Though she can understand the pathetic condition of Ashok’s wife, and though she understands well that she has no right to have an adulterous relationship with him, she has no mind to leave Ashok as she suffers from decision aversion. She avoids taking any strong and good decision to do good to Ashok’s family as she is fully involved with this illegal relationship. Similarly, another character in the novel, Rani, an actress, does not apprehend the desire of her daughter, Roshini and goes on her own way to carry out her project. Roshini is furious about her mother’s attitudes and expresses her feelings to Devayani that she hates her mother for abandoning her for the sake of acting in films. As she cannot understand the feelings of her own daughter, Rani goes on her own way. “Learning - performance distinction” can be identified in Rani’s behaviour and there is a difference between what has been learnt by her and what is expressed in her overt behaviour as she is conscious of working out Diwari’s plans and acting in films. Though she suffers and learns much in working out Tiwari’s ideas, she leaves her daughter for the sake of the same person as Roshini expresses it to Devayani, “‘She abandoned me and went to that bastard. And once she does this movie, she’ll do the same to Neha and Rohan. She’ll go back to movies and leave them here’” (169). Rani suffers a lot in acting in films but even then she is not ready to give up acting and thereby abandons her daughter for the sake of acting in films.

Likewise, when Devayani refuses to accept her sister Savi’s advice to give up her relationship with Ashok, Savi gets angry and asks Devayani whether
she wants sex. Savi raises the above question due to impulsive aggression. Though a sinner, Devayani is of course hurt by this comment and is made to feel herself inferior by her own sister. Devayani’s suffering due to Savi’s comment is expressed through the following lines, “‘You want sex,’ Savi had said, crudely, savagely, deliberately trying to shock me” (193).

Deshpande also delineates the conflicts inherent in the mother-daughter relationship. Mother’s selfless love for her children is a universal phenomenon that can never be denied. Yet in patriarchal societies there is an age-old preference for a son. The worth of a wife is measured only by the number of sons she gives birth to as the birth of a son has a religious significance in Indian patriarchal order. A daughter not only lacks such ritual significance, but is also considered a financial burden. In *A Matter of Time*, Deshpande’s quote from the Upanishad sums up the Indian psyche:

> Whatever wrong has been done by him,
> his son frees him from it all;
> therefore he is called a son. By his
> son a father stands firm in this world. (91)

Mothers are known for this deep rooted desire for a son. They are disappointed if their daughters give birth to baby-girls. This disappointment makes these mothers to treat even their daughters as the “Other” as these daughters become the visible symbol of their failure to have sons, for in India, in certain sects property rights and inheritance are meant for men only.
In *The Binding Vine*, Vanaa longs for a son and it is denied by her husband. After the birth of the second baby-girl, Vanaa expresses her desire for a son to her husband, Harish. Harish snubs her saying that she should be one of those women who crave for sons. He also asks her as to why she thinks for sure that the next child would be a son. But Vanaa has such a strong secret desire to have a son that she is ready to take a chance. Shakutai is also an example to explicate the fact that mothers are known for their unconscious desire for a son. Shakutai suffers a lot on seeing the miserable condition of her daughter as well as the rape-victim, Kalpana. It makes Shakutai moan, “‘Why does God give us daughters?’” (150). Shakutai’s question highlights not only the paranoia of Shakutai for protecting her daughters from the danger of sexual assault but also her unconscious desire for sons.

In *A Matter of Time*, Manorama, Kalayani’s mother has always wanted a son. For Manorama, Kalyani has become an invisible symbol of her failure to have a son. As a result, “. . . there was Kalyani, who could do nothing that pleased her mother” (151). Coming from a humbler background than her husband, Manorama has never got over her fear that her husband may marry again. Moreover she has never given him a son. This fear has led Manorama to take Kalyani out of school and marry her to her brother, Shripati and “Perhaps, after this, Manorama felt secure. The property would remain in the family now. Her family” (129).
The absence of a male heir leads women to great suffering. It is only when Kalyani gives birth to a son that Manorama’s contempt for her is assuaged, “Except once, when she gave birth to a son. There was great rejoicing then” (151). Even Sumi, Kalyani’s daughter feels alien in the house, despite the reassurance of her father, and admits that one day this house will belong to Nikhil, Premi’s son, the only male heir of the family. That “The male child belongs” (71). The novel *A Matter of Time* is replete with references to sons either lost or dead, and the resultant lacunae. In the novel, the significance of a son is exposed through the songs sung in celebrations of the birth of Nikhil, Premi’s son and references also abound in the banter revolving around Rohit, Lalita’s son and Raghupati’s grandson. The gravity of the birth of a son echoes in the following lines, “. . . the walls of this house seem to cry out that the very reason for their existence was a son?” (71).

