CHAPTER II

Thematic Paradigms of Shashi Deshpande’s Fiction
Thematic Paradigms and Narrative Techniques in the Fiction of Shashi Deshpande: A Re-Assessment

Major Themes of Shashi Deshpande’s Novels

Among Indian English female writers Shashi Deshpande set a prominent position for her. She has delicately treated original Indian themes and has depicted modern middle class women with an exceptional artistic ability in her novels. Her heroines stand for the majority concerns and fight in the conventional world of the patriarchal society. Her characters are not stereotypes but they are unique and modern ones. They have quality that they could call their own and despite challenges and dangers they stay uncrushed. They are innovative, brilliant, self conscious, and delicate. They rebel against the customary parental family and flee from the choked out environment of the biased society.

Shashi Deshpande has exhibited in her fiction present day Indian women’s quest for the meaning of the self and society and the relationship that are fundamental to women. Shashi Deshpande’s novels concern with the theme of the search for a female identity, intricacy of man-woman relationship mainly in the connection of marriage and the pain of a disturbed adolescence. The Indian woman has for quite a long time been a quiet sufferer. While she has performed various roles-as a daughter, mother, sister and wife, she has never possessed the capacity to claim her own identity.

In Indian culture marriage is a sacred bond for women. Though being highly educated Indian women from the middle class become meek just to safeguard their marriage. The reason for their kind of behaviour is that they are aware of the result of being separated from their husbands and the society’s reaction towards them. That is the reason they all are resigned and respectful to their spouses despite the fact that they are barbarous and brutal in behaviour. The conviction among the Indian women still exists that their husband is everything for wife and it is the sacred duty of the women to be perfect wife and ideal mother. Parsana Sree has remarked:
In spite of belonging to modern educated urban society and being exposed to the liberal revolutionary ideas and changes shaping in the western world in the name of women liberation movement, the role of Indian women has been just relegated to that of wives and mothers. (Prasanna 98)

Deshpande’s concept of marriage is totally different from that of the western feminist activists. Western feminists encourage the women to live without their husbands and even without marriage. Though Deshpande hates a marriage in which the involved couple “shut themselves off in two separate glass jars who can see each other but cannot communicate”, (Deshpande) she does not permit her heroines to step out the sacred relationship of wedding. What she loves is to look for answer for the issue of Indian women under the framework of marriage for living a happy married life. While the western feminist activists and writers offer sufficient scope to women to live as they want even without marriage or without husband if they cannot adjust with each other. For example, Simone de Beauvoir writes, “It has been said that marriage diminishes man, which is often true, but almost always it annihilates women” (Beauvoir 496)

Deshpande is aware of the importance and sagacity of marriage in the Indian traditional culture. She is not against marriage like western feminists but what she wishes is decent tuning between husband and wife where the self-respect and honour of the wife is protected. She doesn’t want to change the husband, but to bring transformation in the husband’s approach and behaviours towards his wife in the light of innovation. Her belief may not be of the sort what the radical women’s writer’s hold, however she has her own unique image of a feminist writer. That is the reason why women heroines of Shashi Deshpande’s fiction endeavour to make their marriage work in their attempt to lead a significant and happy life. The marriage must be safeguarded, however not at the expense of exploitation and
concealment of women. So the novelist seeks the solution of the problem not in divorce but in changing the attitude of the husbands towards their wives.

Shashi Deshpande’s novel deals with the theme of the quest for a female identity. From many years the Indian woman has been a victim of Indian patriarchal system and she merely remains as a silent suffer in family and society. As she has performed various roles of a wife, sister, mother, and daughter, she has never possessed the capacity to claim her own particular identity as an independent woman. In the novel ‘The Dark Holds No Terrors’ Manohar’s ego tries to rule Sarita which results in breaking down of their relation. Sarita is an independent capable of being fit for facing problems in life by her own. Her identity is no longer been in the context of the name of her husband. In ‘Roots and Shadows’, Indu acknowledges that she throttled her wishes not due to Jayant’s demands but rather on the grounds that it was her own choice with which she had left her own identity. Akka also has to suffer and face the humiliations, injuries and insults with a stoic patience but she never complained. In ‘That Long Silence’, Jaya is renamed as Suhasini after her marriage because her husband likes that name but Jaya was not happy with her name. She all the times fell that with her name her old identity and personality is also lost. In ‘The Binding Vine’, Urmila comprehends that even as a child, Mira has abhorred the way her mother has been submitting herself to her husband and ever she has not her own identity. In ‘A Matter of Time’ It arrives that Kalyani understands that Gopal and she should now move alone and she made herself ready to accept their division. Kalyani come out as the most capable character in the novel. Thus we can say that Deshpande’s protagonists are trying to set their identities in the patriarchal society.

Patriarchal issues is the another important theme of Shashi Deshpande’s fiction. The greater part of the books of Shashi Deshpande question patriarchy in the traditional sense and her female characters are reliably found in a mission for finding their self identity in the
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patriarchal social background. Her female characters are mindful of their condition however they constitute the gathering known as “the gendered subaltern.” Women are most likely at the edges and men at the centre. But as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has pointed out,

...even some of the females join hand with males to exploit the other members of their sex and in a way try to draw privileges by moving a step towards the centre and leaving the margins behind. (Singh Web)

This is valid for Deshpande’s books as well, where women abuse one another. There are chains of importance among women and women like Tara, Mami, Nayana Jeeja, and Vanita implement patriarchy as they carry on like a quiet observer and don’t react to the wrongs done on individuals from their sex. Sulu in Binding Vine and Sunanda, Padmini and Akka in Roots and Shadows likewise bolster and reinforce patriarchy.

Female sexuality and rape is the another important theme of Shashi Deshpande’s novels. In her various novels she has discussed about this themes with the help of her female characters. She deals with the women characters who belong to the Indian middleclass society. She investigates the psyche of new educated Indian middle class women who stand at the crossroad of tradition and modernity. She endeavours to present much debated and sensitive issues of rape, sex, menstruation cycle, love, homosexuality and extra marital affair, in her many novels. The fight between body and mind are the major issues in different novels of Shashi Deshpande. People are confused about these two sides of human personality because they are not sure about which should be given importance. Most of the people give importance to the body as it is concrete thing while mind is an abstract issue. But, on occasion both the mind and body reunite in certain situations. Deshpande’s heroines are very delicate in their mindset which finds this disagreement very alarming in their lives. The theme of rape is the recurring theme in the fiction of Shashi Deshpande. The Binding Vine is
one of her best novels which have the rape at the centre. The brutality of rape and its effect on
the women and her family members is vividly depicted by her in *The Binding Vine* through
the characters of Mira and Kalpana.

Shashi Deshpande believes that women are human beings like men and not mediocre living
thing. The traditions and the conventions existing in patriarchal society ought to be changed.
She has demonstrated the circumstance of women of her nation in her novels. Even today in
numerous places, women are bound to remain in the house and they do not have any kind of
freedom as compared to man in getting education. In the society they are frequently regarded
as articles or show-pieces without a character. In a large portion of the society there is no
festival on the birth of a girl and in numerous places women are burnt alive on the name of
dowry. The killing of a female kid before its birth to the world is predominant in many Indian
societies. In the cases of rape culpable persons remains out of the ambit of laws while the
victim and her family has to suffer. Numerous reformers have attempted to change social
standards and conditions and they succeed in their plans to a certain degree, yet at the same
time there are numerous evil practices predominant in the society. The New Woman roused
by western thoughts and education is attempting to free herself from a wide range of silly
repressions. There are diverse routes utilized by men to discourage them and religion is one
such instrument. As Rashmi Gaur remarks:

> Shashi Deshpande’s novels represent the contemporary woman’s struggle to
define and attain an autonomous self-hood and underline the need to eschew
the Authoritarian submission Syndrome in order to attain a liberated self-
actualization. (Gaur 88)

Shashi Deshpande has concentrated on the situation of social molding of her women
characters. Presenting women as her heroines, Deshpande tries to uncover the issues of
women, that is, their quest for identity, gender discrimination, unbeneﬁcial revolt against the subordinate position in the family lastly her vulnerable surrender before the male domineer. Women remain just the object of sex, love and marriage. Through this old repression she loses her claim of gender uniformity. At last the custom bound family limits the blooming of young girl’s identity, self refusal, humbleness, forgiveness, and tolerance become the women’s characteristics.

Though Shashi Deshpande has discussed the issue of gender discrimination in her many novels but Dark Holds No Terrors and That Long Silence are her best novels which depicted the problem of gender discrimination very effectively. Jaya and Saru echo an emotional breakdown of women because of gender discrimination and male controlled social set up exist in the society. Women lose their personality, rights and livelihood which take them to terminate their gendered parity. Saru and Jaya are the model of second rate position and ensuing debasement of their gender. The author uncovered different unobtrusive procedures of suppression and gender separation inside the family. Indian women has for a considerable length of time been a quiet sufferer of injustices inﬂicted upon them.
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Depiction of the Anguish and Conflict of Modern Educated Middle Class Women

Shashi Deshpande’s significant concern is to delineate the anguish and conflict new Indian educated women got in the middle of patriarchy and convention from one perspective, and self expression, singularity and reliance for the ladies on the other. Her fiction investigates the quest of the women to satisfy herself as a human being, autonomous of her conventional part as daughter, mother and wife. She has inspected a local emergency, which ignited her search.

A nearby investigation of Deshpande’s books uncovers a writer who is savvy, well-spoken and generally free from preferences with respect to sex, yet in the meantime profoundly touchy to the issues of women. It is out of line to name her “feminist” and classify her with a few different writers who contrast from her in various aspects. She is called the best articulator of women who are trapped at the crossroads of change in an Indian society which is experiencing the beginning of move from tradition to modernity. It is a troublesome occupation, in reality, to offer voice to women who themselves, are not certain of their own suffering and who stand in an unenviable position today. They are intensely mindful of the inequalities which are heaped on them however they are sentenced to carry on with the life of suppression which their antecedents have lived. From numerous points of view, their condition is considerably more pitiable than that of ladies of prior eras who unquestioningly acknowledged their secondary position in the society. Deshpande’s heroines are greatly wise, reflective and overly sensitive women who set out on a mission for their own identity and the genuine importance of life. Deshpande feels that women have a huge inner strength; however such a large amount of their strength is spent in handling of their suffering. While uncovering the women’s battle to secure sense of pride and self-identity for herself, the creator quietly
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exposes the numerous levels of mistreatment, including sexual oppression experienced by women in our society.

