CHAPTER-V

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Comparative literature study need not be comparative on every point, but the overall intent, emphasis and execution must be comparative. Comparison may be used in this kind of literary study to indicate affinity of tradition or influence. Comparison and contrast are the tools, which help in forming the method of comparative criticism. In other words: “Comparison is the main tool for the study of more than one literature.”

Masterpieces like the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata are classic works, which compared in the global context. These works focus on the external human emotions and passions. In the contemporary Indian novels dealing with various regions and languages do not only deal with a region, but the treatment probes the depths of passion and despair, strength and weakness, beauty and squalor of the community staying in that region. It gives a glimpse of the actual region of India. These works focus on the life in the present context.

Shashi Deshpande and Triveni are two distinguished names in Indian literature, and they are well known for their ‘feminine’ mode of expression, for their honest views on man - woman relationship, for their unconventional approaches to some of the burning issues such as love and marriage and their effects - good or bad on individuals. They are the two women writers of talent imbued with a typically feminine sensibility. Though they have written in different decades, they have certain points in common
while certain others in divergence. In the works of both Deshpande and Triveni, there is a very sensitive depiction of the way women suffer due to the sexist bias in the patriarchal society which gives a sub-ordinate position to women and always treats them as second rate citizens. A woman's whole existence is seen in relation to the service she can render to a man. The subordination of woman begins even before her marriage when she is groomed by her parents and ironically more often by mothers who are orthodox women in their thinking, to grow into an attractive commodity that can have many uses for her husband in future. All the stress is laid on making her specifically feminine and an attempt is made to curb her independent spirit.

A study of these two contemporary Indian novelists has revealed interesting similarities and differences among the protagonists, other women characters, male characters as well as the social scene which they portray. Both authors give primary importance to the depiction of female characters. It is seen that these novelists portray a wide spectrum of contemporary Indian women, who in spite of the differences, are truly representative of the average, urban Indian women of today. These writers have been able to probe into the depths of the consciousness of their protagonists. The protagonists are guided by a self-awareness which propels them towards self-assertion. From the limited sphere of the traditionally ordained roles of daughter, wife, and mother, each protagonist strives for an identity of her own.

Triveni (1928 to 1963) a major contemporary Kannada woman novelist, has written twenty novels, sixteen of which are feminist. The other four
novels deal with psychological subjects. She restricts herself to psychological aspects of the character in these four novels. Her skillfully wrought novels and short stories are poignant renderings of the quest of the women characters. Moreover, when we evaluate Triveni's depiction of man-woman relationship, we should bear in mind that most of her works were written in the fifties; at the time, when large scale industrialization had just been introduced in India, and women's education was not as widespread as it is today. Triveni shows an inwardness while talking about women's problems and family life; this advantage provides strength to her pen. Most of her stories are about the lives of women young and old, educated or uneducated, rich-poor, single-married beautiful or ugly etc.

Shashi Deshpande (born 1938) a prominent Indian English writer has chosen English, a second language to her, as the medium for the 'exploration of sensibility'. It is only the use of certain native words like 'Appa' and 'Akka' that betrays her native origin; otherwise her command of English language excels that of some of the British writers themselves. While retaining her originality, Deshpande is representative of the present trend in Indian English fiction. Shashi Deshpande has published till date nine novels. In addition, she also has to her credit six collections of short stories and five books for children. Shashi Deshpande's initial focus of attention is the world of women - the struggle of women in the context of modern Indian society. Unable to fully reject traditional, patriarchal norms of society, these women characters attempt
to realize and preserve their identity not only as women but also as human beings.

