CHAPTER-III

FEMININE SENSIBILITY

As per Webster's new dictionary, the word 'Feminine' means 'of women' or 'womanly'. Etymologically speaking, the word feminine is derived from the Latin word 'femininus', which means 'of women' or 'womanly'.

"Out of the attributes credited to masculinity, a gender dichotomy emerges. The usual tendency is to associate the masculine with stability and essentiality and the feminine with change and materiality. The masculine may be identified with a being's inner form (thought or structure) while the feminine is identified with the being's outer forms (word or substance). The masculine may be associated with the potential inactive form of being; the feminine, with kinetic, active, being. The masculine is one and / or integrated; the feminine is plural and / or diffused..."
...In Yoga and Samkhya religious philosophies of India, the universe is said to be based on the polarities of two metaphysical principles. The masculine principle, *purusa* which means "male" or "man", is that of immanent and essential being, whose nature is immutable. On the other hand, the feminine principle is associated with *Sakti*, the energy that activates the everchanging material universe. The masculine, deprived of its *Sakti*, is compared to lifeless god, while the feminine principle out of balance with the masculine is said to be rampant, capricious and dangerous.”¹

This is the Indian philosophical view. It is difficult to square our common-sense view or the modern western view with some of the concepts spelt out in the above-cited definition of 'male' and 'female'. The psycho-sociological view is as follows:-

"'Feminine' and 'Masculine' represent social constructs - patterns of sexuality and behaviour imposed by cultural and social norms. In this usage 'feminine' represents nurture and 'female' represents nature. Femininity, thus, is a social construct. As Simone de Beauvoir says, one isn't born a woman, one becomes one. Patriarchal
oppression imposes certain social standards of femininity on all biological women in order to prove that these standards for 'femininity' are natural. Consequently a woman who does not conform to the chosen standards is considered unfeminine and therefore unnatural. To make women believe that there is such a thing as essence of femaleness, called femininity, serves the interest of patriarchy. Therefore, it is essential to clear the confusion of female with femininity. Women are female but this does not essentially mean that they will be feminine. The problem still remains to define femininity. Under patriarchy, a whole series of feminine characteristics such as sweetness, modesty, subservience, humility etc. have been developed." ²

By femininity is meant the traditional norms, values and traditional sex role, attitudes, aesthetics, accorded to a woman, that is her natural role as a wife, as a mother and her status at home.

According to Webster's unified Dictionary and Encyclopedia, sensibility means, the state of being able to
Sensibility means 'delicacy of perception or ability to feel especially emotional or moral feelings'. "Sensibility refers to an acute perception of or responsiveness toward something, such as the emotions of another. This concept emerged in eighteenth - century Britain and was closely associated with studies of sense perception as the means through which knowledge is gathered." (wikipedia).

Lois Whitney defines 'Sensibility' in a different way.

"...I should say that it is the result of acute senses, finely fashioned nerves, which vibrate at the slightest touch and convey such clear intelligence to the brain, that it does not require to be arranged by the judgement. Such persons instantly enter into the characters of others and instinctively discern what will give pain to every human being; their own feelings are so varied that they seem to contain in themselves, not only all the passions of the species, but their various modifications. Exquisite pain and pleasure is their portion; nature wears for them a different aspect than is displayed to common mortals."3

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The term 'feminine sensibility' can be read cautiously in the works of many women writers. Feminine sensibility is the theoretical framework within which various womanly aspects can be read.

The short stories written by Indian women writers depict different attitudes to the same complex problem of establishing female selfhood. It is but natural for every woman writer to be concerned with the terrible emotional potencies of women. It reveals how a woman is captivated by the social chain of marriage, family and home. The division of labour made by our society fixed the home as a place for women and the outside world is meant for men.

One of the prominent tenets of this sensibility is its reaction to the positioning of woman as the object of the male. Feminine sensibility reacts with resentment to the traditional concept; viz., from early childhood women are brought up to think that the best fulfillment of life for woman can be marriage and bearing children.

But, like men, women are also rightful inheritors of the society. The pages of Indian history tell us that during the Rig-Veda period women enjoyed a high status by having equal rights with men. No area was restricted for them. She
could go to the battle field, fight wars, join in sacrificial rites and festivities, women had the liberty to choose the literary area like Gargi and Maitreyi.