Significantly, at the end of the novel, when Kalyani collapses at the death of her husband and daughter, “Aru, breaking out of her paralysis, rushes to Kalyani and kneeling by the huddled body says, ‘Amma, I’m here, I’m your daughter, Amma, I’m your son, I’m here with you, Amma, I’m here. . . . ’” (233). Though Aru is modern and educated, the significance of being a son or the desire of being a son is at the unconscious level in her mind also.

Similarly, in *Small Remedies*, there is a reference to the significance of the son in Savitribai’s family. When Savitribai recollects her own past for the sake of telling her life history to Madhu, she describes how the son’s child has
been given importance whereas the daughter’s children have been treated as the “Other” in her family as “‘I was my parents’ first child, a very pampered child. My father was the eldest of three brothers, so I was the first grandchild in the family. There were the daughters’ children, of course, but they didn’t count. They were not really our family’” (27).

In Moving On, in Badrinarayan’s family, among his two daughters, Manjari is always considered as strong while Malu is delicate. In the novel, Manjari addresses herself as the son as she says, “I was the son of the family, the tough one, while Malu was the daughter, gentle and to be protected” (41). It shows that the son is always the protector of the family whereas the daughter is to be protected and the women always remain at the inferior position due to this gender discrimination. Likewise, in the last few days of his life, Badrinarayan, Manjari’s father has had a desire to see Manjari and her children. But he knows very well that he cannot expect anything from her “not because she is a daughter” (55) but because he has failed her in her time of need. Usually, the daughter-parent relationship becomes more restricted after the daughter’s marriage. But the sons’ case is entirely different as they have their full freedom to have the parents with them after their marriage.

Similarly, in In the Country of Deceit, Shri Krishna Bhat feels guilty as he is unable to take care of his daughter who is suffering from terrible fits. After her recovery, he realizes his responsibility to look after his daughter’s health problem and raises a question, “But now I have to ask myself a different
question. If Pushpa had been a son instead of a daughter, would I have behaved in the same way? The answer I get is ‘no’ ” (103). Krishna Bhat’s thinking showcases the significance of a son in the Indian society.

The significance of a son in the religious, cultural, social context of India has remained the same from ancient times to the present. The patriarchal society believes that the worth of a mother is in the number of sons she gives birth to and the absence of the male heir deprives her of everything in her life. And all religious laws favour men especially in the matter of property rights and inheritance. These religious laws make a thirst for sons in the minds of the mothers and these laws are responsible for the mothers’ indifferent treatment of their daughters. Thus these women are the victims of socio-cultural constructions in one way or the other. These women are traditional in their outlook and often they share the patriarchal value system. Therefore, they even aid the oppression of these women unwittingly. Deshpande relates this phenomenon to deprivation, socialization and early conditioning. In the family, the woman acquires respect generally with the onset of motherhood. However, it is only with age that she begins to command respect equal to that given to the patriarch. Usually, the power of decision-making rests in male hands. Sometimes, a woman may even become the head, the “patriarch” of the household as discussed above. In such a situation, she often turns oppressive towards the other women in the family and leads them to encounter difficulties. The reason for this phenomenon is discussed in the essay, “A Daughter: A Thing to be Given Away”, where the authors, Penelope Brown, Marthe Macintyre,
Ros Morpeth and Shirley Prendergast explain that in a patriarch “... the aggression and hostility that (women) express in relation to their subjugation as woman tends to become entrapped and contained within their female domain. ...” (131). Thus being agents of oppressive patriarchal practices, Deshpande’s older women have little freedom and choice and frequently they turn oppressors themselves and dominate the other women. Deshpande holds their conditioning and socialization responsible for their attitudes. A mother’s blasé treatment of her daughter is responsible for the crunches that arise in her daughter’s married life later and also becomes an obstacle to achieve identity for her daughter.