The range of the world described by Triveni in her novels is very limited. But within that limit, she has depicted the characters, situations, life that she has experienced, seen, heard of, and understood, very honestly, without any lapses or blemishes. She was writing at a time when she was considered as the most progressive writer. She has seen life through her own eyes of a woman and has dealt mostly with woman’s problems in her novels. The heroines are the centers of attraction of her novels. The heroines protest against the male-dominated society. These attempts always put woman in a cage. The heroines further fight for their individuality, identity, and self-respect. Shashi Deshpande, however, has particularly concentrated on the typical dilemma of middle class educated and employed Indian women whose problems are different from those of rural women in India. Writing in ‘Society’ for December 1989, she revealed the secret of her fictional writing. “I realize”, she said, ‘I write what I write because I have to. Because it is within me. It’s one point of view, a world from within the woman, and that I think is my contribution to Indian writing’. She has her own independent views on women, their position, and predicament.

Triveni stated the problems and situations her characters possibly experience and face in their lives. She tried to depict the different kinds of pressures and conflicts. She still works within the framework of patriarchal values. Triveni as a writer belongs to an earlier generation and hence we see in
her novels the beginnings of change. In the modern context, her viewpoint may appear limited and one-sided. What is significant is that she was able to focus on women's issues and problems. Shashi Deshpande is a more conscious artist who foregrounds the image of the Indian woman striving to involve and retain an individuality of her own. She is an artist better equipped with technical skills with the help of which she achieves depth of vision. In delineating characters a novelist like her has no choice. 'There are some, may be several, choices in the technique', she says, "...But not in the characters". Deshpande does not create wooden characters to serve her need. "I don't think", she told Lakshmi Holmstrom; "any character in my novels comes out of necessity, to serve some need of mine." 

Triveni does not examine man-woman relationship against the transitionary socio-economic framework. The man-woman relationship for her is only a matter between two individuals. Looked at from this angle all her characters and situations in the novels, are true to the life that we see around us. She depicts a wide variety of problem with women at the center. Her view of life lacks the complexity necessary to consider man-woman relationship. The main concern in Shashi Deshpande is the relationship between husband and wife and latter's dilemmas and conflicts. Deshpande told in an interview: "Human relationship is what a writer is involved with. Person to person and person to society are the concerns of a creative writer and to me, the former is of immense importance. My preoccupation is with interpersonal relationship and human emotions".
There is variety in the choice of subject-matter in Triveni's novels but there is no depth of treatment of the subject, as she makes every problem she chooses quite individualistic. She does not raise it beyond that level. There is a lack of subtlety in her novels because of the lack of exploration of experience. She does not bring in and consider the lower class people anywhere in her novels and restricts herself to the depiction of middle class life. So there is less of complexity and more of simplicity of life in her novels.

Deshpande gives a realistic portrayal of the predicament of middle-class educated Indian women, their inner conflict, and quest for identity, issues related to marriage and sex, and their exploitation and disillusionment. As Veena Sheshadri remarks: "She believes in presenting life as it is and not as it should be", and like Jaya of That Long Silence many Indian wives keep on "perennially groping about their fate, but unwilling to do anything that could result in their being tossed out of their comfortable ruts and into the big, bad world of reality, to fend for themselves." 4

Triveni's idea of the status of woman in the society is quite traditional. In her view, woman should be educated, she can be an artist, but there is no need for her to be employed to earn her living. Let a woman be in any field or let her have any position in life and society, unless she marries and bears children, her life is incomplete and meaningless. A woman can love and marry only one man in life; she cannot and should not love and marry a second man. These patriarchal views persist in Triveni's novels and appear strange against the background of today's feminist movement. According to feminists of today,
family is not important, individual (woman) is important. Her desires and ambitions are emphasized more by feminists. Whereas, for Triveni, family life is important. Though she values and recognizes woman's desires and ambitions, she believes that her desires and ambitions could be fulfilled only within the framework of family life. Triveni holds that woman should not be single and unsupported or unprotected. It can be said that Triveni is at once traditional and modern. Because in her novels, she raises the issues of male domination, exploitation of woman and also of prostitution.