Shashi Deshpande’s novels advance in the same way as her female heroines in her novels. As the novel develops, all her female heroines Indu, Saru, Jaya, Urmila and Sumi are indicated to be in a chaos in the starting. Gradually, as the novel develops, they experience a procedure of self-thoughtfulness, self-investigation and self-acknowledgment. Toward the end, they rise as surer, more in control of themselves, and fundamentally more cheerful towards a vibrant and positive future.

 Roots and Shadows highlights the desolation and suffocation experienced by the heroine Indu in a male-ruled and custom bound society. She discovers herself estranged when she declines to adjust to the unbending code set around society. Indu was very happy when she get married to Jayant who is a well educated man but when it comes to being a husband he is same like the other uneducated Indian husbands who want excessive power on their wife. Discussing this matter with Naren, Indu says:

We are rational, unprejudiced, broad-minded. We discuss. We discuss intelligently, even solemnly, the problems of unemployment, poverty, corruption and family planning. We scorn the corrupt. We despise the ignorant, we hate the wicked—and our hearts bleed, Naren for Vietnam, for the blacks, for the Harijans but frankly we don’t care a damn not one goddamn about anything but our own precious selves, our own precious walled-in- lives. (R&S 25)

Marriage to the man of her decision brings just disillusionment when she discovers her educated and apparently modern progressive minded husband the same as the normal
uneducated traditional Indian male. She is even scornful of herself when she understands that she has the whole time been unwittingly imitating the model of the perfect Indian wife. The novel gets its feminist touch from Indu’s constant investigation of herself as a person. An extra marital affair helps her to break free from the sensitive bonds of marriage and makes her mindful of herself, and understands that it is conceivable to practice freedom inside of the parameters of marriage. *Roots and Shadows* offers us scope to watch useless ceremonies and traditions all of which help to propagate the myth of male predominance. The novel ‘Roots and Shadows’ represents the modern educated women who are not able to emancipate the customary milieu in which they are raised. The reason for all the predominant issues of women is their enslavement which is constantly present as silent servitude. The novel, *Roots and Shadows* investigates the inner self of Indu, who is the epitome of new women. She is educated and wedded to Jayant however her womanly desire of articulation is smothered and Mini instils in her every conventional female qualities since her childhood. Indu acknowledges that she throttled her wishes not in view of Jayant’s pressure but rather in light of the fact that it was her own particular choice with which she had given her personal identity. Akka also suffer and submit to humiliation, injuries and embarrassments with a stoic persistence but never complained about it. Akka’s wish to teach her was not on account of giving her on autonomous stand but rather he feels that educated young girl get a decent match and Indu encounters disappointment in sex and endures a silent sexual humiliation.

In ‘That Long Silence’, protagonist recollects some incidents from the past to recreate the missing connections in the chain of women’s agony and self-discovery by all methods is a mature work, furthermore a cathartic one too. In the novel ‘That Long Silence’ Shashi Deshpande uncovers that Consciousness of Jaya through an explanation of her mind during the process of thinking, feeling and responding to the arrangement existing in society. Jaya is being renamed as Suhasini after her marriage is not a consideration of the loss of identity.
Jaya came to perceive herself as an unsuccessful writer in light of the fact that when she had kept written work, her stories had been rejected for absence of real sentiments which she had dismissed. After all she comes to acknowledge herself as an unsuccessful author thus she depends on her spouse. In That Long Silence, Jaya’s inconveniences in marriage stem from her husband’s narrow-mindedness towards any deviation from her part of an obedient wife. When Jayant was in danger with charges of corruption, he anticipates that Jaya should hide herself with her but she declines to do so. He is incredibly incensed and leaves the house. When Mohan leaves the house at that time Jaya remembers the advice of Vanita Mami which gave her at the time of her marriage, “Remember Jaya, a husband is like a sheltering tree. Keep the tree alive and flourishing, even if you have to water it with deceit and lies.” (TLS 32)

In ‘The Binding Vine’ Mira’s diaries and poems draw Urmila’s consideration. Through her diaries Urmila builds up a unifying bond with her and tries to remake the awful story of an agile young girl who suffered and compose poems in the isolation of a despondent marriage. Urmila comprehends that even as a young girl, Mira has detested the way her mother has been surrendering herself to her husband and ever she has not her own identity. Urmila is one who is one step ahead of her antecedents by her attempts to help other women. Deshpande utilizes the personal catastrophe of the Urmil to center consideration on victims like Kalpana and Mira – victims of man’s sexual desire and woman’s vulnerability. The author makes a striking endeavour to depict the anguish of a wife who is the victim of marital rape – a subject which maybe has not been touched upon by some other Indian writers in English. Urmila tries to remake the pitiable story of an intelligent and appealing young lady, Mira, who composed lyrics in the isolation of an unhappy marriage to relieve her anguish. Mira’s inhibitions about her voicing a desire to become a poet are clear in the following lines:
Huddled in my cocoon, a somnolent silkworm.

Will I emerge a beauteous being?

Or will I, suffocating, cease to exist. (TBV 65)

Urmì additionally campaigns for another victim, Kalpana, who is ruthlessly raped and assaulted and now she is on her death bed. The writer neatly handles the juxtaposition of the two incidents—rape submitted inside of the areas of marriage and outside it. The author gives a record of the situation of women who raped outside marriage, who might preferably endure silently than be presented to the mortification included in publicizing the occasion and that of married woman whose bodies are abused by their legitimately married spouses however she might never dare to uncover this to anybody. They would rather smother their voice of protest for the purpose of social and moral security. Deshpande, through the voice of Urmì, offers us a look into the lives of many other women, who are apparently more free than their ancestors though they are victims of some form of violence or deprivation.

The novel ‘A Matter of Time’ moves ahead of feminist’s concerns and brings up the existentialist issue itself. The imperative truth uncovered is that self pity is not solution. It is just through a procedure of self examination and self-seeking, through strength and flexibility that one can change one’s circumstance from despair to hope. Sumì shows a great courage while her husband abandoned her and her three daughters. Through the character of Sumì Deshpande has shown the strength of woman to face the problem and become an independent caretaker of her family. Sumì has accepted the fact that her husband has left the home and he is not suppose to return, so she was ready to face it. She says :

All those days I have been thinking of him as if he has been suspended in space, in nothingness, since he left us. But he has gone on living, his life has
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moved on, it will go on without me. So has mine. Our lives have diverged, they
now move separately. (AMT 85)

*A Matter of Time* is a search of a woman’s inward life. Kalyani’s apprehensions are based on
patriarchal repression that sentences women to the silence. She is made to understand that
while losing her child, a male hair. Sumi, like her mother, is a mistreated and wronged lady.
Yet she doesn’t ask any question to the man; her oppressor. Kalyani understands that Gopal
and she should now move on alone and she accommodates herself to their partition. Kalyani
rises as the most intense character in the novel. The most remarkable case of silence is
Kalyani who puts in about forty years altogether in silence with her spouse, Shripati.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* presents the gender discrimination which is indicated even by
parents towards their girls. Deshpande successfully portrays the yearning of Indian parents
for a boy and the negative impact it can have on a delicate young girl. The novel uncovers the
life of Sarita, who is constantly disregarded and overlooked in favour of her brother, she is
not given any significance. Sarita’s mother shows more partiality between Sarita and Dhruva.
Saru recalls her conversation with her mother:

“Don’t go out in the sun, you’ll get darker.”

“Who cares?”

“We have to care if you don’t. We have to get you married?”

“I don’t want to get married.”

“Will you live with us all your life?”

“Why not?”

“You can’t.”
“And Dhruva?”

“He’s different. He’s a boy. (TDHNT 45)

Precluded from securing parental affection and victim of her spouse’s dissatisfactions, Saru experiences a difficult journey herself and frees herself from humiliation, shame and guilt to rise in full control over her life. Saru is raised in a conventional environment however the education she got makes her a changed individual with a defiant mentality towards custom. Deshpande talks about the male ego which declines to accept a secondary position in marriage. In the novel *The Dark Holds No Terrors* Manohar’s male self image tries to overpower Sarita which results in their separation. Deshpande portrays the traumatic experience of the heroine, Saru, who has a more noteworthy financial and societal position than her husband Manohar. Deshpande likewise makes her readers mindful of society’s response to the higher status of the wife in a marriage, which drives the husband to build up a feeling of inadequacy. Sarita accomplished a good position which is more respectable than the position of her husband. The budgetary ascendance of Sarita renders Manohar less important and essential. In any case, his activity at evenings scares and embarrasses Saru. The pain of being the victim of her spouse’s discontent which shows itself in sexual sadism is strikingly depicted.

Shashi Deshpande presents the actual stories of woman, who representing herself or for the entire of womankind which is truly unique in relation to a man telling a woman’s story. Deshpande draws out this thought of woman explaining herself and rising out of the isolation of self centeredness to spread her wings of fearlessness. Concentrating on the marital connections she tries to uncover the convention by which a woman is prepared to assume her subservient part in the family. Her books uncover the man-made patriarchal customs and uneasiness of the present day Indian woman in being a part of them. Shashi Deshpande
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utilizes this perspective of present social reality as it is experienced by women to show the universe of girls, mothers and wives and also to introduce indirectly the sons, fathers and husbands, the connection between men and women, and between women themselves. Her young courageous women oppose the conventional lifestyle and patriarchal qualities. The words which we generally connect with what we consider to be the idea of a perfect woman are, patience, self-denial, devotion silent suffering and sacrifice.

Deshpande’s characters are taken from every segments of life. They are doctors and authors, educated housewives, uneducated ones and maidservants. Other than deprivation, poverty and such other normal problems, there are a few miseries only for the female. Deshpande gives a sympathetic comprehension of the various kinds of sufferings a woman has to experience. Sometimes the misery of woman is connected to the social taboos, and some of the time the women are silenced for the sake of family’s honour, and they are forced to bear suffering. Shashi Deshpande’s endeavour to end the silence of women has been broadly acclaimed in India and abroad. Her unmistakable comprehension of human relationship, her close perception of the way for the world, her impartial outlook to dogmas and movement makes her a great exponent of feminist issues of Indian women.