Deshpande writes from a man’s point of view too. Sometimes men are treated as the “Other” by women when they engage themselves on fulfilling their responsibilities without understanding their husbands’ feelings, in taking care of the children or doing domestic chores. Sometimes, men are also reduced to a lower grade of importance by the indifferent attitude of women and thereby they too suffer a lot. In Deshpande’s fiction, there are minor characters like Gopal and Ghulam Saab who are suppressed by women.

In *A Matter of Time*, from Sumi’s husband Gopal’s introspection, one can get a clear idea of the insecurities and complexes of men. There is always considerable hyperbole about the concept of motherhood and the feelings of a mother. But women writers do not provide place for a father’s feelings usually.
Deshpande however gives a sparingly honest account of Gopal’s emotions as a father as follows:

But I glimpsed it even then, the truth that would soon confront me, I saw it when Sumi put the baby to her breast. For I knew, when I looked at them, that they belonged together as I never did. Even when Sumi was impatient, when she showed a flash of temper as she often did for being deprived of her sleep, they were together in that magic circle. Woman and child. And I was outside. A man is always an outsider. (68)

At the early days of their married life, Gopal and Sumi have been highly romantic. She has satisfied her husband in all possible ways. But after the birth of their child, a change has occurred in the life of Gopal and Sumi. Sumi gives priority to the child and spends much time with it. As a result, Gopal has been left to feel as the “Other” in his relationship with his wife and child. Here Deshpande successfully articulates the doubts and fears of Gopal with the same effortless ease she has hitherto written about her women protagonists.

Similarly, in Small Remedies, Som, Madhu’s husband feels alienated after the birth of their son, Aditya, like Gopal in A Matter of Time. Two years after their marriage, Aditya is born. Aditya’s birth of course provides ecstasy in the life of Madhu as she says, “Looking at the baby in his cradle, I am dazed by my own happiness. When he smiles at me, when he holds out his arms to me, or so I imagine, I feel burdened by my joy, my whole body heavy and sluggish with it,
gorged, like my breasts are with milk” (89). Being a motherless child, Madhu feels the significance of motherhood at the birth of her son, Aditya and she is fully involved in taking care of her child. As a result, Som feels alienated but he endures it. Though Som is “a fond, indulgent father” (147), he is unable to bear with Madhu’s attachment to Aditya. Like Sumi, Madhu too gives priority to her son and spends much of her time with him as she feels, “What can you give me, my Lord, I, who have everything?” (89). Aditya’s birth forces Madhu to be less concerned about her husband for a period.

Savitribai has lived a sheltered life of a daughter-in-law in an affluent Brahmin family, a woman who even as a child has been part of a large family. The woman with such a background has eloped with a Muslim tabla player and lived in a strange town among total strangers. And of course, it must have required immense courage. It makes Madhu wonder about Savitribai’s life as “What else but love could make a woman of her class, a married woman, take on a lover and leave her home with him?” (176). Madhu feels that it needed tremendous grit and determination on the part of Savitribai to be born in a traditional, orthodox Brahmin family and make a name for herself in the field of classical music. But she has given least importance to her husband. There is no trace of the man’s protest against Savitribai’s desire to learn music. She has been highly conscious of making a name for her in the world of classical music. She has not thought of her husband and his family. She has failed to be loyal to her husband and her husband’s family. Hence Savitribai is not only “The great artist who struggled and sacrificed everything in the cause of her art” (166) but also
“The woman who gave up everything - a comfortable home, a husband and a family – for love” (166). Savitribai’s revolt against her marriage is not because of any problem with her husband. It is Savitribai’s dream to be a renowned singer, which has not been fulfilled while remaining as the daughter-in-law of an affluent Brahmin family, which has made her reject her husband for Ghulam Saab who has recognised her talent and encouraged her to achieve her ambition.