Shashi Deshpande's protagonists reflect sensitivity, depth of understanding and awareness of orthodox virtue in matters of love, marriage, and family. Being a writer of a later generation, she concerns herself with the plight of the modern Indian woman trying to understand herself and to preserve her identity as wife, mother, and above all, as a human being. Her novels can be regarded as the staple material for a study of feminist thought, women's sexuality, the gender roles, self-discovery and so on. But she can be called a feminist; if at all, only in a certain specific sense. The interview given to Lakshmi Holmstrom throws light on her stance:

I now have no doubts at all in saying that I am a feminist. In my own life, I mean. But not consciously, as a novelist. I must also say that my feminism has come to me very slowly, very gradually, and mainly out of my own thinking and experiences and feelings. I started writing first, and only then discovered my feminism. And it was much later that I actually read books about it.5
Deshpande highlights the household conflict between wife and husband, and this conflict operates at the emotional, intellectual, and sexual levels. Deshpande is fully aware of the patriarchal set up of Indian society, and she does not plead for any kind of confrontation or militancy between man and woman, between husband and wife. Though *That Long Silence* is cast in the feminist framework, Deshpande does not go beyond the limits of Indian socio-cultural reality. In India, since woman is considered to be an “embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith, and knowledge.”

Triveni and Shashi Deshpande both give their women characters, a good educational background, in conflict with a parochial society and depict their struggle to rise above the limits set to them. In the novels taken up for study the focus is mainly on the suffering of women within marriage. In Deshpande’s gallery, we have striking portraits of Sarita, Jaya, Indu, Urmila, Madhu to mention a few. In Triveni too, the women like Rama, Sunanda, and Mira are characters with human warmth, so essential to a vibrant character. The women characters in Triveni placed in an orthodox culture have their roots in their native soil but encounter an invading women’s liberation.

Shashi Deshpande highlights the problems encountered by the Indian women caught between the native Indian and invading Western cultures. Each of Deshpande’s protagonists becomes her own role model after having rejected traditional role-models. They succeed in finding a practical solution to the problems that confront them. While Triveni’s protagonists are comparatively static in each novel, they face a conflict between individual desires and societal
expectations. Even when incapable of changing accepted, traditional male-oriented norms and ideas, they do not reveal the strength to question them. She has shown her characters as silent sufferers.

Deshpande's protagonists are stronger than Triveni's protagonists. They attempt to resolve their problems by a process of temporary withdrawal. Their models are not the traditional stereotyped women who are willing to sacrifice their individuality for the sake of upholding the traditional norms: "Sarita in The Dark Hold No Terrors depicts the journey of modern woman towards financial independence, emotional balance and social recognition." All her women protagonists—Indu, Saru, Jaya, and Urmia—succeed in constructing a self through individual professional achievement. They also manage to come to terms with themselves by redefining their relationships by accepting social constraints. They have done justice in their domestic as well as professional fields.

In Kannada literature Triveni was the first to explore the modern Indian sensibility. She wrote about the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action. Shashi Deshpande moves further and catches on the subtle psychological complexities of the individual mind. In the world of Kannada novels, Triveni introduced for the first time and popularized psychological fiction that dealt exclusively with the mentally ill—characters. Through her novels, she opened up a psychic world in which people play unknowingly strange, fantastic, and sad games with themselves and with the rest of the world.
Shashi Deshpande has also shown a keen insight into human psychology. She has made an effort to probe the psyche of a woman. She also digs deeper into the nature of human relationships in order to excavate the known principles of life, which might help individuals to live happily and successfully. She treads the labyrinthine tracts of human psyche and creditably represents it in the fiction. The Dark Holds No Terrors and That Long Silence are an education in the psyche of people who lose their capacity for rational thought on being subjected to traumatic experience.

In Indian writing in English, many writers appear to be delving into the labyrinthine depths of the Indian psyche. Anjana Desai's Cry, the Peacock, and Where Shall We Go This Summer? Bharati Mukherjee's Wife, Kamala Markandaya's A Silence of Desire, Nayantara Sahgal's The Day in Shadow, and Nargis Dalal's The Inner Door portray sensitive individuals in their moments of intense struggle and in their efforts to seek neurotic solutions to their problems.

