Patriarchy, in feminist discourse, refers to a “cultural mindset” that perpetuates inequality between man and woman. *Reader’s Digest Great Dictionary of the English Language* explains patriarchy as “a form of social organization in which the father or eldest male is the head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line – a system of society in which men hold most or all of the power” (709). It operates in direct and subtle ways to achieve its power essential for subordination and subjugation of women.

As these domination and subordination are manifested through various forms in the life of men and women in the patriarchal society, they reflect through their language also.

Deshpande’s concern with the patriarchal concept that a woman must exist only in terms of her relationship with a man becomes apparent in several other novels as well. In a patriarchy, woman is necessarily viewed as needing male control at all stages of her life. Brown rightly observes, “[her / place as mother / sister / daughter or daughter - in - law / wife is completely at the disposal of her male relatives, first, by virtue of birth and second by marriage. The woman’s role is rigidly defined by the male authority structure” (129-31). Hence the language which a woman possesses to express her ideas or for the sake of the communication too is already designed according to the thoughts kept in the unconscious. Since her childhood, she has been brought up in such a
way that she has been suppressed by men in all ways. In a male-dominated society, a woman can only pretend to be satisfied and happy. This idea is beautifully expressed in one of Kamala Das’ poems entitled “Suicide”:

But
I must pose
I must pretend
I must act the role
Of a happy woman
Happy wife. (192)

This pretence leads to frustration and suffocation in a woman’s life. Automatically these frustration and suffocation are reflected through her language when she desires to express her original status. Consequently, the boredom and frustration make characters like Kate complain, “I am sick of being the victim of trends I reflect but don’t even understand” (53). Kate appears in Jane Wagner’s feminist play, The Search for Signs of Intellectual Life in the Universe. From pretension of happiness comes the feeling of being a victim and finally a woman realises that she should definitely have her own identity. These things are possible when they become educated and when they internalize the learning.

Marriage is an important event in the life of a woman. The importance that the Indian society provides to marriage is reflected in our literature and it is the central concern of Deshpande’s novels. Marriage is the ultimate goal of a girl’s life. Though marriage is important for both man and woman, woman is not
enjoying the same freedom as her male counterpart does. Even if the woman chooses her own husband, she is labelled a rebel not only by the family but also by the society consisting of both men and women. Hence, the society is also to be blamed for usurping the freedom of woman regarding marriage. Compared to her father’s house, a woman suffers a lot in her husband’s house due to various problems. Through her protagonists, Deshpande recognizes the inadequacies of male-created ideologies and struggles for the spiritual, economic and social inequality of women who are sexually colonized and biologically subjugated. Her perceptions have come close to the observation of Sarah Grimake, “He has done all he could do to debase and enslave her mind” (10).

The narrative vision of Deshpande is directed to expose the long smothered wall of the incarnated psyche of her female protagonists imprisoned within the four walls of domesticity, drifting between tradition and modernity. In man-woman relationship, especially in their marital life, problems arise due to various reasons as these two belong to two different categories as well as are from two different families. One of the main reasons for the uncomfortability in relationship is one’s misunderstanding of the other’s language. As man and woman are known for their different nature, the language which they use to express their ideas also differs. Manusmriti, an ancient text which has been instrumental in shaping the psyche of the Indian male and female, has ascribed a superior role for men. Indian masculinity can be understood thus as a construct that has arisen out of a deep-rooted sense of superiority in relation to women who have been subjugated and oppressed. Naturally, domination and
subjugation, the two original colours of both man and woman reflect in their language also. As the psychoanalysts like Lacan acclaim, these two different types of nature find their own space in the language of both man and woman.

Psychoanalytic criticism is often accused of being reductive, and is considered as a closed system. However, developments in the context of contemporary literary criticism prove the point that psychoanalytic literary criticism is not without its justification and utility. Initially, Freud’s application of psychoanalysis in literary criticism has been to substantiate his views keeping in mind their broader applications. As the enterprise has proved to be effective, some of Freud’s own disciples have put their hands on literary criticism and they have proved that they are not only psychoanalysts, but also able literary critics. Psychoanalysis has gradually opened up a new awareness about the author’s creative work, thus putting the critics under tremendous pressure. Psychoanalysis also helps in analysing man-woman relationship through their language effectively.

The vast scope of feminism has provided women writers across the world with the vocabulary and framework to articulate their experiences of female oppression and feminist longings. Current western feminist literary criticism has mainly expressed itself in two distinct schools of thought: the French and the Anglo-American as it is expressed by Ann Rosalind Jones in “Inscribing Femininity: French Theories of the Feminine.” French theorists Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous and Monique Wittig employ Derrida’s method of deconstruction, and Lacanian psychoanalysis to create a critique of feminism.
They attack language which they look upon as a tool of male domination to subjugate and deport women to a secondary position. These people allege that the very structure of language is phallocentric that the structure of language has the male as the nucleus of consciousness and considers him the originator of meaning and thought. French feminists question this primacy of the male. They reject all existing language and literature as patriarchal and attempt to structure what they call a *parler femme* or a feminine language.