Like Savitribai’s husband, her lover, Ghulam Saab is also rejected by Savitribai later in her life. As in the words of Ghulam Saab’s granddaughter, Hasina:

Ghulam Saab was the one who made Bai known. He met people on her behalf, he arranged her programmes, he made the contacts for her. It was not easy for a woman to do these things then; . . . Without Ghulam Saab, Bai would never have been able to manage this part of her professional life. (274)

Ghulam Saab’s rejection of his own family and sacrifice of his own ambition for the sake of Savitribai speaks of his love for her. But Savitribai’s total ignorance of his contribution to her success when she talks to Madhu shows her desire to attain the respectability she has once renounced. Her denial of Ghulam Saab’s help and his presence in her rough times makes Madhu, Savitribai’s biographer feel like this, “And yet there’s the other Bai I see as well, a calculating, ambitious woman, using the man for her own ends, abandoning him finally when her need for him is over” (176). In her quest for identity, she
has become overly selfish and possessive, for she gives the child her own
identity for her own sake. By naming her Meenakshi Indorekar, Savitribai has
delinked her daughter from her father, Ghulam Saab. To retain her respectability,
the denial of her lover and daughter is needed as Madhu rightly observes,
“Perhaps she thought that to attain these things, this denial of her lover and
daughter was necessary” (154). After attaining success, Savitribai has rejected
her lover, Ghulam Saab for the sake of regaining her lost respectability which
can be provided only by marriage in the traditional Indian society.

Deshpande is an acknowledged master not only at expressing the anguish
and frustrations of women but also at exhibiting the pain and humiliation of men.
Compared to Gopal and Som, the status of Savitribai’s husband and lover is
more pitiful as they are totally rejected by Savitribai. When Deshpande’s women
become devoted and loving mothers and when they become highly selfish for the
sake of their respectability in the society, they treat their men as the “Other.”
Like Deshpande’s women, men also suffer due to the apathetic treatment of
women. The pain and humiliation inflicted on them by women make them suffer
and sometimes make them treat women differently. This situation also creates
struggles in the life of man and woman especially husband and wife.

In the patriarchal society, women have been fighting for their identity.
Just to win this battle, the needed thing for them is that they must realise their
own true “Selves.” Deeply concerned with problems that agitate women,
Deshpande presents case studies in which protagonists probe into their own
selves to find how wrong has been their assessment of the “Self” and how stupid they have been by refusing to become normal. Deshpande’s heroines are known for their own conflicts due to the clash between their inherent “I” and “I” constructed. Of course it leads them to dilemma. Deshpande’s treatment of this dilemma is really unique. She explores the psyche of the “New Woman” in whom we find the co-existence of two conflicting selves. These two conflicting selves may be tradition and modernity. Hence there is the “Other” within the “Self” itself, and this can be identified in the women characters of Deshpande. It is beautifully expressed in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* by Deshpande in this manner, “I had learnt it too, to create an image of myself for the world to live within it hiding my real self so resolutely that at times I forget myself it was just a façade” (80).

In *The Binding Vine*, Urmila desires for a complete freedom as she has been quite fed up with her husband, Kishore’s unconcerned treatment. He never understands the feelings of his wife, Urmila. And also in the words of Urmila, he is a man “who flits into my life a few months in a year and flits out again, leaving nothing of himself” (164). She is being a submissive wife and performing the conventional role of a wife with her own expectation that her husband’s character would change one day or another. Though she wants to get some sort of relief through the friendship of Bhaskar, she is being a traditional woman and she still has so much of love for her husband who never bothers about her wishes, and she would like to live with him till the end of her life. She indulges herself in Bhaskar’s friendship as she finds in him the qualities she
expects but she never crosses the boundaries. In this friendship, she has her own freedom to speak, to express her desires and above all, she gets a patient listener. Actually she expects her husband to be a man who understands her well. But in reality, as an orthodox wife she manages to live with her husband with her own hopes and never fights with him. Hence the “Other” of her “Self” has been suppressed that Urmila’s true desire or expectation has been suppressed by the things she has to do to save her married life.

Like Urmila, Mira is also known for her desires. She does not like to lead her life with a man who has suppressed and exploited her sexually. Through Mira’s writings, it can be understood that she has an intense dislike for the sexual act with her husband. But she has lived with him for the sake of marriage. Her true desire before her marriage has been to become a writer. Though she has fulfilled her desire through her secret writing as a means of expression after the marriage, it has not been made public. Like Urmila, Mira too has had a thirst for a life of freedom and this is of course the “Other” of her “Self.”