The discriminating socio-cultural values and practices of the female child are highlighted by both novelists. In The Dark Holds No Terrors, Saru is unwelcome in the family because her parents' preference is for a male child. She remembers how her brother was named: "They had named him Dhruva. I can remember, even now vaguely, faintly a state of joyous excitement that had been his naming day. The smell of flowers, the black grinding stone."

The protagonist of Modala Hejje suffers because of her sex. Since she is a girl, she is not expected to have any formal education. Even the mother, more
unconsciously and out of her upbringing, differentiates between her daughter and her son regarding food and clothes. The narrator says: "With the birth of my younger brother, Guru, (says the narrator) my life changed suddenly, I hadn’t even dreamed of such a change...Now, everything first to Guru and only then to me. I could no longer sleep on my mother’s lap now. Guru would get up within no time and my mother would push me away to have Guru on her lap."9 As Meenakshi Mukherjee quotes: "That the classical ideals no longer obtain significance in the Indian context. But in actual literary practice, numerous characters are found to adhere to classic prototypes especially the women of fiction who persistently re-enact the suffering, sacrificing role of Sita or Savitri."10 In Keelugombe Triveni emphatically exposes the exploitation of wife by her husband in the institution of marriage. Her husband has treated her as though she is not an individual in her own right but a puppet. Shashi Deshpande also deals with the problem of rape in marriage, Mira, Urmila’s mother-in-law in The Binding Vine had died in childbirth. She had four years of loveless married life leading to her "dislike of the sexual act with her husband physical repulsion from the man she married."11

Triveni is highly ambivalent regarding man woman relationship and the institution of family. It is true that an ideal woman to her is a happily married woman, who looks after her children with love and care. Of the six friends in Kankana and Mukti, the only woman to find happiness in life is Ambika, who has no ambitions in life and who readily accepts whatever life offers her. Triveni’s novel Apajaya (defeat) is titled so because the protagonist of the novel,
Meera gets defeated in her attempt to lead a happy married life. Indu in Shashi Deshpande’s *Roots and Shadows*, is able to free herself from the responsibilities that bind her to the past, only after Akka’s death. She is Akka’s successor to don the mantle of the family matriarch. She shows maturity in executing her duties. But there is much difference between Akka and Indu. She realizes that Jayant need not determine her sphere of activity. From a wife who suits her desires to her husband’s expectations, she matures into an individual who chooses to live life in accordance with her own wishes. Initially, Jaya, in That Long Silence, accepts life unquestioningly; she does not express her opinions openly, even about her husband’s illegal earnings at office.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita retreats to her paternal home to move away from the painful reality of Manohar’s sadism. In spite of being a successful doctor, initially she lacks the capacity to assess her own worth and is constantly plagued by a baseless guilt. This temporary withdrawal to her paternal home helps her examine her expectations and attitudes and then mature into a person willing to face life. Shashi Deshpande’s preoccupation with the feminine sensibility is unique in the annals of the Indo-Anglian novel. Her obsessive concern is with the fate of a married woman in Indian society today. The society is in a state of transition with our cultural values in the melting pot. One could sense in Deshpande’s novel a compelling urge for a way of living which would respond to the innermost yearnings of women for freedom and self-dignity. A view endorsed by critics such as Adele King, notes the interface between western feminist theorizing and Indian social
reality in novels such as *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *That Long Silence*. As Adele King rightly points out: "Deshpande's novels which describe the experience of modern, educated middle class women, show both similarities and contrasts to western works."\(^{12}\)