While uncovering the woman’s battle to secure sense of pride and self-identity for herself, Shashi Deshpande unpretentiously exposes the various levels of oppression, including sexual oppression experienced by women in our society. In the changing situation of post colonial Indian culture she observed crosscurrents of conventional standards and recently transported ones, Shashi Deshpande was burdened with the job of giving her women characters the particular roles that would fit in the socio-cultural modes and morals of the changed society. A new era of women come into sight, supporting the changed values as per these new values women have a voice they could call their own, a voice that had been stifled for a considerable
length of time. The women who have the ability to make free decision and need not to rely upon the decision of the male such a new women are depicted in the novels of the new era of women writers.

Women who have been battling since ages to assert themselves are yet being controlled by their male partners and compelled to stay silence. The voice of this recently developed class of woman, who have the same education as the men are having and are now given the chance of supporting themselves economically which is depicted in the works of Shashi Deshpande. Deshpande’s bold protagonists, being bold and fearless which is important for self-affirmation replaced the submissive protagonists who were acknowledged as the standard women protagonists.

Shashi Deshpande, in her works, defines freedom for the Indian woman inside the Indian socio-cultural institutions. She has ardently restricted herself of making solid, glorified women protagonists, and has exhibited the Indian woman confronting the dilemma of to select between tradition and modernity. Deshpande’s feminism does not remove the lady from her background but rather tries to uncover the diverse ideological components that shape her. These incorporate religious, social, and mental components.
Human Bonds and Family Relationships

Deshpande always gives emphasis on relationships. It is one of the very prominent themes of her novels. Somehow she conveys the fact that the fundamental criteria of maintaining a relationship are communication and co-operation with each other. In every relation these two qualities are mandatory. Even these two aspects are mutually dependent on each other. If a person fails to communicate with another, he would not be able to co-operate. In all the novels by Deshpande people suffer because they fail to communicate with the other and consequently each of them becomes a separate island. The way Deshpande deals with her characters, both male and female, is really unique. Rather she provides an open space where the activities of both man and woman be judged with equal measures. She tries to delve deep in human psychology to seek the cause of the dismal conditions that occur in the lives of human beings, both men and women. She believes in the doctrine of Hindu mythology where man and woman have been treated with the same importance and legacy and it has been stated that the entire universe is created through the ultimate amalgamation of the divine Purushu and Prakriti. But, in practical world, women are suppressed by some hackneyed ideologies and concepts and have modeled themselves according to the convention. Shashi Deshpande has used myths repeatedly in her novels to emphasize the fact how, even after decades, the Indian women try earnestly to fit themselves according to the traditional concept of an ideal woman, the ideals being various mythological women like Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Draupadi, etc. — all are the revered women, known for their tolerance and perseverance. A woman wants to be an ideal daughter when she is in custody of her parents; an ideal wife when she is married and after all, an ideal mother when she becomes a mother herself. The most interesting thing is that, she has never a choice of her own in any of these phases of her life. In every phase of her life she is taught to sacrifice for the benefit of others, to compromise with the situation and to tolerate almost all the ill-treatments showered upon
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her either by her relatives or by society. Sacrifice, compromise and tolerance — these are the three basic things an Indian woman is taught during her journey from girlhood to womanhood. She is restricted to utter even a single question. But, the question which arises in our mind is, why this discrepancy between a boy-child and a girl child? Shashi Deshpande has tried to seek the answer.

The most palpable answer to this much debated and clichéd question is, the sense of insecurity which prevails upon the human mind. It is not that the girl-child is less beloved to her parents, but, in most cases, as it is rooted in Indian culture, a boy-child is preferred to a girl-child, because, in Indian concept, a girl is not supposed to take care of her parents after her marriage. It is not expected also from her. On the other hand, parents rely on a boy for their future. Deshpande quotes from Hindu mythology in one of her novels to convey the fact that it is stated in Hindu mythology that a boy would save his parents from being doomed. It is not by a daughter, but, by a son that a generation continues. Deshpande quotes:

> 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. . . . Brhad-aranyaka Upanishad (1.5-1.7). (AMT 91)

So, it is the intrinsic Hindu belief that makes Indian parents to covet a boy—child. And the mothers are more biased than fathers with a boy. It is because she has a psychological conviction that she has to remain under the umbrage of her son in time of her husband’s absence. In Indian society each woman is supposed to depend on a man for her living, both for money and for shelter. Therefore, the mother, consciously or unconsciously tries to appease her son by taking his side in all the needs. This activity of the boy’s favour goes against the girl-child and consequently she becomes furious against her mother’s selfishness. But, this kind of selfishness is rooted in human psyche; it is not an individual complex.
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Rather, this dependence of women on men in the various phases of their lives is instinctive. Shashi Deshpande portrays this psychological conflict in almost all her novels. In all her novels, the mother-daughter relationship is antagonistic. The daughter finds her own mother hostile towards her, on the other hand, the mother feels threatened by her daughter’s aggressive nature. This conflict is most prominent in The Dark Holds No Terrors where the protagonist Sarita accuses her dead mother for her unsuccessful marriage with Manohar. She expresses her grievances against her: “If you hadn’t fought me so bitterly, if you hadn’t been so against him, perhaps I would not have married him.” (TDHNT 96) So, it is evident that Sarita marries Manohar in order to take revenge against her mother. Her mother, on the other hand, is angry with her decision of pursuing a career of a medical practitioner. She expresses her grievances against her daughter Sarita to her husband when Sarita informs her that many girls are going to the medical profession, and she also aims to pursue a career of a doctor. Her mother says:

‘Yes, but they’re girls whose fathers have lots of money. You don’t belong to that class. And don’t forget medicine or no medicine, doctor or no doctor, you still have to get her married, spend money on her wedding. Can you do both? Make yourself a pauper, and will she look after you in your old age? Let her go for a B.Sc. ... you can get her married in two years and our responsibility will be over. (TDHNT 144)

This is the difference between a boy and a girl according to Indian society. A boy is always a big support, a broad shoulder, upon which his parents can rest their heads in times of need, but, a girl is always supposed to be the responsibility of a family. Mothers have always a sense of insecurity regarding girls, because, physically, conventionally and financially they are much weaker in comparison to boys. So, parents can’t depend on their daughters in times
of their needs. Besides, there is a huge generation gap between the mothers and the daughters. Mothers try to present the world as they have experienced through her life, but, the daughter opposes the fact because, education has made her enlightened and she has her own aspirations of life. So, the mothers become the medium through which society rule over the women psyche. Father does not involve himself actively in this conflict and he remains an onlooker. Actually, he has sympathy for his daughter but he can’t transgress the limits which society imposes on him as a father, as a husband and above all, as a member of patriarchy. In all her novels, Shashi Deshpande has tried to show, how deeply men and women in society are cocooned in their respective roles. Sometimes, they struggle to emancipate themselves yet, they can’t cross the limits which are provided to them.

Another very controversial relation that Deshpande has brought forth recurrently is man-woman relationship within marriage. Unlike other feminist writers Deshpande opines that marriage is the most expected and desired fate of almost all Indian women. In Indian culture, it is said that women does not marry, but, their marriages are organized by their relatives. In all the novels by Deshpande, the protagonists marry the persons of their own choice with their full consents. So, in all cases, it is not the marriage by force, but, on the contrary, the marriage by choice. All the protagonists consider marriage as an escape from the restrictions and obligations of their parental homes. It is for the ill-treatments of their mothers particularly that they leave their homes as the mothers seem to have a menacing effect on their lives. They marry the person by their own choice, and even sometimes, the marriages take place against their parents’ approvals. But, in each case, the marriage has to confront a tough situation and the wife has to return her parental home which she had left a long-time back. Shashi Deshpande does not accuse only the husbands for the destruction of the marital bond; rather she tries to seek a relevant reason of unfortunate event of man’s life, in which both husband and wife suffer. Deshpande emphasizes upon the interesting aspect of human
psychology that every human being wants to be loved and cared by someone and this is true in case of both man and woman. So, when the daughter feels neglected and deprived of her mother’s love, she seeks the love and dependence elsewhere, preferably in a man whom she finds dependable and caring. Her expectations rise high as she marries him, but, in course of time when she finds her husband demanding and the situation is against her favour, she gets frightened and tries to withdraw herself. Each novel by Deshpande opens abruptly with discussing a problem of marital life. Deshpande describes various perceptions about marriage. She rather throws an open challenge to her readers to consider how they perceive marriage. Though many romantic thoughts are related with marriage, the scene changes with the advancement of time when husband and wife become familiar with each other. In most cases, it becomes a mere ritual, or rather, a legal permission of society to live together. Deshpande has delivered the practical truth of married life through her characters. Jaya, in That Long Silence thinks marriage means a situation where: “Two bullocks yoked together. . it is more comfortable for them to move in the same direction. To go in different directions would be painful”. (TLS 11-12)

In another context Urmi finds marriage as a closed room where two people are locked in and they can’t get cut. For the parents, to marry a girl to a suitable groom means the completion of their responsibilities towards their daughter. But, how the daughter feels after marriage, is not their look-out. If a marriage becomes unsuccessful, all the discredit goes to the daughter and no one accuses the groom, as it is supposed that the girl will try her best to continue the relation even at the cost of her self- respect. She is repeatedly taught by her elders of her household that a husband is like a sheltering tree and so she should try to appease him all the time. Mira, in The Binding Vines expresses the situation when her mother teaches her how to behave in her in—laws house, through one of her poems:
Don’t tread paths barred to you

obey, never utter a ‘no’;

submit and your life will be

a paradise, she said and blessed me. (TBV 83)

The daughter finds life exhausted and suffocating and tries to retreat. But, where can she return except her long left parental home? So, again she goes in search of the lost maidenhood and lost self. Actually, she becomes disgusted with the roles which she has to play in different phases of her life. She suffers mostly when after marriage society tries to omit her “self” by a new nomenclature in her in-laws house. It is as if her entire personality has to be changed after marriage. But, a mere name can’t change the identity of a human being. Surprisingly enough, no one understands this simple fact. Mira, being very much annoyed with this custom raises her protest against the society through her poetry.