Like Urmila and Mira, Shakutai considers her hopeless married life as her fate. Shakutai’s dislike of her husband is still stronger. But she does not like to take revenge on him though he has abandoned her and the children for another woman. Actually she has been fed up with her own life maintaining all by herself. But still she wants to confine herself to that marriage by suppressing her own true desires. In spite of her real desire, she expresses to Urmila, “‘We have to keep to our places, we can never step out’” (148). But her real anger on her
husband is revealed when she deals with the matter of mangalsutra. One day she thinks that “‘... the man himself is so worthless, why should I bother to have this thing made in precious gold?’” (110) though it is one of Shakutai’s dreams to have her mangalsutra in gold. Though she considers her marriage to that man the greatest misfortune of her life, she does not walk out on marriage as she has been suppressed by the traditions. She is really frustrated by her husband’s rejection of her and there must have been in her mind a clamour for relieving herself of the marriage. But she suppresses her true desire of assuaging herself from this plaintive married life and lives like a conservative wife and mother.

In *Moving On*, Manjari is also bold and steadfast like Deshpande’s other women characters. She marries Shyam against her parents’ wishes. But very soon the novelist problematizes the situation. Manjari’s sister Malu is made pregnant by Shyam. Malu’s death after delivery, followed by Shyam’s suicide shatters Manjari a lot. One can understand the amount of mental agony Manjari goes through. Her husband’s betrayal and his illicit relationship with her sister have already made Manjari a frustrated being. Though she wants to be loyal to her husband remaining as a widow, her desire for sexual relationship subjugates her. This may be due to the fact that her long detachment with a male body arouses her desire. As a result, she sleeps with her tenant who is much younger than her. Likewise, though she does not accept Raja’s repeated marriage proposals, she does not protest against his mischievous activities like hugging and kissing her. It is also due to her suppressed and factual sexual desire, which she struggles to fulfil.
Conventionally, the identity of a woman is dictated by what others perceive her to be as per the dictates of the society. She is not her own person but an image adjusting and accommodating as per the image predetermined for her. This identity is not the genuine identity but a distortion of the “Self” an illusion. The real “Self” remains a false image till she realizes her true calling or true desire as “Maya,” a persona in which her “Self,” the inherent “I” in her identity amalgamates with her other “I” constructed out of her relationship with other people and her love. Deshpande’s women also have the smothered part of their own “Self.” What they are performing is really different from what they would like to perform. Actually they have definite desires, which are suppressed for various reasons. This is actually the suppressed part of their personality which is always given primary importance for the sake of fulfilling the norms of traditional society. These two conflicting selves are also responsible for various problems in man-woman relationship.

The female or male identity rests mainly upon the patterns of power structure that exist in a society and these patterns are responsible for the pathetic status of women. Niwas says, “A creation of patriarchal setup, which views males as superior and females as inferior gender serves the male flair of domination. There are structures of domination, in particular constructions of gender, which ensure the overall subordinate position of women in society” (66). The male identity is mainly constructed through personal possessions and achievements. And the idea of possession is an integral part of men’s identity.
Men are always in a position to oppress women in any familial role they play like son, father, husband and brother.

The Indian male as established earlier creates his identity around his profession and his possessions. For Sarita, the protagonist of the novel The Dark Holds No Terrors, what is very much needed to maintain a happy marriage is as follows:

A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. If he’s an M.A., you should be a B.A., If he’s 5’4” tall, you shouldn’t be more than 5’3” tall. If he’s earning five hundred rupees, you should never earn more than four hundred and ninety-nine rupees. That’s the only rule to follow if you want a happy marriage . . . women’s magazines will tell you that marriage should be an equal partnership. That’s nonsense. Rubbish. No partnership can ever be equal. It will always be, unequal but take care – that it’s unequal in favour of your husband. If the scales tilt in your favour, God help you, both of you. (137)

The lopsided gender equation is there within the context of urban marital relationships as Sarita is a doctor and Manu is a lecturer in the novel. Submission of the wife is ensured with the help of socialization that begins in early childhood and extends well into adolescence and adulthood. Deshpande’s girl children are trained in such a way to give preference to the males around them. But when they grow and get educated, their new sense of identity and
equality clash with the internalized sense of submission and docility and consequently, when they get married later, their marriages threaten to fall apart.