Triveni has great respect for such women (i.e. Rajamma in *Hannele Chiguridaga*), who irrespective of their husband’s eccentricities and oddities, tolerate them and thus keep a family intact and functioning. Most of the women who reject marriage, for one reason or another, suffer in Triveni’s novels (Susheela in *Kankana*, the protagonist of *Modala Hejje*). Triveni and Shashi Deshpande reflect the paradoxical realities of family life. Triveni’s ideal is not only family, but a family in which both the partners have equal rights and responsibilities (like Madhuravani and her husband in *Keelugombe*). Deshpande stands for a contented family life, in spite of her pleading for the freedom of woman in the Indian society. Jasbir Jain comments that in *A Matter of Time*, the author:

Subtly debates the whole issue of individual freedom. The novel has three parts- The House, The Family, The River - and each title carries within it a meaning. ‘The House’ is the body; it is also memory and lineage, the coming together of all different elements... ‘The Family’ consists of three generations....The third part ‘The River’ is about immersion in the river waters which clean and purify. It is also about the stream of life which flows.\(^{13}\)
Indu, in *Roots and Shadows*, experiences disillusionment in sex and suffers a silent sexual humiliation. She suffers no guilt in her extra-marital relationship with Naren. Of Deshpande's heroines, only Indu (*Roots*) has an extra-marital affair; Saru, Jaya, and Urmi are almost tempted but they do not succumb. Simone de Beauvoir says that for “Loyalty and friendship” to exist between man and woman the essential condition is that they should be “free in relation to each other and be equal on concrete matters”.

In Triveni's *Sothu Geddavalu* (She Who Lost and Won) tells about the anguish suffered as a result of adultery. It is an unusual story about an extraordinary loyal and remorseful young woman who is ultimately the helpless victim of a male dominated system where her winning or losing is equally meaningless. Triveni's *Bellimoda* reveals a feminist point of view. It criticizes the action of the young man who refuses to marry the girl he is engaged to, because she gets a baby brother and hence he cannot get all the property of her father. The story was slight when the book was first published. It did not prove particularly popular. But later when it became a film, it was only then that the readers understood the implied criticism of man's shallow nature and love of money over the wealth of heart. Through this novel, Triveni depicts that marriages often are not based on love but on dowry. Though Shashi Deshpande holds feminist views and admits she has been influenced by feminist literature in her later novels she has stated that she wants to rise above feminist themes and write about human beings and not about men and women only as feminist outlook presents only part of the reality.
We can also read about the position of the traditional thoughts and practices in the present changing society in the novels of Triveni. It is easily stated that such changes are the contributions of broad minded attitude and the reformation movements. But, the old values may remain the same, unchanged eventhough the practices change. Though there are encouraging words about widow marriage, the thoughts about women have remained unchanged. The difference between old tradition and modernity is identified through the analysis of mental conflicts of characters of the novels and the way they face those conflicts. The whole depiction seems to emphasize the role of the educated people and its importance in framing the modern mental attitude that is necessary for a social change.

Sunanda of Doorada Betta represents such a conflict of the modern mind. Sunanda, who is born in the middle class family of progressive attitude, marries at eighteen and becomes a widow the very next year. She continues her education that she had given up and accepts the job of a teacher. She has no objection for the second marriage. But her traditional (orthodox) thoughts hidden in her mind come in the way. The treatment of the subject in Doorada Betta seems to uphold the ideal of 'single husband' (or monogamy i.e. woman can marry only once in life), through the depiction of the conflict between the impressions formed of chastity (loyalty to husband) during the childhood days and the open minded attitude of freedom that is presented by modernity. Triveni's Modala Hejje criticizes society which treats women cruelly and
protests against man's inhuman exploitation of helpless women. She depicts men as sadistic often.