Then came the interlopers guided by Manusmriti. “Day and night woman must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their families ...Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her son protects (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence.” With the passage of time, they devastated women’s position and degraded their status. They did not seem to care for the feelings of hurt, injustice or insecurity of women. These interlopers trespassed on every aspect of a woman’s existence, her productive and reproductive powers, her sexuality and morality, her mobility and her political, legal social, economic status.

Simone De Beauvoir observes;

“Woman herself recognizes that the world is masculine on the whole; those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it to-day are men. As for her, she does not consider herself responsible for it; it is understood that she is inferior and dependent; she has not learned the lessons of violence, she has never stood forth as subject
before the other members of the group. Shut up in her flesh, her home, she sees herself as passive before these gods with human faces who set goals and establish values. In this sense there is truth in the saying that makes her the “eternal child”...The lot of women is a respectful obedience. She has no grasp, even in thought, on the reality around her. It is opaque to her eyes.”

Feminine sensibility, as a theme, has received much attention from many Indian women short story writers. In her Feminist Literary Theory Sarla Palkar writes:

“Cultural representations of women in the image of a Sita or a Savitri or an Ahilya -women known for their exceptional devotion to their husbands – still proliferate in popular media as well as in serious literature. In most of the popular films, dutiful daughters, devoted wives, self-sacrificing mothers are valorized.”

Some of the short stories of Shashi Deshpande, Dina Mehta and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni redefine the Sati Savitri image. The image suggests the eternal loyalty of the wife for the husband. Sita, wife of Rama in the great Hindu epic Ramayana, is held up as a model/ paragon of wifely virtue. Marital fidelity is one among the great qualities of a
woman. The image also tells her to be obedient to the patriarchal society. The writers have sharply reacted to the stereotypical roles like dutiful and obedient wife, and also the values of endurance, virtue, chastity and submission accorded to the Hindu wife by the patriarchy. Stories written by the above said writers present the traditional image of the women and their reactions to the household and familial obligations.

The girls, most of the time, have to submit to the desires of their parents to see their brothers comfortably settled. The sons may be less talented and less intelligent than the daughters, but parents prefer spending money on the sons for they believe that the sons are such assets as would stay with them while the girls would go away to their in-laws' house. Therefore, money spent on girls would prove an unnecessary drain on their purse. This shows how women are often marginalized and ignored like the protagonist portrayed by Shashi Deshpande in her story *Intrusion* who regrets:

“No one had asked me if I had agreed; it had been taken for granted. I had taken it for granted myself, when suddenly, a few days before the wedding, I had gone to
my father, stricken by doubts, "Why? he had asked me, again and, again. And 'what will you do then? In a panic I had asked myself 'What?' A thousand answers, but none to the question 'What's wrong with him?'. I had nothing to say, either, when my father said quietly, 'I have two more daughters to be married.'"

Those helpless words of the father are a subtle and selfish exertion of power, a neurotic urge to possess; to mould the daughter into a predetermined shape. By creating an institution called family, the father, member of the patriarchy, tries to intrude in the area of free choice of the daughter's matrimonial alliance. Under the shadow of paternal domination she agrees.

Indu in Shashi Deshpande's novel *Roots and Shadows* recounts that, as a child, they had told her that she must be obedient and unquestioning. As a girl, they had told her that she must be weak and submissive. Why? She had asked. Because they told her, she is a female. She must accept everything, even defeat, with grace because she is a girl, they said. It is the only way, they said, for a female to live and survive. And she had watched them and found it to be true.
Indu also thought that the women of olden times that the greatest good luck for them was to die before their husbands did— to die ‘Suhagans’. The response of Mini of the same novel to another character Indu on her marriage issue is that she would marry any man who says yes. Because she knew that the kaka and others had taken many pains to find out eligible men and she felt as if she had committed a great crime by being born a girl. And then when someone had agreed, how could she refuse and make kaka go through all of that over again. She did not care what kind of man he was, once they were married and he had become her husband, none of his faults would matter.

Like the daughter of the story ‘Intrusion’, the unnamed protagonist in *It was Dark* recollects the advice:

“You must submit”, my mother had whispered, her face turned away in embarrassment. Society is a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole, I had submitted and miraculously it had made things easier. “Submission”, I had thought then—“it’s the answer”.

The agreement to ‘submission’ by a woman to a man is in itself a patriarchal norm though the advice is given by the mother, a woman. T.N. Geetha observes,
“Shashi Deshpande in all her stories focuses on the sacrifices which Indian women have made at different stages of life.”