The fear of losing the self makes a woman bound to return to her parental home in search of her identity. She keeps herself aloof from the present situation and a perpetual brooding of her overall condition makes her able to confront the reality. She does not compromise completely with the situation, but, she does partly and that too, for her children and her own self. Shashi Deshpande somehow conveys the fact that relations have utter importance in everyone’s life. One can’t discard his relations, if he does so, his own identity would be in crisis. One makes his social identity in respect of another person, for example, if a wife ignores the existence of her husband then her own identity as a wife would be discarded. Thus, how far a person can neglect the existence of others in his life? If, a person escapes each relation, he will be no where because there will be none to restore his identity. So, escape is not a solution of any problem, however severe it is; rather, one should face the
situation courageously and should assert his ‘self’ among all these complex situations. This is actual heroism. Shashi Deshpande’s characters are unique because she never tries to convey anything like - women are flawless, they cannot commit anything wrong, they are always on the right track; neither has she projected any such idea that all men in her novels are evil persons, always false-finding, and always torturing their wives. Deshpande always tries to portray each of her characters with a humanitarian touch. She displays the fact that all are human beings comprising of both virtues and vices and if anybody should be responsible of all the mishaps, then it is our rigid society and our culture. The problems, Shashi Deshpande deals with, are not new. She brings forth the problems cast upon women since the dawn of civilization. Women are the sufferers because, they are weaker. The problem she has discussed in A Matter of Time when Gopal walks out of her family and he simultaneously leaves his innocent wife Sumi, who falls in distress but never appeals to her husband to come back. Deshpande traces a similar incident from the ancient Hindu mythology where Yajnavalkya informed Maittreyi, his wife, that he would take renunciation from his family and would take sanyas.

Sumitra in A Matter of Time also does not take any help from her husband. Neither she persuades her husband, nor does she follow her husband. Rather, she takes a practical approach towards life and starts a new struggle to establish herself in the society and be a support for her three daughters. Here, Deshpande rewrites history. In one respect, Shashi Deshpande is a ‘feminist’, because, she takes the side for a woman in her struggle. But, on the other hand, she takes the point of view of a liberal humanist, because her protagonist Sumitra never accuses her husband for leaving her in the midst of her life, neither does she impose the responsibilities of her children to her husband. Every human being is different, so is his point of view. Marriage is such a bond where two human beings should live side by side, hand in hand in every situation. If anyone doesn’t want to be with the other, none should
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compel the other one. Sumitra is definitely hurt by her husband’s behaviour, but, her self-respect makes her strong. Everyone should have such respect for his own self, be it a man or a woman. Shashi Deshpande conveys the fact that women like Sumitra are not rare in Indian history. It is not that the Indian women became conscious about their selves after the western propaganda of ‘feminism’. Rather, India had introduced many talented women who made their names immortal in history. The image of Indian woman is not only comprised of Sita and Savitri, there is also women like Maitreyi, Gargi, Lopamudra who are revered for their knowledge and wisdom. But, surprisingly enough, we rarely remember them and idealize these characters as it is patriarchal society which has popularized the concept of sacrifice and tolerance instead of assertion of selfhood and knowledge. The most pathetic scenario of a married couple is that even if both of the husband and the wife are suffering in a tottering marital bond, marriage has to continue to exist. A marriage is supposed to be an institution for mutual convenience. It is such a social system through which both man and woman are benefited. Moreover, children are one of the most important issues. Generally children become the bridge between the father and the mother. In Small Remedies, we find, though Som and Madhu became separated for some different reason, one of the causes of their reunion was their only son’s premature death. The relation exists even in the hardest and cruellest of situations as, the human beings let the relations to exist.

Shashi Deshpande provides space to every character of her novels. None is judged only by his faults. And she gives most emphasis on the situations because it is the situation that makes a person vulnerable enough to act in a particular time and in a particular moment. That is why, a sensitive artistic self of Manu (Manohar), in The Dark Holds No Terrors, turns into a sadist overnight. The racial instinct of domination was obviously inherent in his psyche, but, the question by a journalist: “How does it feel when your wife earns not only the butter but most of the bread as well?” (TDHNT 200)
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This sudden question made Manohar furious. It arouses Manohar’s dormant ego. Had she not asked the question, the situation would not have been worst. Manohar is also as victim of the social structure that has made the concept that women are always men’s responsibilities and the man who is not capable of taking responsibilities of his family, is considered to be a eunuch by his fellow men. Manohar’s grudge is not against his wife Sarita, but it is a grudge against his economic impotence. When he is not able to dominate his wife economically, he unconsciously tries to dominate her physically. It is the only way through which he can show his power. Deshpande provides the space for Manohar and treats his psychological disorder with a very sensitive mind. It is not that, always women suffer, men’s sufferings are not discussed because a man cannot express them as he has a more prominent and dominant ego. Thus all men and women characters are equal in her novels because she never categorizes anyone as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. She tries to view every human being with different points of view. There is a dichotomy between the thoughts of man and woman. Still, she tries to be liberal to all.

After reading the novels by Deshpande a question may arise, what is the purpose of marriage, if there are so many problems in marital life? Deshpande has dealt with this question also. In her novel, In The Country of Deceit she herself has raised this question repeatedly. It is a very relevant question in Indian subcontinent where marriages happen after negotiations. In consequence, two people actually compromise with each other because once the marriage is done, there is no option. Divorce is supposed to be a menace in Indian culture, so is the live-together concept. In the novel, Devayani falls in love with a married person. But, both of them realize after some time: “Love is not enough.” (ITCD 237)

One has other responsibilities to other relations. He cannot do whatever he wishes to do because many other relations exist simultaneously and he can’t ignore his responsibilities.
What happens if Devayani continues her secret love-affair with Ashok, both of them being mature enough to take the decisions of their own lives? But, Devayani can’t, because, she is bound to be loyal to her other relations. Deshpande tries to convey the fact that a man can be highly qualified, he may have higher degrees, but, he cannot ignore the cultural heritage which is rooted in his psyche. Devayani finds herself guilty for the epidemic disease of her nephew to whom she serves as a surrogate mother. Her traditionally Indian psyche unconsciously finds herself guilty for the fact that being engaged in a relationship which society has made tabooed, she is committing sin for which an innocent child is being punished. Devayani could have continued the relationship with Ashok if she were nonchalant about her family and her heritage. They would never continue with the clandestine affair because in that case she would have been considered as a mistress or the other woman. Besides, she could not depend upon a person who is preoccupied with his own responsibilities. He can ignore the duty of a devoted husband, but he is passionate about his daughter. He says: “I’m sorry, Divya, I’m sorry. I can’t lose my daughter, I can’t let her lose me.” *(ITCD* 254)

Devayani also realizes that if she marries Ashok, then his daughter’s life may change forever and Devayani might be hated till the end of her life by Ashok’s wife because, it is for Devayani that she will lose her husband as well as her family. These apparently trivial emotions which may look absurd at first can be major issues for people. These thoughts are directly related to life and in our cultural heritage where both an unmarried woman and a divorced wife are considered as *pariah*, both of them have a menacing effect in society. First one is castigated because she has failed to acquire a husband, and the later is failed to restore a husband, who is nothing but, a sheltering tree.
Shashi Deshpande brings forth her ideas through very commonplace incidents of the day to day life and her characters are taken from the middleclass society. They are not any projection of her “heat-oppressed brain”. That is why when we go through her novels, it seems that we are very familiar with all these problems which sound very trivial, but, can be complicated enough if they are not treated carefully. Her characters seem very close to us because, a camouflage she presents our own lives with our own dreams and sorrows, our own aspirations and disappointments to ourselves. She is an Indian by birth and she presents the women in her novels, are Indian in essence. They may talk about Betty Friedan and Virginia Woolf but at the core of their hearts they are the traditional Indian women who try to reconcile with their predicament not for their own selves, but, for the benefit of their family as well as their children. Simultaneously, they try to assert their selves even in the cruelest of situations. Deshpande is a liberal humanist who wants to put her feminist ideas not to keep the woman race distinct from the entire humanity, but, to provide the women their due respect and recognition for the betterment of humanity. At the end of the discussion, we may humbly put her words which the author herself quoted from Simone de Beauvoir as her concept of feminism: “...that fact that we are human, is much more important than our being men and women.” (Tandon 177)
Tradition and Modernity

Shashi Deshpande endeavours to confirm the point that Indian feminism as reflected in the Indian fiction is one of a kind innovative and new trend that must be evaluated on its own scale and ought not to be compare with the western feminist writing. In every one of her books, Shashi Deshpande identifies the problems of new women with the feminine outlook. She fundamentally ponders the issues and concerns of the working class Indian women. Her works, based on the life in which she lives, stay conscious to the routine events and experiences, and they give aesthetic expression to something that is simple and routine. Deshpande’s feminism is originally Indian as it is envisaged out of the predicament of Indian women set between contradictory identities: tradition and modernity, family and career, society and tradition. Deshpande’s works are personal not political. Her feminism established in the local environment has a tendency to be humanistic and optimistic in its viewpoint.

The basic topic in Shashi Deshpande’s books is human connections, particularly the ones that exist between of father and daughter, husband and wife furthermore between mother and daughter. In every one of these relationships the woman has a central position and the story develops through her feminist cognizance. Her books mirror the lives of suffocated women looking for a shelter from suffering. Looking for an answer for their private issues, the female heroines in her books shift from their own agonies to the sufferings of the other women around.

In Shashi Deshpande’s fiction three different types of women characters repeat with minor but intelligent changes. The first types of women are the protagonist’s mother or the mother figure – the conventional women who thinks that her place is with her husband and family. Whatever be her inconveniences, she doesn’t leave her husband; she tries hard to keep a
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working association with him at any cost. It could be said that she represents the conventional religious ethos and affirms to the Manu’s code that the woman ought to be under the control of the father in the maidenhood, the spouse in her youth and the son amid her old age. In spite of being the victims of patriarchy, some of these women hold control over other ladies in the family due to their status as mother or mother-in-law. Jaya’s, Indu’s and Saru’s belong to this type of female characters.

The second type of suffering ladies is the opposite of the traditional type of women. Here, the woman is bolder, more independent and defiant. They can’t comply with the Sita’s variant of womanhood and they are deliberately inclined towards what could be assigned as radical feminist belief. Such Ibsenian, Nora type of women characters, is extremely uncommon in Shashi Deshpande’s fiction. They are mainly the protagonist’s classmates and friends. Saru’s friend Nalu holds a feminist belief to life for the purpose of which she decides to lead an autonomous life as bachelor.