Lacan and Derrida are known for their own contributions in the field of Language and Philosophy. The critical approaches of both Lacan and Derrida move beyond Freudian derivatives. Lacan in his re-interpretation of psychoanalysis has contributed to new complexities and speculations in literary horizons. Parallel to Lacan’s revision of Freud, structuralism and its offspring, deconstruction, have taken serious note of psychoanalysis. From its linguistic and theoretical dimensions, psychoanalysis has been successfully integrated into Derrida’s philosophy.

The approach adopted by both Lacan and Derrida, in the context of Freud accounts for a positional variance on the unconscious. Lacan expresses that the unconscious is structured like a language. His stress is on the supremacy of the “signifier” in determining the subjects in their acts. He places the emphasis on language’s imposition of a mould which creates the unconscious. Derrida takes altogether a different view. For him the “signifier” is not so supreme. Words, whether spoken or written, are subject to differences, differing from and deferring in transient fixation of meaning. Derrida’s reading of Freud is not only
a deconstruction of Freud’s texts, but also a self-reflection upon the very activity of deconstruction itself. It is proved by Derrida’s words which have been quoted by K. C. Baral as follows:

Our aim is limited: to locate in Freud’s text several points of reference, and to isolate, on the threshold of a systematic examination, those elements of psychoanalysis which can only uneasily be contained within logocentric closure, as this closure limits not only the history of philosophy but also the orientation of the “human sciences,” notably of a certain linguistics. If the Freudian break through has an historical originality, this originality is not due to its peaceful co-existence or theoretical complicity with this linguistics, at least in its congenital phonolegism.

(101-02)

Derrida’s analysis of Freud has strengthened his own concepts of logocentrism and phonocentrism. Attributing significance to writing than to speech, Derrida finds that there is a positive break, or opening of a path in Freud’s writing for his metaphysical speculations. The influences of Lacan and Derrida have affected the contemporary critical climate immensely.

Jacques Derrida is well known for his concept of feminine sexuality like “difference.” Actually Deshpande’s novels are feminine texts, which critique the position of Indian women in the phallocentric orthodoxy. In the logocentric literary history, it is common to see the woman as inferior. In the structured, dual
hierarchized oppositions, the woman is always on the side of passivity. Every
time a question comes up as to the kinship structure, family model, the male, the
father, the son finds the privileged place. Hence, in all aspects of human life, the
woman-centred gynocentricism takes a beating and the man-centred
phallocentricism gets the upper hand. It is Jacques Derrida who has, through his
critique, given a network of concept-metaphors relating to feminine sexuality. It
is not only Derrida but also many others, both feminists and pre-feminists who
point out that society, old and new, has been phallocentric. Derrida has spoken
much about it in his various discourses.

It is well known that gynocentricism is the oppositional notion of
phallocentrism. From the very beginning of the western epistemology, the
opposition between the masculine and the feminine has been soldered as
deep-seated polarities in the societal, religious and cultural organisations, which
have defined the disprivileging of women. According to Derrida, such binary
polarities have to be deconstructed if that epistemology is to be dismantled. To
Derrida, deconstruction is not a discursive or theoretical affair, but a
practico-political one. Derrida’s deconstruction is neither negative nor neutral. It
is also not merely linguistic. It is of course quite useful to highlight feminist
thought. Some of the elements of his work bear directly on feminist issues. The
most important of these is Derrida’s use of certain feminine metaphors to replace
masculine metaphors which dominate the western epistemology. “Differance” is
one of Derrida’s terms that deconstruct the binary oppositions at the root of
western epistemology.
Actually feminists’ emphasis on difference stresses the masculine hierarchies and positions the masculine in a privileged situation. Concurrently, the disprivileging of women is so deeply rooted in western/eastern culture that it may not be possible to dislodge this situation by feminist themselves. Derrida offers a solution to them. His position is not to abandon the difference but conceptualizing it in a new way, creating “a neutral originaries” (170) in the words of Jacques Derrida and Christie V. Macdonald, as quoted by Robert Gnamony in *Literary Polyrhythms*. In other words, difference can be interpreted not in terms of polarities but in terms of multiplicities and pluralities. Derrida’s new concept does not treat men and women as opposites but that which represents multiple differences, pluralities of characteristics that cross and re-cross the boundary between the two. Derrida’s concept instigates women to over throw the polarities of the metaphysics of presence. His explication of “differance” posits a new discourse, which has no centre; neither masculine nor feminine; yet does not erase either the masculine or the feminine.

Derrida has borrowed from Saussure the concept that language is founded on difference. He coined the neologism “difference,” to stress the double meaning of the French verb, differer – to differ and to defer or delay. In this sense, difference is also the deferral, for the moment at least. “What is written as difference,” Derrida has explained in *Margins of Philosophy*, “will be the playing movement that produces . . . these differences, these effects of difference in language” (11). “Differance” is neither a word nor a concept; it is rather a technique, a Derridean device that induces to think strategically; in his words,
“What is most irreducible about, our era” (7). It may be remembered that, feminists of the yesteryears vociferously and unanimously have believed that women as a social class all over the world have been globally exploited and oppressed by men.