In the story *The Awakening* Shashi shows the self-sacrificing nature of woman. The girl may be very talented and ambitious, but she too has to stoop to shoulder the responsibility of the family for economic reasons. It focuses on her reactions to the situation in which she finds herself. Alka is disgusted to see that her father’s small salary is not permitting her to realize her dreams of getting higher education, going abroad and of marriage.

“Put up my hair and wear glasses and a crisp ironed sari like the girl I see on the bus every day. Marry (what kind of man? the face is a blur) and never quarrel with only a curtain between us and the children. And live in a house that smells nice. And have my clothes, not wear things out of a general pool...” is her dream. She expresses her anger and helplessness in taunts and reproaches at her father.

She completely ignores the feelings of her father and the complex realities of life and reluctantly agrees to become a typist to lift the family out of the Morass. Even though she determines to stick with her dreams, her father’s death pours
cold water on her wishes. Life has become inescapable and, contrary to the rules of society, she turns to be a protector of her family. She throws light on the fact that woman has to sacrifice a lot and must make herself ready to serve the family and society respectively. In this context the writer also focuses on the awakening of the feminine sensibility of the protagonist. The daughter receives a letter of her father written to his brother. Through that she learns about the depth of paternal love for her and also the adulthood which is bitter and painful. This awakening can be interpreted as love and affection which existed deep down in the protagonist towards the family.

Marriage to the woman is not by choice, but is made compulsory. Marriage is a sacred institution. Marriage is a must for a woman. Everybody agrees to it. Women also agree and submit themselves. To accept marriage, support marriage and to believe that marriage is everything - such attitudes reveal the feminine sensibility. Every girl is desired to be married off, even though against her wishes, which is what we see daily taking place in thousands of Indian homes. Savitri in R.K. Narayan's *Dark Room* realises that she does not possess anything in this world. What possession can a
she has is her father's, her husband's and her son's. A woman's life is nothing but to get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grand children.

It is not the parents' impatience but the society which questions them on the issue of an unmarried girl which makes the parents hurry to get their daughter married off.

There is a possibility of ignoring the girl's wishes if she has crossed the marriageable age. The short story I want presents the above ideas. The story centers around the situation of matrimonial alliance and relationship in a girl's life. Parents are anxious because Alka has crossed the marriageable age, Alka is anxious of being ignored and feels disgusted at hearing the words of relief of the parents when her marriage is settled. The mother smiles and tells,

"What a relief Thank God
That reminds me I must
Go to the temple and offer a coconut tomorrow."10

The father smiles too and responds.

"What a burden this has been on my mind. Last night I slept well for the first time in years."11
The mother is relieved. The father is also relieved. Indian parents, especially mothers, anxiously look forward to their daughters being married off. The mother will be happy if the marriage is settled. She will be more happy if the married daughter has children. So all these dreams, desires, anxiety, concern, worry of women suggest their feminine sensibilities.

The word ‘burden’ given to her and the words “It is settled”, “...They have agreed” and the bridal inspection, make Alka feel bitter about the marriage and her life. During bridal inspection she is asked to give up her job and become a housewife. She knows that her desires are suppressed by the father and the future husband. In spite of that she surrenders herself before paternal authority and compromises with things. She compromises for the sake of the reputation of the family and the security of her future.

If Alka agrees to the paternal authority, Hema in Deshpande’s *A Wall is Safer* agrees to the circumstances within the family. Vasant, Hema’s husband changes his residence to Bombay. She, who is a lawyer gives up her profession. Sushma, Hema’s friend tries to convince Vasant by defending Hema’s cause. She forces him to think of her profession. He replies carelessly that she could teach. Then
she told him that she was a lawyer and one cannot change one’s profession overnight. Hema’s attitude is not like Shushma’s. She thinks that if she goes away from her husband, then the children would be without their father for months, she herself without a husband for months, and he without a wife and children for months... Like this she is troubled by thoughts of separation.

At last she says, “Oh! I’m all right as I am. After all, I’m a good housewife now.”12 These thoughts are teeming in her mind.