The third kind of women portrays the women in the middle. A large portion of Deshpande’s protagonists have a place with this class of women. This woman is neither conventional nor radical in her thoughts and practice. She may leave her home in dissent against her misery, however steadily understands that walking out of the problem does not alleviate her suffering. Saru in The Dark Holds No Terrors agonizes over her miseries even after she gets away from her conjugal home. Indu in Roots and Shadows abandons her spouse to look for asylum in her ancestral home, yet she is not able to acknowledge her destiny as any conventional woman may do. These protagonists endure more because they are aware of the escape routes of two different sorts of ladies – the conventional and the radical – yet hesitate to pick those alternatives. Their initial position is one of staying at the crossroads. It is towards the end of the story, that Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists acknowledges herself and figures out how to
handle the challenges of the life. Saru chooses to face her husband and not flee. Indu and Jaya choose to face their husbands and talk the matter to find a solution of their problems.

The female heroines of Shashi Deshpande are not representations of conventional “Sita” type of characters. They are the “new women”, who could be compared to the flooding rivers that makes a new way into fissure and gaps. In Deshpande’s novels, the protagonists are at first try to escape from household, professional and sexual traps in which they find themselves trapped in them. In any case, every asylum, whether it is love, marriage or sex, just ends up being another trap wherein they further lose their sovereignty and identity.

Prior to their marriage, even in their parental homes, Deshpande’s heroines find it hard to acclimate to the sort of family relationships that exist in the conventional middle class families. They then experience uneasiness or even contempt towards their mothers, whom they see as dominating and suppressive individuals. Against their mothers’ wishes, they endeavour to leave their parental homes for the sake of education or marriage. The fathers of the heroines turn into their supporters and source of motivation in fulfilling their ambitions. The protagonists like Saru and Jaya see marriage as an escape made so as to free them from the suffocation they feel in their parental home. Their act of wedding outside their society, as in the case of Indu can be seen as their method for defying patriarchal dispositions towards marriage.

However marriage ends up with being no escape. The husbands acknowledge their wives as working women however they cannot encourage the feminist self in their wife. In many of Deshpande’s novels protagonists are left with no feeling of satisfaction – both physical and mental–because their husbands were not able to understand their feelings. The protagonists who have children, sense a sort of uneasiness in their association with their relatives. They regularly ponder whether history repeats itself regarding the misconception between the
parents and the children. The heartless husband and the demanding children get to be hindrances to accomplishing individuality. Therefore the feeling of being caught returns to them even after the marriage too. Their professions or social duties come in clash with the desires of the husbands and create strains between the relations in the family. Finding it hard to adapt to the strains emerging out of their professional roles and domestic duties, Deshpande’s women, at first, look for alleviation through surrender of their professional role. They quit their jobs and attempt to look for peace by restricting themselves to their familial roles as homemakers.

Having moved far from the misery of conventional archetypal women of long back, they think that it is hard to stay as housewives. They soon find that their endeavours to accommodate themselves to homemaking just add to their sufferings. When they find that surrendering professional roles does not make them in at any rate happy at home, the female heroines look to escape from their domestic duties too. Giving up their roles as wives and mothers, they swing back to their parent’s’ homes. The parental homes get to be havens for their fretful souls. There they start their quest for knowledge and for an answer for their private hardships.

For Deshpande’s protagonists, giving up of their roles as daughter, wives, mothers, homemakers and professionals is an exceptionally excruciating procedure. At the point when the female protagonists begin living in their parental homes, they sense relief in their old home. They return back to their senior counterpart’s style of living, surrendering the schedules to which they got used to in their conjugal homes. Saru in her disappointment discovers herself assuming control proficiently on everyday’s tasks that she does obediently day in and out at her conjugal home. Indu feels an inquisitive feeling of freedom and
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homecoming. She likewise finds herself continuing the role that her aunt used to play as the family head.

In accepting new roles or new approach towards old roles, they break the mental obstructions, which they had at first fabricated around them. They come to know more about their mothers, and slowly overcome their sentiments of separation, hatred and contempt towards them. Actually they have recognized themselves with their elderly counterparts and accepted the roles of their mothers or mother figures after they return home. With their scorn towards mothers deciphered, they have a tendency to turn inward. Their stay at ancestral homes allows them to recall the past and re-assess their decisions and actions. Their parental homes don’t give them any lasting help from their suffering. In any case, these momentary retreats help them to face their real self and understand themselves better. Here they find the sexual and different reasons that had prompted their conjugal disagreements.

Disappointment in the women’s sexual experiences is referred as one of the vital elements influencing the conjugal relations of the Deshpande heroines. In *The Dark Holds No Terror*, Saru clarifies her sexual relations with Manu, her husband, in this way: “He had been the young man and I his bride. Now I was the lady doctor and he was my husband.” Saru finds in him a monster during the evening and a loyal husband in the day. Their sexual life is diminished to macho sadist acts imposed on woman by man. Neither the woman nor the man in Deshpande’s works attempt to take care of their conjugal and sexual monotony. The women have a tendency to overlook the sexual roots as their conjugal disagreement. Their accepted roles don’t give complete sustenance, as their sexual disappointment raises its appalling head on occasion and disturbs the congruity of their living. Subsequently they look for sexual satisfaction by extramarital relations. Saru tries to legitimize her issues with Boozie and Padmakar Rao, as the substitutes she had found for her unfulfilled marriage. Yet,
such undertakings don’t give her complete satisfaction. In the case of Indu’s relation with Naren, we see a woman in guilt. Like Indu and Saru, Jaya in That Long Silence feels remorseful of her prematurely ended relations with Kama, her neighbour.

Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists may be considered as sexual degenerates as they go off the track of custom. In any case, their extra marital affairs were a failed attempt on the grounds that their sexual flexibility does not pilot them out of their problems. Rather than helping them to face the issue, they just holdup the issue. At the point when their sexual escapades bounce back, they disclose their issues to their friends or relatives. Saru admits to her father about her conjugal problem to spare herself from it. Her dad encourages her not to flee but rather to confront the issue.

The familiarity with the self and a last refuge in the self are deep rooted encounters in the works of Shashi Deshpande. The familiarity with the self is only the enlivening of woman’s awareness. Elaine Showalter briefly communicates how essential this enlivening is to woman’s rights when she says “How much easier, how less lonely it is not to awaken…. Yet we cannot will ourselves to go back to sleep.” (Davis 179) The determination to confront and acknowledge the self is found in many female heroines of Deshpande. The act of confrontation gives them the velour to choose things for themselves and progressively drives them to a positivistic separation from life. The refuge in the self aids them towards a more profound consciousness of their suffering. As indicated by Deshpande, the solution can’t be given on the grounds that it is self-bound; as such, it relies on upon the people concerned – it relies upon the fibre of their self. A more profound familiarity, with the self, prompts to the comprehension of its actual nature. However, the protagonists don’t go to that degree. Towards the end Saru declines to call her difficulty as destiny and would rather call it as something she “had helped to happen.” (TDHNT 70) Blaming just the patriarchy or just
certain outside foundations for her problem, detracts her from the way that she also to be blamed for being feeble and permitting her predicament to happen.

At last the Deshpande’s women decide to act naturally, accepting themselves in whatever situation they are. When the ‘exit plan’ comes to be fail for them, then the ‘way in’ – their digging deep into their selves - gives the fundamental sustenance and strength to confront their issues. Their determination to confront the circumstance and their reliance just on the self demonstrate to them the best approach to stand up to the crisis in their lives. Despite the fact that their issues stay unsolved, their state of mind towards the issue change with their comprehension of the self. Once they begin stand on their own legs, the heroines choose to quit fleeing starting with one shelter then onto the next. They acknowledge all that is cracked in their self and attempt to bind together the parts. As they choose to assert their selves against different powers that try to enchain them, they see the hope of satisfaction and peace in their family lives.

From the study of Deshpande’s female heroines, it turns out to be clear that it is the credible base of Shashi Deshpande’s works, which makes her feminism naturally Indian. Deshpande develops a feminist comprehension of the woman’s issue out of a simply Indian background. The central experiences in her fiction are verified via autobiographical connotation. Deshpande’s feminism is not a duplicate copy of the western feminists. It is all that established in the Indian soil; her study of western feminists has just served to place her thoughts on women’s liberation all together. The expression feminism is connected to Shashi Deshpande in the broadest sense here to refer to the writer’s exceptional familiarity with a woman, her enthusiasm for woman’s issues, and not as she makes a support for woman’s rights in her fiction. Actually she doesn’t hold the batten of women’s freedom beyond making the woman realize herself. If she starts with the feminist cliché of the patriarchal
methods of discrimination to women, she goes beyond and draws out the treachery brought about by woman on man. What is developed through her extraordinary attention to the Indian woman’s circumstance is a method of narration, where the woman is at the middle, speculating and working out the issue positively.

Particularly in the case of Deshpande’s protagonists, they neither shatter the ancestral dignity nor give up essentials of modernity. They keep some of them in suspended animation and wait for the right time to bring about the change in the role of the women and are successful in relaxing the rigidity of some customs. They subtly change their immediate environment and the people concerned. They are both conformist and non conformist. They conform to the modern values of education and marriage. But they appear non-conformist to the age long tradition. Shashi Deshpande’s success lies not just in conducting the voyage in the traditional way of life of her heroines but in harmonizing the two divergent trends.
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Treatment of Love, Marriage and Sex

Shashi Deshpande explores the minds of modern, educated Indian women who stand on the crossroad of tradition and modernity. As an author she has tried to bring forth much debated and sensitive issues like sex, love, menstruation cycle, homosexuality, rape, extra marital affair, pre-marital affair in her various novels. The conflict between body and mind has been one of the most prominent issues in various novels by Shashi Deshpande.