Unlike Freudian psychoanalysis, in Lacan’s psychoanalysis, the phallic power is symbolized by the “signifier,” which is projected as more powerful than the subject who fades and suffers castration. The banished subject is represented as “absence.” In Lacanian psychoanalysis, phallocentrism is the “symbolic order.” As it is expressed by Selden in *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, “Woman is the silence of the ‘Unconscious’ which precedes discourse. She is the ‘Other,’ which stands outside and threatens to disrupt the conscious (rational) order of speech” (15). Mani Meitei says:

Thus the gendered human subject (woman), the defile of the signifier, enters into the symbolic order, thereby suggesting a resistance of the subject which is the barred subject, barred by the signifier. This gives rise to a representation by the repressed subject, and this representation is now the feminine discourse. Thus the feminist’s position is to deconstruct the linguistically genderized view, “he” or “she”, and to subvert the symbolic order that is the “Law of the Father”, marked by the signifier of the phallus and the castration complex - all aiming at the loss of sexual difference. (77)
Since their childhood, women have been treated as the “Other” and their feelings and desires have also been suppressed by men traditionally. Hence men possess superior nature and women possess inferior nature. Not only their activities are regulated by their nature but their language is also shaped by its influence. But when women become educated and come under the processes of internalization, self-realisation and individuation, they are forced to understand their original status as “the repressed subject” (77) in the words of Mani Meitei. And this sort of understanding only gives rise to feminine discourse.

Deshpande, in her works, defines freedom for the Indian woman within the Indian socio-cultural value system and institutions. She has not been interested in creating strong, glorified female heroes, instead, she has presented the Indian women as facing the very real dilemma of having to choose between modernity and convention. Deshpande’s focus in her fiction is essentially on woman and her role in the society. Accordingly, marriage is perhaps the most important event in the life of a woman. But, marriage leads a woman to subjugation and slavery only. Women pay for their happiness at the cost of their freedom. They play the role of an ideal housewife because they do not want to destroy the family peace. But the role of a wife restricts her self-development – firstly by taking away her freedom of thought and expression, and secondly, by denying her the scope of giving free play to her artistic potential. But in the changing contexts of the country, India and times, the women of Deshpande find themselves at cross-purposes with themselves as well as the society. Deshpande explores the psychic and moral dilemmas and repercussions of the situation in
her women characters who are trying to achieve a new harmony of relationship with themselves and their surroundings. Both man and woman’s language play an important role in attaining harmonious relationship between them. As men are always considered superior and known for domination, and women are always considered inferior and known for subjugation, not only their actions but also their language expresses its distinct nature. Owing to the education and changing scenario, women come to realize their real status which is very awful. And this realization gives rise to feminine discourse which can also be noted in Deshpande’s fiction. This chapter particularly deals with the language of man and woman, the language of domination and the language of submission and tries to explicate how man’s misunderstanding of woman’s language and vice versa leads to complications in the life of man and woman especially in their relationship as partners.

In *The Binding Vine*, Urmila feels appalled when Bhaskar reveals that his mother has made a list of eligible girls from his community and has collected their photographs. Bhaskar is unable to understand Urmila’s dislike of it. He asks, “Tell me, what’s wrong with it? You believe in marriage-for-love, you think only that is right?” (160). Urmila replies, “It’s not that, it’s just... this seems so cold-blooded. As if those girls are objects in a catalogue. You know what I mean’ ” (160). Being a man, Bhaskar fails to see anything wrong in Urmila’s expression and calls it sensible. Urmila has to tell him, “It leaves out the girls. Girls aren’t going to meekly accept any man their parents choose for them - not any more’ ” (160). A complacent man, Bhaskar fails to understand
what Urmila tries to reveal to correct his presumption. He does not expect any
girl to reject a man like him who has money, status and family reputation and
actually he does not care about love. Urmila expresses the fact that girls also
have their own desires about their marriage. But Bhaskar believes that a girl
must marry a man her parents choose for her and there is no place for her likes
and dislikes in marriage. That is why he raises the question in a dominating
voice as “‘Tell me, what’s wrong with it?’” (160).

In another context in the novel, *The Binding Vine*, Urmila tries to correct
another presumption of men like her own brother that women do want to be
dominated. Actually, no woman wants to be dominated. Amrut, Urmila’s brother
voices his presumption about the character of women to Urmila herself, “‘Do
women want to be dominated?’” (137). Urmila replies, “No, Amrut, no human
being wants to be dominated. From the moment of our births, we struggle to find
something with which we can anchor ourselves to this strange world we find
ourselves in. Only when we love do we find this anchor” (137). Urmila, in her
polite manner, explains to her brother in her beautiful language that love is very
much needed for man-woman relationship and true love has the redemptive
power.