Alka and Hema have indianness in their blood. They represent the Indian feminine sensibility. G.S. Balarama Gupta observes:

“Shashi’s women are conscious of their predicament: they are victims of inequality. They are creatures of conventional morality; they are the ones who are unfairly abused, misused and ill-used. But they believe in conformity and compromise for the sake of the retention of domestic harmony rather than revolt, which might result in the disruption of familial concord. Shashi’s fictional world is replete with only Savitris, not Noras.”13
Dina Mehta’s *Prison* symbolizes the imprisoned state of the protagonist’s life. She feels like the bird which is inside a cage and, wishes to fly freely. Here not only the traditional norms, but her own inner voice etc. never let her go beyond the prison walls. Mehta shows that infidelity is very easy for a man while it is too difficult for a woman. Mehta portrays the protagonist Gauri who is in a state of mental conflict while striving for some sort of inner freedom and happiness, suffers from repressed desires, and her bondage to domestic commitments.

As per Hindu scriptures, those who live up to the feminine ‘ideal’ are looked upon as being divine; those who deviate are fallen. The example of Sita of the *Ramayana* – chaste, selfless and utterly devoted to her husband – is still commended to every woman by patriarchy.

Gauri is facing a different dilemma from that of those other protagonists. According to traditional norms with a happy married life, being well settled, a wife with honour and mother of twin sons, Gauri’s life is a fulfilled one and smooth in the way all women wish to lead. But it is, nevertheless, like a golden prison which gives a suffocating sensation.
She avoids her inner turmoil and tries to escape from falling in love with Dilip Sohini (who is just 10 years older than her own sons), though she felt herself attracted towards him. She sets up barbed wire entanglements. In spite of all this she goes to a French movie along with Dilip.

The moment she sees Dilip in IF office she discovers that she is trapped by him. His staring at her makes her feel she is beautiful and desirable. She does not admit that her season of immunity was over.

Mehta observes that marital infidelity is not a matter of vicious act for a man but for a woman, it is: she has to cross the threshold of morality, and chastity to reach the other shore of infidelity.

Being only human, Gauri feels a fascination and passion for a young man but soon she feels it wrong. Her feelings mirror the woman’s nobility, chastity. Gauri makes the better choice, takes the right decision by reverting to the Indian heritage. Her very brief encounter with him reflects her uneasy conscience which is conditioned by Indian culture. Mehta studies the inner conflicts, unspoken feelings of woman perfectly.
"What might happen if they meet again? But they would not. Such a meeting was blocked by agents more powerful than she, by an ancient tyranny at work within her that forbade her to seize her own felicity. Had women behind bars before her glimpsed new horizons, stormed out of their prisons and crossed whole deserts and wilderness in pursuit of their vision? But her heritage was against such a breakthrough. A strange quality of inaction was hers and within these walls she was doomed to remain."  

These words emphasize her feeling of helplessness when she feels pity for the fish in the tiny aquarium in the children’s room, the love-birds in their cage, the dog on his leash. She understands equally their agony and compares her prison-like situation with theirs. Her heritage does not allow her to put herself out of the prison of tradition and to reach out for new horizons.

It is clear that the fourteen year old marriage could not satisfy her completely. It seems that she has missed out on fulfillment through sheer domesticity. Like birds, she has agreed to be caged within conventional boundaries of a woman’s place.
Deshpande's stories hold the mirror up to the inner layers of the feminine sensibility. Her sensibility recoils in reaction to the male dominance. In the story *My Beloved Charioteer* the different facets of male dominance can be seen in all their deadliness. It tells the stories of women of three generations, i.e. there is an old widow with her experiences of marital life. There is a better understanding between the old lady and the child. But there is an isolation and an alienation which separate the old lady from her daughter. The Old lady tries to break the wall built between them. She tells of her husband’s attitude who made her life burdensome.

"He was your father......but what was he of mine ? I lived with him for 25 years. I know he didn't like unstringed beans and stones in his rice. I know he liked his tea boiling hot and his bath lukewarm...I know he didn't like tears. And so when your baby brothers died, I wept alone and in secret. I combed my hair before he woke up because he didn't like to see women with loosened hair. And I went to the backyard even then, because he hated to find stray hairs anywhere. And once a year he bought two saris. Always colours that I
hated. But he never asked me and I never told him. And
at night....I go on relentlessly, I scarcely dared to
breathe, I was so terrified of disturbing him........"  

The stories narrate the inescapable vicious circles that
imprison women in India. The old lady's story echoes the
agonies of many wives of our society. The way she tolerates
or suffers silently the misbehaviour, the unpleasant verbal
and non-verbal chastisement meted out by her husband
reveal her feminine sensibility.