In her various novels Deshpande points towards the very sensitive issue like body and its needs. As she is a woman herself, her tendency has been to seek how Indian women respond to the controversial and tabooed thoughts of body and sex in a rigid circumference. The consciousness of ‘body’ develops within a woman in a very tender age and the process goes on with her physical maturity. She is made conscious by her ambience that her ‘body’ is something that is to be protected from the unexpected attacks and simultaneously it has to be cherished for future fecundity. Woman’s body has been an unavoidable attraction for men from the dawn of civilization. The consciousness of a woman’s ‘body’ and the subjugation of it by her male counterpart remain a much discussed ‘feminist’ issue. Deshpande rethinks over the entire matter and analyses the differences with a slightly different approach. The traditional social concept does not allow a woman to polygamy. Even after the death of her husband, or in case she is abandoned by him, she is not supposed to gratify her physical needs. If she chooses a life of celibacy, she is revered by all nevertheless she suffers within. As Deshpande admits herself that she writes for women, it is evident that a woman’s psychology would be prominent in her writing which essentially portrays the inners thoughts of the protagonist. But, in her effort she seems to be eager in seeking whether women are
against this kind of declared subjugation or they are confused with their activities and their aspirations.

*Roots and Shadows* is the story of Indu’s predicament whose inner self is torn between age-old concept of morality and an urge to tear all the manacles of society. Indu in *Roots and Shadows* is a modern, educated and liberated woman. She is a journalist by profession and she has married out of her own choice. Indu once went to her ancestral house where after a long time she met her childhood friend Naren with whom she became involved in an extra-marital sexual liaison. At first she was a little bit confused but, gradually, she seemed to be desperate in her efforts to emancipate her suppressed self. The carnal experience with Naren was a way to assert her free will. Indu herself seems not at all repentant for whatever she does in absence of Jayant, her husband. After the act is over her mental state is in jeopardy. She ponders over her activity placidly after the sexual act is over:

> I can go back and lie on my bed. I thought, and it will be like erasing the intervening period and what happened between Naren and me. But deliberately I went to my bed and began folding the covers. I don’t need to erase anything I have done, I told myself in a fit of bravado. (*R&S* 152)

Indu seems to be indifferent after such an important incident of her life. This nonchalant behaviour of Indu evoked many disputes among the critics. Such a critic, P. Bhatnagar laments over the mental condition of Indu who seems to be indifferent after having sex with another person. He ruefully opines:

> Indu’s casual and matter-of-fact attitude to what she had done is shocking. Have our morals really gone so low that women commit this sin for nothing,
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just to prove that they do not lack courage? Is this really representative of the modern Indian woman? (Bhatnagar 129)

Another critic, P. Ramamoorthy thinks differently over the matter. According to him:

This shades a brilliant light on Indu’s awareness of her autonomy and her realization that she is a being, and not a dependent on Jayant. The novel gains its feminist stance in Indu’s exploration into herself but it also moves beyond the boundaries of feminism into a perception of the very predicament of the human existence. (Rammamoorthy 124)

But, the question is what Indu herself thinks about her sexual act with Naren. Though she consciously does not appear ‘repentant’ for what she has done with Naren, in her inner recess of mind she is tormented by the age-old concept of right and wrong, sin and adultery. She thinks:

“Adultery...what nuances of wrong doing...no, it needs other, stronger word...what nuances of sin the word carries. I will now brood on my sin, be crushed under a weight of guilt and misery. (R&S 155)

The subconscious mind of Indu inculcates the idea that in indulging in the sexual relationship she actually has wronged Jayant, her husband. It is a kind of betrayal that she has committed in developing a relation with Naren. She is totally confused with the dilemma in which she is plunged into. Indu loves Jayant passionately and there is no doubt in it. But, she sometimes beguiles him in order to fit herself in the desirable woman image of Jayant. Indu by nature is very much passionate, but, she is bound to mould herself as an indifferent person only because Jayant does not like passion in a woman. The age-old concept regarding women’s sexuality makes Jayant shocked to find so much passion within his wife:
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...it shocks him (Jayant) to find passion in a woman. It puts him off. When I’m like that he turns away from me. I’ve learnt my lesson now. And so I pretend. I’m passive. And unresponsive. I’m still and dead ...so that’s all I am Naren. Not a pure woman. Not a too faithful wife. But, an anachronism. A woman who loves her husband too much. Too passionately. And is ashamed of it. (R&S 83)

On the other hand, Indu tries hard to compromise her passion according to the desire of her husband whom she loves very much. In her effort she repeatedly deceives herself, of her genuine feeling, her own aspirations. But, to her utter frustration she finds that her emotions are taken for granted to Jayant, her efforts are being ignored by him. This negligence makes her furious. Naren helps her to give vent to all the suppressed emotions which she hid so long in order to avoid ‘conflict’ with Jayant. Involving in the sexual act with Naren she finds:

There was a joyous sense of release, of passion I could experience and show and participate in. I clung to him convulsively, marvelling that I did not have to hold myself back. (R&S 152)

This is how Naren becomes an ‘instrument’, a medium by the help of whom Indu’s suppressed self finds the emancipation. Indu was attached with him mentally. Her mind was pre-occupied with the love for her husband Jayant. In a way Indu is a foil to Akka, who could not assert her independent will in case of sex. Being married at a very tender age she had to succumb to her husband’s lustful desires, though she tried to escape the brutal physical torture, she had no other option. In the character of Indu Deshpande has presented the ‘new woman’ to whom sexuality is a basic need. That is how the responses of women towards the tabooed concept ‘sex’ are changing with the ushering in of various aspects in the Indian society.
Deshpande seems agree with the fact as she allows her protagonist Urmila in *The Binding Vine* to say about the desire of her body. Urmila says about the restlessness of her body when her husband Kishore was abroad. She reminisces those days of her utter frustration:

> Then he goes away and I’m left with that passion. There was a time when I was frightened by the intensity of my bodily hungers for Kishore. It seemed to do-nothing but complicate my life enormously. I often wished I could put my desires into a deep freeze and take them out, intact and whole, when he returned. (*TBV* 164)

This was a feeling of any human individual regarding one of the basic instincts of life. But, in India, women are not supposed to express their desires in presence of-others; instead, they should restrict it within their minds. This discrepancy again and again expressed in the novels of Deshpande. She deals with another controversial and sensitive issue like rape in her novel *The Binding Vine*. There are two instances where women become the victims of the violent assaults on their bodies. Shashi Deshpande shows how patriarchy deliberately indulges the age-old rule of dominating a woman by applying power on her body. The author finds the violent assault on a female body is the way of assertion of domination by the male. It is again the ‘body’ of a woman which is taken into consideration. The author opines regarding rape in an interview taken by Lakhsmi Holmstrom:

> You see, I don’t believe in a simple opposition of bad bad men and good good women. I don’t believe the world is like that at all. Nevertheless, I believe this is one area where women really are exploited, when men do use their power, their sexual power in order to subjugate women. (*Pathak* 244)
The first instance of rape takes place in the life of Mira. Mira, the poetess is raped by her husband in each and every night. That is why the nights become the source of anathema to her. She loses all the charms for the word ‘love’ which her husband utters every time during love-making. This particular term has been so despicable to her that she starts to abhor the word. She tries to avoid her husband by not responding to him properly. She keeps her inner ‘self’ cocooned within her, as her husband would not be able to reciprocate her aspirations.

Mira expresses her mental state on the pages of her diary:

But I have my defenses; I give him facts nothing more, never my feelings. He knows what I’m doing and he gets angry with me. I don’t mind his anger, it makes him leave me to myself, it is bliss when he does that. But he comes back, he is remorseful, repentant, he holds me close, he begins to babble. And so it begins. ‘Please’, he says, ‘please, I love you’. And over and over again until he has done, ‘I love you’. ‘Love’! How I hate the p word. If this is love it is a terrible thing. I have learnt to say ‘no’ at last, but it makes no difference, no difference at all. (TBV 67)

Such kind of molestation within the marriage takes place with Saru in also in The Dark Holds No Terrors where she too, was brutally raped by her husband in each and every night. Saru in course of time becomes a renowned physician where as her husband gradually degrades from a prestigious place of society. Unable to cope with his failure, Manu, her husband starts to molest Saru in each and every night. So intense was the impact of the incident in her psyche that she would have to wake up at night by the terrible night mare even if she deserted the house where Manu lived with her. This kind of rape is quite natural within marriage, particularly in Indian culture, as in India women are not supposed to have any say regarding ‘sex’. According to Indrani Jaisingh, an eminent lawyer:
It is assumed that by marrying a man, a woman has given her consent to sexual intercourse with her husband at anytime. Thus, even if he forces himself on her, he is not committing an offence (of rape) as her consent is assumed. (Pathak 147)

It is no matter if she is willing to involve in the act or not, her consent in this matter is not at all important. Nobody allows the woman to express any wish of her own. In this context we can bring forth the idea that has been delivered by Deshpande in her recent novel, In The Country of Deceit, that a woman, till date, is equated with the material possessions. There is a concept that all crimes are committed for three things, “land, women and gold.” (ITCD 86)

Kalpana, Shakutai’s elder daughter is another victim of rape in The Binding Vine. Here Deshpande draws a very realistic picture of the Indian middle class society in which a woman’s chastity is highly valued. Shakuntala is eager to hush up the fact that her daughter has been physically assaulted by a hooligan. She does not want the incident to be spread as in that case nobody would marry that unfortunate girl. Shakutai pleads to the doctors in distress:

If a girl’s honour is lost, What’s left? The girl doesn’t have to do anything wrong, people will supposed to hold the ‘honour’ for her family, and if the girl’s honour is on stake, how the family always point a finger at her (..) I have another daughter, what will become of her...? (TBV 59)

For a single mother (Shakutai was deserted by her husband) the situation becomes tougher, as there is no support from her husband. She has her daughters to be married by her sole effort and if the incident of molestation be published she would not get any groom who would agree to marry Kalpana as she is not a virgin. Whether the girl is a virgin, whether she has been able
to protect her chastity are the important factors that matter a lot in time of marriage. Kalpana, being a rape victim fails to gain the opportunity to get a husband from an honourable family.