At the end of the novel, *The Binding Vine*, Urmila’s final decision and her
color reveals the established character of ordinary women. Though she is fed
up with her life because of her daughter’s death and her husband’s
misunderstanding of her, Urmila decides not to give up her married life and
prepares herself to do her daily chores happily. Her language of suppression
goes like this, “I race through my chores in the next one hour - cooking, getting
ready for college, looking through my timetable, my notes, preparing Kartik’s lunch box. This is how life is for most of us, most of the time; we are absorbed in the daily routine of living. The main urge is always to survive” (203). The sentence “The main urge is always to survive” (203) implies the fact that as a traditional woman, Urmila does not want to loose her marriage but she wants to survive in her married life. Unlike Gopal in *A Matter of Time*, she does not want to walk out on family because of her alienation and rejection. Instead, she cares about her responsibilities, her son and above all her marriage. This care, the special quality of woman, only urges Urmila to speak like an orthodox woman.

In *A Matter of Time*, Gopal’s walking out on his family destroys the whole economic structure of the family as well as its peace. Both Gopal and his wife, Sumi, are really very unusual people. Sumi does not expose her anger and does not want to get any explanation from her husband. She appears to be an epitome of silent suffering and passive resistance. But she wants to ask him one question which remains unsaid:

. . . if I meet Gopal I will ask him one question . . . the question no one has thought of. What is it, Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in this age of acquisition and possession walk out on his family and all that he owns? Because . . . it was you who said that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How then can you, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back on everything in your life? Will you be able to give me an answer to this? (27)
In the patriarchal society, marriage, it is believed, gives privileged position and security to women. Sumi’s words show that she is also known for her unconscious desire that she does not want to lose her marriage and the status and security it provides her in the society. That desire only is reflected in her question though it is unsaid. It can be said that Sumi’s unconscious thought is structured like her language and it of course reflects Lacan’s words on language.

The distracted relationship of Gopal and Sumi affects their daughters – Aru, Charu and Seema economically as well as emotionally. They all bother about the desertion of their parents and think of different tricks to bring them together once again because living separately after getting married is considered very odd in the Indian society. In order to bring together the parents, the daughters divert their concentration from their careers and future planning. However, Charu and Seema are not affected much by this abandonment of their father but Aru, the eldest daughter is affected much by their separation as she expresses, “That’s wonderful . . . you don’t care where he is, you don’t care what people think - but I care, yes, I do, I care about Papa having left us, I care about not having our own house. I don’t want to live like this, as if we’re sitting on a railway platform, I want my home back, I want my father back” (21). Like her mother, Aru has her own strongly ingrained unconscious desire that she is very determined in saving her family and she does not want to give up her father for any reason. Though modern and educated, Aru gives space for the unconscious and rooted desires which also indirectly reveal that women always
need the companionship of men. Women’s dependence on men is revealed through Aru’s language indirectly.

The marriage of Sumi and Gopal is based on perfect understanding but later on it is shattered with Gopal’s alienation without any hope of reconciliation. While other family members are busy with their wild guesses, his wife, Sumi knows that “the reason lies inside him, the reason is him” (24). Gopal himself admits to have been frightened by his own inner emptiness as he says, “Emptiness . . . is always waiting for us. The nightmare we most dread, of waking up among total strangers, is one we can never escape. And so it’s a lie, it means nothing, it’s just deceiving ourselves when we say we are not alone. . . . All human ties are only a masquerade” (52). Such is the strength of the “virus” that Gopal is rendered incapable of functioning as a full human being. In the light of this quoted passage, Keerti Ramachandra perceives that Gopal’s desertion of his family signifies the vedic renunciation freeing “himself of all bondage,” (21) which is not entirely convincing. Men are known for asserting their freedom in marriage and even walking out on their family is easy and possible for them. For men, the idea of themselves as superior is so strongly rooted in their psyche that it is mainly responsible for their actions and reflects through their language too. Gopal himself gives his reason for his walkout, “I stopped believing in the life I was leading, suddenly it seemed unreal to me and I knew I could not go on” (41). The words of Gopal reflect only his power to do whatever he likes in his life as a man.
When Sumi’s sister Premi attempts to mend the rift that has set in the life of Gopal and Sumi, Gopal discloses his loss of faith in life quoting Yudhishtira and he tells her of “the greatest wonder in this world”:

We see people die and yet we go on as if we are going to live forever . . . it’s the secret of life itself. We know it’s all there, the pain and suffering, old age, loneliness and death, but we think, somehow we believe that it’s not for us. The day we stop believing in this untruth . . . it will become difficult, almost impossible to go on . . . ‘It happened to me. I stopped believing. The miracle failed for me and there was nothing left. You’ve got to be the Buddha for that emptiness to be filled with compassion for the world. For me there was just emptiness.’ (133-34)

This sort of thinking is possible only for men in the patriarchal setup. It is quite surprising that how Gopal, a responsible father can give this explanation, forgetting all his responsibilities. These are the words which can be produced only by men like Gopal. He gives his own reasons for his walkout which may be vedantic but is not convincing. Hence, traditionally, men live in freedom and they have no restrictions to do anything compared to women and of course this contrast in their nature creates troubles between them especially when they become life partners.