The story of a doctor in *A Liberated Woman* is also an
epitome of the intolerable situation of Indian wives in general.
She is more talented than her husband, who is a lecturer.
The jealous husband makes her suffer through his sexual
assaults, though theirs is a love marriage. She recognizes the
reason of his worst attitude as being his envy of her
competence. She decides to give up her job but is not ready to
take a divorce from him. She believes that she deserves the
humiliation. She adjusts herself so much that she does not
hurt the feelings of her husband.

Rather she would take all measures ".....to plug all her
escape routes herself and act like a rat in a trap." Deshpande
reveals the extra-sensitive mind of her protagonist, who,
though independent-minded, is ready to tolerate the
unbearable condition of her married life, but not to harm the
domestic peace.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a remarkable Indian-
diaspora writer, is concerned about the psychological and
emotional aspects of womanly sensibility.

The protagonist Meera of Banerjee’s story *The Perfect
Life* also tolerates, the suppression of her own desires like
the wife of the story *The Disappearance*, and sees her
dream destroyed silently. An Indian graduate Meera, now a
bank employee, is living with her boy friend named Richard.
Meera and Richard are perfectly made for each other and
have a harmonious relationship till she meets an abandoned
Hispanic boy under the stairwell of her house. She welcomes
him into her house and gives much attention to the boy. She
names him Krishna and Krishna also likes her. But Meera’s
concern for the boy is not liked by Richard. So they separate
for a while. Richard’s response to Meera’s attachment to the
boy is an epitome of male-domination, which takes a sinister
pleasure in suppressing-trampling over-woman’s dreams. In
spite of this Meera wishes to adopt the Hispanic boy, but he
runs away from Mrs. Ortiz’s house who was taking care of
him. Now Meera will not receive any objection from Richard.
He agrees to marry her; Meera can now dream of a perfect life
with Richard, but along with other personal grievances, she
has to suppress her inner desires to lead a perfect life. She has to live with the pain of losing her loved foster-child. Hence her life is not a perfect life.

Banerjee reminds us of the ancient saying that woman must always be protected- by a man in her childhood, in youth and in old age, even a woman like Meera who is economically independent. If only she marries and lives with Richard, who can protect her, will it be possible for her dream of a perfect life to be fulfilled? Banerjee wants to portray through Meera the marginalized woman.

The first story of the collection *The Bats* also exposes the evil of wife-battering. The story is entirely set in India. The wife in *The Bats* is a victim of wife-abuse and wife-battering, which is a cruel aspect of male-authority. Here a young girl narrates the untold misery of her mother against an aggressive and violent man. She describes the blustering and dictatorial attitude of her father with her mother and her own experiences:

"Things fell a lot when father was around, may be because he was so large. His hands were especially big, with blackened, split nails and veins that stood under the skin like blue snakes. I remembered their chemical smell and the hard feel of his fingers from the time when
I was little and he used to pick me up suddenly and throw me all the way up to the ceiling, up and down, while mother pulled his arms, begging him to stop and I screamed and screamed with terror until I had no breath left."16

Her father works as a foreman in a printing press, comes home drunk and beats his wife, who came from a village. She is a housewife, ignorant, timid and, more than this, her total economic dependence on her husband gave him full chance to treat her like a slave. She always hides the marks and scars on her face which are noticed by her daughter, though.

"A couple of days later Mother had another mark on her face, even bigger and reddish blue. It was on the side of her forehead and made her face look lopsided"17

The wife and her daughter leave home and go to their grandpa-uncle's home to escape from the brutality of the husband. But to the surprise of her daughter and also to the reader's, the wife returns to her husband's home. The return of the wife shows that there is no permanent escape from this cycle of violence. Banerjee explains the situation brilliantly in terms of an interlude of the 'bats.'
The Bats come in huge numbers, descend all of a sudden on the mango orchard, which grandpa-uncle was taking care of. Bats bit and ruined hundreds of mangoes. Grandpa-uncle takes much pains to get rid of those bats. He tries sticks and drums and magic powder from the wise woman in the next village—but he does not succeed. Finally he uses poison. Next morning they see the heap of dead bats lying all over the orchard. But this is not the end. Hereafter every morning they see many dead bodies of bats on the same spot.

The dialogue of the daughter (who is the narrator), written by Banerjee in this context, seems to be pointed at the present condition of her mother. The daughter is puzzled at the fate of the bats.