In Small Remedies a similar instance can be observed, where the protagonist Madhu finds her happily married life on the verge of destruction when she divulged a truth regarding her accidental carnal experience in a very tender age with one of the friends of her father. Som, her husband suddenly turns to be a different kind of a person after she tells him the incident of long past. It did not matter at all to Som that he himself was engaged in a long-term passionate relationship with a married woman and Madhu never asked anything regarding that affair, but, Som reacted violently over Madhu’s affair. Som could not accept the fact that Madhu was wistfully engaged in the sexual act, no one actually forced her in participating in that heinous activity. Madhu could realize the mental condition of Som:

I know what the truth is that Som wants from me; that it has not happened, that I was a virgin when he married me. I begin to understand the truth that he could, perhaps have borne: that I had been raped, forced into the act, that I was a victim, not a participant. (SM 260)

It is a shock to Som to find his wife was not a virgin at the time of their marriage. His long cherished concept of virginity and purity of a woman is destroyed in a moment when Madhu tells him about her pre-marital sex with a grown up man. If Madhu would have told Som that she had been forced in that particular activity, Som could have found solace in his mind. But, he is utterly disturbed by finding the passion in a woman in such a tender age. This was not the characteristic he ever even thought of in a woman, and that too in his wife to whom he divulged each and every secret of his life. Som cannot find solace with the fact that the incident took place a long time ago; that Madhu was not mentally attached with the person; that it just happened accidentally; that the person is dead at present. All that matter to him that
Madhu’s virginity was shattered long before her marriage and that Madhu did not let him know about the incident earlier. 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.

Shashi Deshpande gives the implication that the women stand on a very narrow edge between morality and immorality, a momentary flaw on the part of a woman, a slightest deviation from the path of normality can earn for her the stigma for the rest of her life. In this respect we humbly put the words by Y.S. Sunita Reddy who opines: “Our society has been so conditioned as to categorize women as immoral on the slightest deviation on their part from the normal course of behaviour.” (Sharma 71)

If Madhu would never have divulged the truth to Som, her life would never have been in distress. If she would have hidden what had happened with her in the early stage of her life, she would never faced any problem in life. Deshpande shows the discrepancy of society regarding the sexuality of women. On one hand women are made conscious about their ‘bodies’ through their journey from girlhood to womanhood through the experience of menstruation and other developments in their bodies. But, quite sarcastically they are not given the freedom to talk about their bodies and the passions which generate their bodies.

In That Long Silence, Shashi Deshpande reflects emotional and psychological attachment of married women to their husbands and children at the cost of suppression of their selves. The bond of marriage is so deep in the mind of Indian women that it does not allow them to leave even non-cooperative as well as oppressive husbands. Jaya, the protagonist of the novel, In That Long Silence gets troubles in marriage stem from her husband’s intolerance towards any deviation from her role of subservient wife. When her husband lands in trouble due to the charge of corruption level against him by the department to which he serves, he wants Jaya’s
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companion in hiding, which she refuses. It enraged him so much that he leaves Jaya and goes away. That makes Jaya, so worried and upset that she gets confused and forgets even her daily routine of life, and finds herself unable to pass life without her husband. It is all because of the impression what she has gathered from her family background. She believes in Vantimami’s advice that the husband is like a “sheltering tree”, and “symbol of kumkum” that must be kept alive at any cost, because without the husband family becomes unsheltered and vulnerable. Moreover, the compulsion before women is:

Marital problems, familial disharmony, financial difficulties taken together all these subjugate and enslave women to a considerable extent that she cannot but endure everything, tolerate all kinds of masculine oppression silently. Her silence has its reverse on her psyche.(Lahiri 196)

Jaya suffers a lot, but the circumstances in which she has been born and brought up compels her to endure sufferings silently. Jaya despite having played the admirable role of wife and mother finds herself lonely and estranged. Realization comes to her that she has been unjust to herself and her career as a writer only because she is afraid of inviting any displeasure from her husband. Jaya, like other too, becomes introvert and finds herself unable to live without husband. She has the feeling to be independent, no doubt, but she lacks the courage to revolt against her husband.

In That Long Silence Deshpande has brought forth a unique kind of relationship between Jaya and her neighbour Kamat in her Dadar flat. Jaya finds some rare qualities in Kamat which she sought in her husband Mohan. Kamat gives Jaya that particular shelter which she needed badly. Even he encouraged Jaya’s writing and provided valuable suggestions. The complication was created when Kamat himself felt attracted towards her. Jaya was mentally
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dedicated to her husband, and she gave Kamat entirely a different status in her heart, but, Kamat could not realize her feeling towards him like her father. Though some critics opine that Kamat reminded Jaya of her suppressed sexuality, Deshpande, the author herself does not approve the claim. She rather has tried to project a very positive kind of relationship between a man and a woman which is mutually reciprocal, and altruistic in nature.

Deshpande evidently does not approve the contemporary notion which is in vogue to give each relation, however innocent they appear, to a sexual touch. She has rather criticized this tendency. Sexuality is undoubtedly a very sensitive and complicated issue, but it would not be just to view each and every relationship in the light of sexuality. A relationship can be beautiful, chaste and innocent as well and it may have an altruistic aspect. The love within the same may not always be considered as homosexuality. It would be an offence if any innocent relationship is labelled with this newly derived tag ‘homosexuality’. Deshpande has given account of such an incident in The Dark Holds No Terrors where the protagonist Saru passionately remembers one of her childhood friend whom she admired most in her schooldays. The other girl was immensely beautiful and Saru used to stare at her with a kind of obsession. She remembers her unrequited love for the girl:

Today everything has a sexual nuance, and when a girl says she loves another, it can mean only one thing. But, Lesbianism was an unknown word and an unknown concept to me then. And for long after. That love...the feeling I had for her... should lead on to something else was also an unknown idea. It was enough to love, to gaze upon her face, to thrill in ecstasy at the sight of her. I wanted nothing more than that. To possess meant nothing. I just loved her deeply and a the more because she knows nothing about it. (TDHNT 61)
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It was a case of nympholepsy, a desire for the unattainable, and a joyous surrender of a worshipper to the paragon of beauty. Her love for the girl was out of the instinctive craze for beauty as the girl was extremely beautiful. Saru was considered ugly by her mother and so her insatiable thirst for beauty was meted up by the gaze to that girl. It is the intrinsic nature of all the human individuals to covet the beauty within his reach. Sarita’s reaction is very innocent and spontaneous. It would be wrong to view her attraction towards the girl as homosexuality.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors* is the novel which explores the confusion of a woman, regarding her ‘body’, in the best possible way. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita, the protagonist is afraid of the assaults which have been cast upon her by her husband Manu. Both of them love each other passionately and they celebrate their love through their bodies. But, the same body of Manu becomes the medium of fear when he started to assault Saru in the darkness of night. The novel begins abruptly with the revelation that Saru experiences in a dream:

> The hands became a body. Thrusting itself upon me. The familiarity of the sensation suddenly broke the shell of silent terror that had enclosed me. I emerged into the familiar world of rejection. My rejection that had become so drearily routine. I struggled to utter the usual words of protest, to say... No, not now; stop it. But the words were strangled in my throat. (*TDHNT* 11)

Since her childhood Sarita has been confused with the consciousness of her ‘body’. Her mother always points to her body repeatedly in a way that she develops a kind of hatred towards her own body. When she started to grow up, her mother warns her: “You are growing up...you should be careful now about how you behave. Don’t come out in your petticoat like that. Not even when it’s only your father who’s around.” (*TDHNT* 62)
This is how women are aware of their bodies since their childhood. Sarita considers her own body as the source of hatred. She remembers the days of her growing up with contempt as she is now denied the habits she was accustomed with earlier in her childhood and the restrictions are because of some developments in her ‘body’. She remembers with reproach: “And it became something shameful, this growing Up, So that you had to be ashamed of yourself, even in the presence of your own father.” *(TDHNT 62)*

Along with this there was another enigma, the menstruation cycle. Though biologically this incident is common to each and every woman, in most of the Indian households this incident of a woman’s life is considered to be ‘impure’, Saru describes those nightmarish ‘three days’ of extreme torture of her life:

> Not just the three days when I couldn’t enter the kitchen or the puja room. Not just the sleeping on a straw mat covered with a thin shit. Not just the feeling of being a pariah, with my special cup and plate by my side in which I was served from a distance, for my touch was, it seemed, pollution. No, it was something quite different, much worse. A kind of shame that engulfed me, making me want to rage, to scream against the fact that put me in the same class as my mother. *(TDHNT 62)*

Much later when she was married to Manohar, then only for the first time she could feel that the body could be the source of ecstatic pleasure. She remembers the early days of her married life with Manu when both of them celebrated their love for each other through their bodies:

> I was insatiable, not for sex, but for love. Each act of sex was a triumphant assertion of our love. Of my being loved. Of my being wanted. If I ever had
any doubts, I had only to turn to him and ask him to prove his love for me. And he would ...again and again and again. (TDHNT 40)

What Shashi Deshpande has repeatedly implied is that women do not enjoy gross sexuality when there is no mental attachment in it. The act of sex becomes enjoyable and the source of ecstatic pleasure when they can accept their partners mentally. According to Urvashi Sinha and Gur Piyari Jandial:

Deshpande’s main aim in depicting pre-marital or extra- marital sex is not to show the women seeking gratification outside marriage. Rather it stresses the fact that sex without emotional involvement is of little importance. (Mohan 169)

The protagonists of Deshpande’s novels have proved this hypothesis again and again in their lives in which the relationship based on gross sexuality do not last long. They believe in the relationships which provide them utmost motivation to conquer their problems in life. They don’t always pamper their minds as they try to maintain a balance between their desire and their responsibilities provided to them.