In *Small Remedies*, Savitribai recollects the authoritative language of her Guruji through her interview with Madhu and fortunately she understands her
master’s language well, which is very helpful to her to understand the reality and attain her success later. When Savitribai expresses her difficulty in learning the “todi,” her Guruji replies, “‘Todi was mine. You can never get that. You have to create your own, it will come through your life, your experiences, your joys and sorrows’” (133). Of course, here Savitribai’s Guruji’s voice is known for its own authoritative nature, a traditional characteristic feature of man. This authoritative voice can be identified only in man’s language. Savitribai as a woman takes the advice of her Guruji in her own polite way and understands it in the right sense and makes use of it as a weapon to achieve success in the music world later. From Savitribai’s revelation, Madhu realizes Savitribai’s growth in the music world and her genius in this way, “In this story I see the artist, the woman in search of her genius, of her destiny. But the artist was born of the woman. First there was the woman and then the artist” (133).

Similarly, Madhu feels hurt by the harsh language of her cousin, Lata. Madhu stays in Lata and Hari’s house for the sake of interviewing Savitribai, the legend of the music world, to make the biography of Savitribai. One day, Madhu has to stay with her family friend, Chandru at the hotel, for a night, as he has drunk much and collapsed on the bed. Actually it is too late for her to go back to the house by herself. Next morning, she goes to the house and to her shock, she has to bear the harsh words of Lata. Madhu expresses, “‘I’m sorry, I should have informed you. I did try to ring up, but you were not at home . . .’” (252). But Lata replies, “‘It’s okay, you didn’t need to. What does it matter if we worry? And it’s our own stupidity, we’re small-town people, we don’t
understand these things’” (252). After observing Lata and Hari’s reaction to her inadvertently spending a night in a hotel room with Chandru, Madhu thinks aloud helplessly as she exposes, “It does not matter that Chandru is Som’s friend and that Chandru and I have been friends as well for nearly twenty-five years. Men can be brothers, fathers, lovers, husbands, but never friends - is that how it is?” (254). In this situation, not Chandru but Madhu suffers a lot. Madhu’s feelings are reflected in her words.

In *Moving On*, Manjari’s revelation of her adulterous relationship with her tenant, Raman, really bewilders Raja and he gets furious. Raja, a one-time wooer of Manjari, finds it hard to understand the thing that why she cannot accept him and what has attracted her to Raman. But when Manjari narrates her wretched condition to Raja, he realizes the problems posed to the widows like Manjari. Manjari represents the ill-fated widows when she says, “. . . I gave up wearing saris because I didn’t want to look womanly, I cut my hair short like a man’s, I wore my most forbidding expression. But it was of no use. They can smell it, yes, they can smell the woman in you” (284). Manjari has herself witnessed the forces of society trying to violate her womanhood. Her miserable status only makes her speak like this and her words of course point out her indirect quest for freedom. Through her words, it can be understood well that how women remain as “repressed subjects” in the patriarchal society and how their suppression is exhibited through their language.

In *In the Country of Deceit*, Sindhu, Devayani’s aunt in her letter describes a couple in a film which she has watched with her family members.
Actually the husband and wife, who have separated meet by chance and talk about “why they broke up” (98). Sindhu translates their dialogue into English as follows:

She says, ‘you know what the problem was? We never communicated.’

He says, ‘But we had sex.’

She says, ‘But that’s not communication!’

He says, ‘Then what is it?’

She walks out on him.

I laughed and laughed. Keshav and Sudhir looked at me as if I had gone mad. The point is, the man always says: I want to be comfortable, I want to be looked after, I want children, I want love, I want sex, sex, sex, sex . . .

The woman says: I want children, I want to be looked after, I want to be loved, tell me you love me, I want love, love, love . . .

Where’s the meeting point then? (98)