"I guess they just don't realize what's happening. They don't realize that by flying somewhere else they'll be safe, or may be they do, but there's something that keeps pulling them back here." 18

There is a link between the interlude of the bats with the story of the wife. Women choose marriage even though they find no satisfaction. Like bats they choose the married life. They don't realize that by choosing a different life, they would
be safe, but there's something that keeps pulling them back here.

Like Shashi Deshpande and Dina Mehta, Banerjee has also described the feminine sensibilities of her protagonists from a highly perceptive angle. Even though Banerjee’s stories examine the plight of Immigrant women, she heightens their domestic burden. She makes out the point in her stories that the present day Indian husband’s attitude towards his wife is the possessive attitude of barbaric times. The Indian husband seems to be like Petruchio in William Shakesperare’s *Taming of the Shrew*—who declares:

“I will be master of what is mine own; She is my goods; My cattles, she is my house, My household –stuff, My fields, My barn, My horse, My ox, my ass, my any thing.”

In the story *Silver pavements, Golden Roofs*, Bikram, the husband of the protagonist Pratima, exhibits the same temperament and attitude as Petruchio. Not only in his face, but by nature also Bikram is ugly. He has come to America dreaming of becoming a millionaire, but working as a garage mechanic. So he takes his bitterness out on his wife, who tolerates his domineering nature without question, as a
traditional Indian wife would do. It is not just a matter of tradition but also of fear hidden in women's heart towards their fathers, husbands and also the society. The story is narrated by Jayanthi Ganguli, who arrives in Chicago to stay with her aunt Pratima and uncle Bikram. She witnesses the brutal behaviour of her uncle towards her aunt. Jayanthi realizes his ugly nature one evening when she has forced her aunt to go for a walk with her. She could not at first see why her aunt had only reluctantly agreed. On their way unexpectedly they are insulted by the street boys. They have thrown slush on their face.

"I don't see which boy first picks up the fistful of slush but now they're all throwing it at us. It splatters on our coats and runs down our saris, leaving long streaks. I take a step toward the boys. I am not sure what I'll do when I get to them—shake them? Explain the mistake they had made? Smash their face into the pavement? But Aunt held on tightly to my arm."19

Her uncle notices them when they reach home and gets angry for two reasons. One is by asserting his power as male authority. He is angry that they went out without his permission. And secondly, the discrimination he faced from
the Americans had engendered bitterness in him, which he now visited upon his wife by hitting her.

"When the back of his hand catches Aunt Pratima across the mouth, I flinch as if his knuckles had made that thwacking bone sound against my own flesh. My mouth fills with an ominous salt taste." 20

This incident has an unforgettable impact on Jayanthi more than Pratima. She is terrified and says to herself:

"Is this what my life too will be like?" 21

She is disgusted with the life of her aunt in the foreign land. Banerjee describes her story as of one caught between Pratima's ugly domestic life and the discrimination or alienation faced by Bikram and Pratima as immigrants. Pratima does not protest against the ill treatment of the husband; she accepts her married life as it is. She neither complains nor raises her voice in this situation.

Moving from one story to another seems like facing the untold miseries of women one by one. The wife in The Bats tolerates the exploitation of the husband with a thought for the future of her daughter. She knows very well the consequences if she leaves her husband forever. Both protagonists - Pratima and the wife - are afraid to expose their
private problems, because they know in India the public exposure of a private problem may lead to divorce. But the divorce will not lead to any positive results.

In this story Banerjee seems to hold out that a woman's life can be fulfilled only by getting married. Even her protagonists do believe in this truth. The wife in the short story *The Bats*, Pratima in *Silver Pavements and Golden Roofs* and Meera in *The Perfect Life* opt for married status, willingly or unwillingly.

Feminine sensibility spans the limited realm of women: Home, husband, children, relationships -these are the only aspects included in her world. It also probes her reactions to the surroundings, society, herself, God and religion and to every experience she has in her life. Shashi Deshpande describes it in these words;

"I have been able to feel more for a housewife who is most devoted...women who do not go out to work, who are literally trapped, who are scared to get out of family relationships....most women are still emotionally dependent on the family; they want to be good daughters/ wives/mothers always." 22
References:


7. Ibid. p-32.


11. Ibid, p.41


17. Ibid, p.3
18. Ibid, p.8
19. Ibid, p.51
20. Ibid, p.53
21. Ibid, p.53