The body - mind conflict is best revealed in Deshpande’s novel, Moving On in which the conflict is shown through the predicaments of both Manjari and her mother Vasu. Vasu was a writer and she always gave preference to mind. In the matters of her physical needs, she was immensely secretive like any other traditional Indian woman. But, she was married to a person who was by nature very much passionate. Badri Narayan, Vasu’s husband was a doctor by profession and so he had an obsession for ‘body’. When they were married Badri found Vasu very coy and reluctant in sexual matters. But, as Badri was a very liberal person, Vasu always dominated their sex life. It appeared in the course of the time that she did not
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like physical passion. This was the reason that she could not support her elder daughter Manjari who married Shyam out of love. Much later when Manjari gave a thought over the conflict between herself and her mother on the issue of her marriage with Shyam, she discovered: “...Mai’s steady hostility which had so baffled me, was part of her ongoing battle with Baba, it was part of her resistance to Baba’s idea of the importance of the body.” (MO 115)

Manjari too, suffered from this conflict very much throughout her life. After the untimely demise of her husband Shyam, she lived the austere life of a devoted widow. She did not encourage the thought of re-marriage not only because of her two children, but she could not accept any other person in place of her deceased husband. But, it was quite a tough time for her to bring up her children on her sole effort. She had faced many bitter situations in which she was even proposed by her friend’s husband to become his mistress. She reminisced bitterly the days when she gave up wearing saris because looking womanly was a threat to her, she used to cut her hair short like a man so that she would look ugly, she laughed occasionally so that men could avoid her for wearing always the grimmest expression. Living alone in a male dominated society became really troublesome for her. This is very realistic picture of Indian society which Deshpande has brought forth by the description of Majari’s life struggle. After many years of self-imposed celibacy Manjari suddenly engages herself in an affair with a person who is much younger than her. Apparently, it seems very confusing why Manjari involved herself in such a heinous act as developing a sexual relationship with a person who is much younger than her in age. If she was only concerned with her physical needs, she could have married Raja, who already proposed her for marriage. But, we should remember that Manjari was a self-made woman, an educated, independent human being who never became a burden even to her parents. When Raja proposed her for marriage, she rejected the proposal. She thought that Raja was doing a favour for her by arranging a shelter
for her old age. Actually, her mind was pre-occupied with the memories of her dead husband; she could not have accepted any other person to substitute the void that had been created after the death of Shyam. Suddenly one day she was attacked by an intruder. It was an attempt of some mysterious people who wanted her to sell her property. That particular incident changed her life completely. The physical assaults on her body aroused her bodily hunger within. She consequently started to suffer by her bodily needs. The demand of her body was unbearable for her. Her father used to say, “Emotions can be faked, lips can speak untruths, but the body never lies.” (MO 108) Being unable to tolerate the poignant sufferings she was bound to indulge in a secretive liaison with Raman, the tenant of her house. She avoided any kind of physical contact with the person, “No words, no touching.” (MO 258) She does not want to make any relation with this person who is supposed to provide the satisfaction of her physical need. Any kind of touch, the exchange of words might develop a kind of bridge between them, and that bridge may germinate any kind of relationship which she would not be able to mention in presence of the other family members. But, simultaneously she can’t ignore the demand of her body. Her sense is very clear in that matter:

Only the body, his body, my starved body. No thoughts, no feelings, only sensations. The smell of sundried cloths, of sweat, the hardness, the pressure of his body, its weight on mine and my body responding, welcoming his. (MO 257)

Manjari gives an explanation though she is desperate to satisfy her body, her mind is guilt conscious. There is a hidden sense of guilt that permeates over her psyche. Indulging in such an affair with a person who is not her husband, she thinks that she is committing a sin. So, each and every time she is engaged in it, each time there is a battle between her mind and her body:
Never again, never again, I tell myself when I’m back in my own bed, bathed and changed and yes, once again with my mind in a tumult but my body strangely at peace, strangely light...” (MO 257)

She has no control over her body, yet she tries to assert her ‘self’. It is not Raman who takes the leading role in this act, but, it is she who forms the rule. By making dominance in this field in which women are supposed to be passive partners, she is breaking the age-old custom of women’s sexuality. Manjari is giving a voice to Women’s long suppressed sexuality. Yet, being born in conservative Indian culture, she unconsciously succumbs to her essentially Indian nature. That is why she suffers intensely from guilt- consciousness. Whatever she does in her life, it may affect the lives of her near and dear ones. In Indian traditional concept ‘Sex’ is a taboo, and it is even unthinkable for a widow to gratify her bodily hunger with another person. Being nurtured in an orthodox Indian culture, Manjari can’t shed off her hesitation from her mind. She thinks of the shame and dejection that would befall in the lives of her other relations after the incident of her nocturnal revelry is exposed. This sense of guilt consciousness is always present in her mind. That is why she chooses the night for the time of her secret affair, as this is an act which she can’t reveal in the broad day light, she goes herself to Raman’s room, as it is the demand of her own body. In her sub - conscious mind she is alert whether her ‘sin’ is prominent in her body or her gesture insinuates towards her ‘sin’. She tries to console her mind by emphasizing that she has done no wrong. This is also the sign of her disturbed psyche. In her effort she tries to obliterate the signs of her ‘sin’ from her body in order to get mental purgation.

Do I look Different? Does anything show?...The body is honest, yes, it told me its need and I’ve gone along with it, I’ve given it what it wants. I’ve done nothing wrong. ...And yet, why do I bathe three times a day, why do I scrub myself when
bathing, as if I want to flay myself, why do I punish my body so angrily? The body and mind so much at variance with each other. .. (MO 260)

Much later when Manjari comes to know from a policeman that Raman may be in association with the culprits who once gave threats in order to sell the house, she tries to protect Raman. It is not because of the fact that she has developed any kind of mental attachment with Raman, but it is because if Raman is caught, her own prestige which is associated with many others in her family will be in utter jeopardy. Manjari admits the fact by herself: “I don’t want Sachi and Anand to be ashamed of me. And Raja - for some reason, the thought of Raja knowing anything is unbearable.” (MO 279) This is the actual mental agony of the Indian women who try earnestly to emancipate themselves from the age-old manacles of society and yet are helpless in their minds as they can’t achieve salvation outside of their families.

In Deshpande’s recent novel The Country of Deceit which was published in 2008, the author again brings forth women sexuality as one of the main issues of the novel. Sindhu, Devayani’s aunt provides some information to Devayani which enable us to identify the difference between the two cultures of East and West. Sindhu informs Devayani about a woman who was suffering from cancer, and during her treatment she expressed a wish that after the period of treatment is over she would like to dance a ‘striptease’ in order to celebrate her recovery. Sindhu interprets how the people of West irrespective of gender celebrate their bodies. Sindhu persuades Devayani for getting married to a suitable groom and the reason why should a woman get married at all is very interesting. She says:

( . . .) the body is important and so are the demands of the body. I learnt this early in my ‘ life. With my first husband, I got only the trailer and I knew there was a more interesting story to come ( . . .) Our country does not allow women to fulfil these desires without marriage ( . . .) there is a line in Upunishud which says that
the generating organ is the centre of all pleasures (...) And they use the word *ananda* which is such a wonderful word (...) this is very natural feeling, a very natural desire and you have a right to expect your life to contain this *ananda* as well. (*ITCD* 43)

Much later Devayani herself admits that marriage is in a way a legal permission for sex. She sums it up thus: “(...) that is the point of marriage. Sex without guilt. Sex without any strings attached. Sex without fear.” (*ITCD* 77) One can’t ignore the body as body is the medium through which a life is lived. But, in our country, if one tells about the needs of the body, he is castigated. Much later when Devayani herself falls in love with Ashok, she realizes how the conflict between body and mind resolved in case of love with the desired person where the abstract idea of love can be captured through the concrete body. She herself says:

> But how can you love a man and not sleep with him? How can you not long for the physical union? It’s not just sex, it’s showing your love through your body, it’s seeing and feeling his love through his body. It’s the desire for union, the most complete union two human-beings can achieve. (*ITCD* 226)

But Devayani can’t continue her affair with Ashok. Not only because she is afraid of her own stigmatization which would befall upon her, but also for her family prestige which is associated with her personal honour which would be ruined if she goes on with the relationship with Ashok. There is another reason of her retreat; Devayani repeatedly remembers the immense hatred and curse which KN’s mother kept in store for her husband and that woman he eloped with. Devayani can’t afford to bear such colossal hatred for the rest of her life. Therefore, she decides to end up the relationship. In the letter she tells Ashok: “We would always be haunted by the unhappiness of others, you, more than I, because your commitments are stronger, more binding.” (*ITCD* 237)
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In this context Devayani’s voice seems to be in tune with the author herself, who in an interview with Lakhsmi Holmstrom says: “But, I can’t see people in isolation. They are part of families” (Pathak 244) Devayani admits their boundaries not as 3 man or 3 woman but as two different human individuals. All of us have certain responsibilities in our lives and we can’t escape them. Maintaining the relationship which has practically no future, she is actually deceiving, the others in her household and this act of betrayal makes her conscious about her guilt. She says in the letter to Ashok:

I’m tired of lying and deceiving others. I have always known it is much worse for you. Like I said, there are greater claims on your commitment, on your loyalty, than there are on mine. But, I too have my bonds and I can’t go on lying to the people I love, I can’t go on deceiving them. (ITCD 237)

There is another reason which is lurked in her mind secretly, and this is the ailment of Arjun to whom she serves as a surrogate mother. Being born and brought up in a rigid culture she always had been pined for the affair with Ashok, as he was a married person. She had an idea that indulging in an affair with him, she was actually depriving his wife and daughter. She had always been guilt conscious, but, she was vulnerable by the emotion for which every human being craves passionately. Suddenly, Arjun fell ill, and she thought as if it was for her ‘sin’ that Arjun was being punished. This feeling makes her much more vulnerable than her own love and so she decides to walk off the relationship. Though in her rational mind, she knows there is nothing like ‘sin’ and ‘punishment’, she asks her own self:

Now I thought — will we never get away from these primitive fears of a vengeful god? Thunder, lightning, floods, fire - all these were the punishments meted out by a vengeful deity. And we are still frightened, we still make promise to placate the deity. (ITCD 177)
Actually, this is the uniqueness of Indian women. They don’t think of their own selves, their own passions, their own aspirations, instead, they give priorities to others. And motherhood is the most delicate issue they face in their lives. Motherhood is a state that makes women most vulnerable. This is the reason that Manjari, in *Moving On* wanted to keep her affair secret from her children’s knowledge. She could not afford to let her children know about her secret affair. As a mother she can’t afford to lose her children, and as a human individual she is incomplete without her family. It is this sense of defeat/this sense of loss that restrict her to continue the relationship with Raman.

In her various novels, Deshpande has tried to show the confusion of the women which generate in their minds regarding the conflict of ‘body’ and ‘mind’. It is an effort of the author to view women at the centre of the dilemma and how do they respond towards the basic dichotomy which has been remained unsolved since the dawn of civilization. Dissatisfied with the roles which has been given to them by the Patriarchy Indian women are now gaining the voice to protest against all the socio-cultural oppressions, but, the age—old custom and cultural discourses have hold them up tightly with the tradition. So, it is not the patriarchy only, but, the essential “Indianness” within their bosoms which is responsible for their predicaments.
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