The misunderstanding of communication between a husband and a wife is beautifully exposed here. The woman tells the man about the main reason for the breakup that they have never communicated. To her, “communication” means nothing but sharing their thoughts with each other and understanding each other. But the man relates the word “communication” with sex. This misunderstanding is responsible for disagreements between a husband and a wife.
In yet another context in the novel, *In the Country of Deceit*, Ashok has bought a gold chain with a pendant for Devayani as a birthday gift. When he gives it to Devayani, she refuses to accept it. He says, “‘you have to tell me why’” (209). She replies, “‘I feel as if I’m being paid’” (209). He gets angry as Devayani reports, “He stared at me, his face blank at first. Then it was flooded with anger. There was something terrifying about it” (209). He puts the box back into his pocket and walks out. Devayani’s words “‘I feel as if I’m being paid’” (209) are responsible for Ashok’s anger towards her. Actually, Ashok fails to understand the meaning of the word which of course exposes the feelings of Devayani. Though she is merely Ashok’s sex partner, she does not want to be paid by him at any cost. Devayani belongs to a decent traditional family. She knows quite well that she cannot expect anything of Ashok as he is a married man. Yet she yields herself to him wholeheartedly. Though she cannot reach the status of his wife, she does not want herself to be treated merely as a sex partner. That is why she reacts to Ashok in such a way for his gift. Instead of understanding the fact, Ashok gets angry with Devayani and walks out. Though Ashok has maintained the adulterous relationship with Devayani successfully, from the beginning, he talks to Devayani in his own way. He knows well that he deserts the life of a spinster, Devayani. But, still he remains care free and declares his status distinctly to Devayani, “‘I’m a married man . . . ‘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’” (91). Though his love for Devayani is true, he does not care about the future of Devayani and he is very conscious of fulfilling
his sexual desire only. At the unconscious level, superiority is strongly implanted in his psyche and he possesses the idea that as a man he has the freedom to act like this. Ashok’s insensitive words make Devayani get angry and realise her pathetic status at times.

When the women of Deshpande come under the processes of self-realization and self-individuation because of their education and the influence of social institutions, they start thinking about attaining the status of “Self” in the patriarchal society and thereby giving space for the development of their language which is nothing but a feminine discourse. It can be identified in the language of the educated women of Deshpande as they use it as a weapon to attain their goal. Language aids these women to pour out their feelings.

In The Binding Vine, through Mira’s poems and photographs, Urmila gets an image of her mother-in-law as a very lively and intelligent girl snuffed off in a forced, incompatible marriage. Mira’s inhibitions about her voicing a desire to become a poet are beautifully expressed in the lines, “‘Huddled in my cocoon, a somnolent silkworm /will I emerge a beauteous being?/Or will I, suffocating, cease to exist?’” (65). Actually, she wants to “emerge a beauteous being” (65) in her life. But her marriage blocks the path in her life to attain her goal. At least, in her writing, she finds space for pouring out her feelings and her true desires, which she wants to fulfil in her life.

Urmila decodes Mira’s loneliness from the fact that Mira rarely mentions her family in her poems. This loneliness is a part of her being. After her
marriage, Mira has been christened Nirmala – he first estrangement from her identity, her known “Self.” Though overtly she does not react, she puts down her reaction in these lines:

Nirmala, they call, I stand statue-still.

Do you build the new without razing the old?

A tablet of rice, a pencil of gold
can they make me Nirmala? I am Mira. (101)

With the loss of such selfhood, Mira survives in her husband’s house. A strong assertion is revealed through her language. But this strong assertion remains a private experience; it never becomes public in her life time.

In *A Matter of Time*, a significant thing about Sumi is her creativity as well as her ability to relate herself to the world even after the desertion of her husband. After Gopal’s walkout, her creativity gets revived. She writes a play entitled “The Gardener’s Son” and proposes to write another. She wants especially to rewrite the story of Surpanakha from an original point of view by thinking of Surpanakha in a different way and she expresses her idea like this, “Female sexuality. We’re ashamed of owning it, we can’t speak of it, not even to our own selves. But Surpanakha... flaunted them. And therefore, were the men, unused to such women, frightened? Surpanakha, neither ugly nor hideous, but a woman charged with sexuality, not frightened of displaying it...” (191). Here, a revolution can be seen not only in Sumi’s modern thought but also in her language. K. Senguttuvan says, “The above revision of the Surpanakha episode
speaks of Sumi’s eagerness to place man-woman relationship on a sound, non-partisan footing and also of her modernity in thought” (33). The language of Sumi, which is used by her to reflect her thoughts on female sexuality, is really unique. Thus women like Urmila, Mira and Sumi try to reveal their sufferings in the patriarchal society through their insightful words.

Sensitive women writers like Deshpande do not lose sight of their plight in Indian society. As Bullock expresses, feminist agenda is based on the principles of similarity and difference – similarity because “women are human beings like men and therefore ought to be granted equal rights,” (313) and difference because “women are different from men and therefore ought to be granted the right to represent themselves” (313). Writing about women by women is actually a clarion call to feminine representation by gynocritics. And the one given by Roman Selden deserves attention:

‘Write yourself. Your body must be heard. Only then all the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth.’ There is no universal mind. On the contrary the female imagination is infinite and beautiful. Since writing is the place where subversive thought can germinate, it is especially shameful that the phallocentric tradition has . . . succeeded in not giving women their say. Woman must uncensor herself, recover her goods, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal. She must throw off her guilt (for being too hot or too frigid, too motherly or too unmaternal etc. (150-51)
As long as the society remains patriarchal in its role allocation and division of labour, the culture of women, the second sex is bound to be eclipsed. A woman’s mind is shaped by hammering through words constantly that she is weak both physically and mentally and is subordinate to man. The dominant culture and the marginalized culture are usually displayed in the form of suppression of the women by the men in the society. In fact, this enters the psychology of unconsciousness that subjects woman to silence so that she does not identify herself with the masculine imagery. Her suppressed “Self” reflects in her language and especially in the advice of one woman to another woman. It can be seen in the text, *Roots and Shadows*, “As a child, they had told me I must be obedient and unquestioning. As a girl, I must be meek and submissive. Why? I had asked. Because you are a female. You must accept everything, even defeat, with grace because you are a girl, they had said.” (158-59). Here, “the shadow of submission” lies even in the language of Indu, the protagonist of the novel *Roots and Shadows*. The advice stresses the reality to Indu that “It is the only way, . . . for a female to live and survive” (158-59). A traditional idea about the life pattern of woman is strongly rooted in their psyche at the unconscious level and this only urges the women to advise other women in a conventional manner. Thus the unconscious is responsible for the language of both man and woman.

Man and woman are known for their language which differs a lot. And it is very essential for both of them to grasp each other’s language for the sake of good communication between them and to avoid problems in their life. When they fail to understand the other’s language, difficulties arise between them.
Especially, this misunderstanding of the language of the other creates more problems in their married life. The words of Madhu, the protagonist of the novel *Small Remedies* prove that man and woman have separate language as follows:

> The truth is I’m comfortable with men, I’ve grown up among men - my father, Babu and kakis, my father’s friends. I understand men. It’s the women I find harder to understand. At times, like when Ketaki’s mother speaks to me, I think I need someone to translate the language for me. There seems to be some disjointedness between her words and what she means. (88)

Of course, there is a lot of difference between the language of man and woman. Likewise, in *A Matter of Time*, though Gopal gives his own reasons for his uncertain, un-predicted abandoning of his wife, Sumi is unable to understand him when he comes to pacify her. Though Sumi seems to be quiet, she suffers a lot. Like Sumi, Urmila, Madhu, Mira and Devayani also suffer a lot not only because of their suppressed condition in the patriarchal society but also from the problems which arise between them and their life partners due to the misunderstanding of each other’s language.

The male characters in Deshpande’s novels portray, in different degrees, the various facets of masculinity and patriarchy in Indian society. These various facets reflect through their language itself. The language through which they communicate itself proves the nature of their relationship with others. While the majority of the husbands of the protagonists are patriarchal in their approach
towards their wives, surprisingly it is the older men, particularly the fathers who prove to be progressive and broadminded. Compared to the other relationships, the father-daughter relationship goes smooth. In Deshpande’s fiction, the mother-daughter relationship is viewed as love-hate relationship as the daughters usually get care and concern from their fathers in their critical situations. The fathers’ consideration, love and affection are naturally expressed through their language.

In *A Matter of Time*, Manorama has never been affectionate towards her daughter, Kalyani for various reasons and “Manorama died unforgiving” (151). Kalyani is really a woman “who has survived Manorama’s myriad acts of cruelty” (151). But Kalyani’s father Vithalrao has been known for his affinity and love towards his daughter. Especially after Kalyani’s return home after her husband’s desertion, Vithalrao becomes a changed man. In the words of Deshpande, “It was as if Vithalrao was searching for someone who would tell him, ‘your daughter will soon be reunited with her husband, they will live happily together.’ If it was a search, it was a solitary one, for he never spoke to anyone about it, he never associated his wife with it” (152). Though Vithalrao has lived with his wife, there seems to be no mutual understanding between him and his wife. Vithalrao’s collapse into a broken, suffering human being is really hard for Manorama to bear. His tears horrify her. She gets angry and says, “‘Stop it,’ she would say, scolding him with a rough tenderness. ‘You shouldn’t do this, stop it,’ . . . .” (152). Manorama’s cruelty towards her husband is revealed through these lines. Manorama’s words of course reveal her character
and her relationship with her husband. Vithalrao is more affectionate towards his daughter than to his wife and it is exposed through his words, which highlight his desire about his daughter’s life. He seems soothed by her daughter’s presence even a few days before his death.

In *Small Remedies*, there is an understanding and comfortable relationship between Madhu and her father. Since her birth, she has been brought up by her father only with the assistance of the male servant, Babu. To Madhu, her father means everything. Even after his death, she recollects her past days with her father and feels about her father’s love like this, “Today, when I think of it, the smell of his loneliness comes to me as well” (175). In Madhu’s life, there is no comparison to her father. It is beautifully expressed through her words:

> I knew none of these things when we were together. It was enough for me to have him home with me. We were always comfortable and easy with one another. The space between us was not crowded with demands, doubts, assertions or questions. There was enough air for us to breathe easily. Ours was a relationship built, not on information, but on trust. (175)

Madhu’s words bring out her relationship with her father built on love and understanding. Her father’s treatment of her shows how she has been comfortable in her relationship with her father.