In the book entitled *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* and edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, Gayatri Chakravarthy Spivak writes in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” as follows:

> Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object formation the figure of woman disappears not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the “Third-world woman” caught between tradition and modernization. (65)

It is this tension between tradition and modernity that Deshpande deals with in her novels. Her women characters suffer from the conflict which arises due to this tension.

The traditional society never visualises women as individuals that women are being mothers, daughters, sisters and wives who always care for others but never as individuals. Women have been treated as the “Other” by men right from their childhood. Especially in marriage, woman is assigned an inferior position and is forced to suffer a lot. Marriages normally subordinate the wives to the husbands and it also idealizes female martyrdom. Profession does not spell success for a meaningful existence and women’s success in a profession shall always be considered secondary to her success in her marriage. Bhavana Dwivedi remarks:
Deshpande brings out the problem of marriage as an evil social practice because right from the beginning to the end it is the history of woman’s suppression, a long-drawn-out drama to the end it is the history of a woman’s suppression, a long-drawn-out drama of negotiation in which she feels uncertain of her position. This is a deal in which the poor woman is literally bracketed with an animal, for she cannot exercise her reasoning or intelligence and express her genuine individual concerns. (117)

Though they are educated and career-oriented, Deshpande’s women are forced to understand that success in marriage means manipulating, sacrificing, adjustments and silently managing her relationship with her husband in accordance with the norms dictated by the society.

As Deshpande’s objective is to probe into the deep layers of human sensibility, she shows that an individual’s basic desire is to be himself/herself but the pressure at external factors is so overpowering that this basic desire is lost in wilderness. The desperate outcome of this as endured by women is beautifully portrayed in the fiction of Deshpande. As Indira Parikh observes, “You are always in somebody else’s space. There is no space which you can call your own. The only way to gain acceptance is through conformity, sacrifice and obedience” (103). Usually, the Indian wife accepts this status because of the models given to her to emulate. According to Mies, “The Indian woman accepts this status, the status of being the other, because she has been nurtured since
childhood on the mythological characters of Sita, Savitri, Draupadi and Gandhari as role models and taught to emulate their devotion to their husband” (101).

The patriarchal setup is responsible for women’s condition in the Indian society and the responsibility also lies with the victims who refuse to raise a voice and achieve the goal. Deshpande’s characters like Shakutai and Sulu belong to this type. But when women like Urmila, Madhu, Manjari and Devayani become educated and come under the process of internalization, they come to know about their poignant status and they want to relieve themselves of the pain and suffering provided by the status of being the “Other.”

The protagonists of Deshpande are all educated and career-oriented. The novelist has taken up the effort of creating a picture of “changing image of woman” through her heroines. Deshpande’s protagonists like Urmila, Madhu and Manjari are in search of the means to overcome oppression, to develop their powers and abilities for personal fulfilment and self-actualization. Their search is nothing but their search for identity. In their search for identity, they try to live and think anew and raise numerous questions. They strive for certain autonomy to realize their immense potentialities for action and self-actualization. With more and more women being emancipated through education and careers, men are really caught up in a difficult situation to make a change in their character. As a result, though they realize the need for the change in their attitude towards women, they like to retain women in the subordinate status only. Deep down in their mind, they still hold on to the traditional beliefs of the superiority of men
and subjugation of women. Kishore, Som, Raja are examples for this. Though they are educated, Som and Kishore are archetypal husbands who cannot understand their wives’ feelings and desires. And thereby they subordinate their wives’ notions by suppressing them physically as well as morally.

These women develop an unconscious desire in their minds to achieve “Self” in the patriarchal society as they have suffered a lot at the hands of men. In many situations, the power of decision-making may rest in male hands but an older woman’s views would be solicited and valued. When these oppressed women become the head, the “patriarch” of the household, they often turn oppressive towards the other women in the family and make them suffer. This often happens in mother-daughter relationship. Manorama and Shakutai are suppressed for various reasons in all possible ways by the patriarchal society. When they become authoritative, they treat their daughters also in the suppressed ways due to their aggression and hostility derived through their subjugation.

Sometimes, the suppressed women retain their men in the subordinate position in search of their new identity as occurred in the life of Sumi, Madhu and Savitribai. Sumi and Madhu do not bother about their husbands’ desires because of their attachment to their children. Savitribai rejects her husband and her lover for the sake of attaining success in her music world. She does this consciously as she becomes cunning and selfish to reach her goal.