In *Moving On*, Manjari’s relationship with her father, Badrinarayan is smoother than her relationship with her mother, Vasu. Badrinarayan is deeply
attached to his daughter though he is against Manjari’s love marriage. Manjari’s mother, Vasu, vehemently opposes her marriage and does not compromise with her daughter till the end of her life. Unlike Vasu, Badrinarayan tries to support his daughter in the critical situations of her married life. Badrinarayan says, “It’s been growing on me in these last few days, a desire to see Jiji and the children,” (55) and he regrets for his past actions towards Manjari as he says, “. . . I failed her in her time of need” (55) and “. . . I knew even that I was wrong. And so, much as I want to see Jiji, I remain silent” (56). But in his relationship with his wife, Badrinarayan has not been even able to understand her as he says, “. . . I thought I knew Vasu well, I knew her inside out, every nuance of her being, every bone in her body. Yet, I had to accept that I knew nothing about her real self” (56). Though he is unable to go against the wishes of his wife regarding Manjari’s marriage, he has had a secret thirst for supporting his daughter and it is revealed through the words when he thinks of his daughter.

The protagonists of Deshpande feel comfortable in their relationship with their fathers. Their fathers’ way of treating them differs from their mothers’ way. There is not much domination and suppression in the father-daughter relationship and it is mainly because of the language of the fathers. Though they belong to the category of “man,” the intensity of their dominating nature is low in their language when they converse with their daughters. And it is mainly responsible for the cordial relationship between them.

Language plays a vital role in man-woman relationship. It occupies a significant position in maintaining good relationship between man and woman,
and so it has to be given much importance for the sake of effective communication between them. As Tony in *Small Remedies* declares, “Without words there can be no ideas, no emotions. We need words, not only to speak, but to live out our lives as well. Wordless, we are blank. Vacant” (163). As the line “We need words, not only to speak, but to live out our lives well” indicates, language should be developed and scrutinised by both man and woman to retain healthy communication between them and to live out their lives well. Tony’s words stress the significance of language at the communication level in man-woman relationship.

Man-woman relationship becomes stressful due to man’s misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the language of woman and vice versa. Gaining understanding through language is really a tough task for both man and woman and especially for the partners in a married life. Deshpande has portrayed this well through the characters of her novels. In *The Binding Vine*, though their marriage is a love marriage, there is less understanding between Urmila and her husband, Kishore. The main reason is that Kishore, an archetypal husband, is never ready to listen to Urmila’s words and never tries to understand its implied meaning. As a result, their married life lacks mutual understanding and particularly, Urmila suffers a lot as she is unable to get solace from her husband. Even in the relationship between friends, Bhaskar and Urmila, Bhaskar fails to understand Urmila’s words explaining about the girls’ choice at the marriage, though he is her perfect friend. In the novel, *A Matter of Time*, Gopal never tries to explain the reasons for his walkout to the satisfaction of his wife,
Sumi. And Sumi also hardly takes efforts to ask him about this and as a result their marital life lacks a friendly communication and finally ends in distress.

Deshpande’s fiction projects father-daughter relationship as more friction free than other types of relationship. There is love, care and understanding in this relationship and above all, it is less problematic. It is well identified in the relationship between Urmila and her father in *The Binding Vine*, Madhu and her father in *Small Remedies* and Manjari and her father in *Moving On*. In *The Binding Vine*, Urmila is raised by her father to be so independent that it is she who immerses his ashes in the river at Haridwar when after his death her younger brother Amrut breaks down, “‘I can’t, Didi, you do it’” (95). It shows the closeness between Urmila and her father. In *Moving On*, compared to her relationship with her mother, Manjari feels comfortable in her relationship with her father. Her mother reprimands her with harsh words especially after she reveals her love with Shyam. But even after the death of Shyam, Manjari’s father comforts her with his soothing words. In *Small Remedies*, though she is a motherless one, Madhu is brought up well by her father and she herself declares, “We were always comfortable and easy with one another” (175). Fathers are perceived as lenient and more companionable by the daughters than their husbands and mothers.

Naturally, more problems remain in the husband-wife relationship due to the misunderstanding of the language of each other and also of their different nature known for domination and subjugation. The manifestation of language resulting from the repressed feelings of the various characters in Deshpande’s
fiction reminds us of Lacan’s concept that the unconscious is structured like a language. Deshpande here highlights that the repression and regression in the abysmal depth of their heart is responsible for man and woman’s attitudes. Man and woman’s strongly rooted traditional thoughts reflect in their language too when they communicate with each other. A traditional wife remains silent before her husband’s domination as she never thinks of her essentiality. But, when an educated woman is unable to bear her husband’s dominating attitudes, she strives to achieve her selfhood and it paves the path for critical situations in their marital life.

Language and communication to a certain extent bruise man-woman relationship. Deshpande delineates the fact that man and woman’s subtle deep-seated thoughts at the unconscious level of their psyche should change to ease the relationship between them as thoughts always lead to words and deeds of the human beings.