In Deshpande’s novels, marriage teaches the women the art of deception and suppression as a survival strategy but the protagonists of these novels
believe that women should be aware of their rights and needs and without the slightest guilt feeling, they should assert their personal needs and desires. In fact, these women can be identified as the mouthpiece of the author, Deshpande herself who has been engaged in the process of “consciousness raising” to uplift ordinary Indian women. Men usually do not have that much problem comparing to women as they identify themselves with God and expose themselves as superior to women. And from here, the identity of women becomes the victim of men. Deshpande insists upon a “space” for women. She proves the fact that if the “Self” of woman is disregarded through the “unwritten story,” woman will record her protest in her relationship with men and of course it paves the way for problems. Though most feminists urge that women should claim more fully the man ordained space, they agree that this should not be the ultimate goal. It is not enough to claim more space for women under the existing social structures but to deconstruct and transform the existing reality which is very much needed to reflect better the fact that women are one half of the sky. Hence, feminists and feminist criticism are known for their contribution to bring about betterment in the status of women in the patriarchal society. Elaine Showalter rightly says, “No one would deny that feminist criticism has affinities to other contemporary critical practices and methodologies and that the best work is also the most fully informed” (334). Deshpande’s women too are known for their own intense desire to rise above the common as there are always different standards – for men and women – being practised in the society. The demands of “Self” cannot be ignored and can be ignored only at the cost of the destruction of mental peace
and the distracted personality. G. M. Amur says, “Women’s struggle, in the context of contemporary Indian society to find and preserve her identity as a wife, mother and most important of all, as human being, is Shashi Deshpande’s major concern as a creative writer, and this appears in all her stories” (10).

Though Deshpande does not want to be branded as a feminist, she argues for women. She stresses a magnificent thing that each one becomes part of the larger disharmony in which the complementary relationship between husband-wife, man-woman, parents-children that holds the family together in love and understanding flounders. Mirnalini Sebastian quotes the words of Homi K. Bhabha in her book *The Novels of Shashi Deshpande in Post colonial Argument*, “The ‘other’ is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully within cultural discourse, when we think we speak most intimately and indigenously ‘between ourselves’” (231). The select novels demonstrate our perception of the “Other” not in the outside social space of gender but within the limited space of the family where the act of domination and subordination is played out daily. The quest for identity must be understood by both man and woman in man-woman relationship. Otherwise all their efforts to achieve it will end in a greater futility and nothingness. But most of the times they fail to understand their common desire for identity in marriage and as a result they lead their married life with complications. But women like Urmila, Madhu, and Manjari have rightly understood their desire for identity and struggled against the patriarchal society. Hence, the hope for Indian women lies in the happy fact that though there are Miras, Kalpanas and Shakutais, they also have their
Urmilas, Madhus and Manjaris. Deshpande’s men and women are also no exception from this and they have also their own problems due to their search for identity. Mukesh Yadav and Shalini Yadav rightly observe:

Shashi Deshpande contributes by depicting the problems and plights, trials and tribulations of the middle class women of Indian society. She does not give her female protagonists a readymade solution for their problems but develops a faith in hope so that they can change their circumstances from despair to hope through a route of self-searching and self-examination, through valor and resilience. (21)

Women too want to achieve a harmonious life with their life partners. Hence in order to gain both equality and to realize their potential, women must be autonomous and must transcend their distinctive femaleness to lead the kind of life men do.

Language and its varied expressions play a vital role in defining relationship. As men and women are different, there are subtle differences in the nature of their language through which they react to so many things. And certainly, this makes a real impact on man-woman relationship. Men and women use language differently and this difference sets them apart to a certain extent. Men’s language is most often exposed as a means of diminishing women as revealed in the novels of Deshpande. The biggest difference between men and women and their style of communication boils down to the fact that men and
women view the purpose of conversations differently. Men and women differ psychologically in the way they act, from the style in which they communicate to the way on which they attempt to influence others and these psychological gender differences across communication styles are predominantly stereotypical. This difference in their language leads to unhealthy communication, which is, one of the most frequently given reasons for breakdown of man-woman relationship especially in marital relationship. The next chapter discusses the complexities and fluidity of language that spheres man-woman relationship, with the aid of the psychoanalytic concepts of renowned critics.