In Deshpande's *The Binding Vine*, Kalpana a young woman hanging between life and death in a hospital ward, is the victim of rape. Sharapanjara's Kaveri suffers from a tremendous sense of guilt, which leads her to mental breakdown. Even before the marriage Kaveri becomes the victim of rape by her cousin. The submerged memory of this encounter surfaces and she is driven to mental breakdown. After her husband's death, Malati in *Hannele Chiguridaga* returns to the protection of her father and brother. She does not cross the limits marked by them and accepts the protection of some other man in the end. Her traditional father questions: "You have so many elder brothers, still they have thought of further educating you. Should I live to see you toiling in a job after completing your education?"\(^\text{15}\)

From this dialogue we can note two things one, the education and employment of Malati is equated with her widowhood. Two, the woman, who dedicates her life for husband and children is compared with the woman who works outside the house to earn, and there is clear indication that such a woman who works for her livelihood can not attain 'completeness' of womanhood by shouldering the responsibilities of wife and mother. The possibilities of education and profession for women of different castes and classes in different conditions are highlighted in the novels of Triveni. She was writing at a time when higher education and holding a job were considered as
unfavourable for a woman. In Shashi Deshpandé’s *Small Remedies* Leela is ‘the rebel’ in a wholly conventional, tradition-bound family:

The black sheep of the family. A widow who remarried. And, what was worse, infinitely worse, remarried a Christian man. These were the things the family spoke of. Leela’s other activities did not matter to them, none of her achievements registered. Her years of teaching, her role in the trade unions, her work among the factory workers—these were blacked out, they did not exist.16

Thus Aunt Leela, a Brahmin widow marries a most unlikely person from another religion with whom she lives happily even though they share neither food nor language.

Triveni mainly depicts themes and characters set in urban, educated, middle-class, upper-caste families. She herself came from such a background, and her first-hand knowledge of these lends authenticity to her fiction. Triveni stands out as one who attempted to create self-awareness in women and enable them to struggle for their own emancipation. The double standards that society employs in the judgement of men and women which is mainly responsible for the suppression and suffering of women are exposed by Triveni in her writings. The ideal wife is expected to submit her will to the will of her husband and harbour no desires of her own. She is expected to look upon her husband as the lord (god or Parameswara) in order to be released from worldly existence.

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Shashi Deshpande handles also an entirely controversial area of feminism in her novels - the issues of female sexuality. A powerful stand of feminism is concerned with the ways in which to assert women's legal rights to their own bodies.

Triveni has written about the emotional cruelty women experience in marriage, their longing for affection, and their frustration. Her fiction covers most of the relations and phases of women's life cycle. Her women characters mainly are married women who seek to attain their selfhood in marriage and aim to establish a relationship, which is something other than a dominant, submissive relationship. Marriage is the traditional basis of man - woman relationship. She strongly advocates the need of a married woman for freedom to become aware of herself as an individual. Her novels throw a new light on the corners of women's lives that have for centuries, perhaps remained in dark.

Triveni's attitude to feminism is gentle and not strident. Construction of her novel is simple and straightforward, and perhaps that is one of the reasons why her novels have proved popular. In fact her novels appear to have become more popular after her death. Some of them have become films and some others have become text-books in schools and colleges. On the contrary Shashi Deshpande's novels are more refined in construction and complicated in structure. She does not restrict herself to feminism. Actually she goes beyond feminism to a search for self-identification.

In this respect she may be considered to be a superior novelist to Triveni. Educationally and culturally Shashi Deshpande was better qualified to
deal with social problems. Triveni's feminism is more implied than categorically stated. Though basically the situations and experiences of the women of Deshpande and Triveni are the same, yet we also come across some difference in their responses, which could largely be due to the difference in their social milieu. While Deshpande's women are bolder in asserting their individuality, Triveni's women are rather slow in realizing their needs and then asserting their individuality. Triveni's women, like their creator, hesitate for long before taking the final bold decisive step. Triveni's women represent the transitional stage. Deshpande's women are working, hence already exposed to the outer world, and are also economically independent, while Triveni's women, though well educated, are largely housewives only, dependent on others.

The writings of the women writers cannot be interpreted and rightly understood without taking into account the principles of patriarchal family system and its apparent forms. Though the features of the culture of paternal family are different in various socio-economic systems, the fundamental feature is the domination of male members and suppression of females in all those societies. The literature produced by women out of such conditions and in such contexts naturally reacts to the male-domination and therefore attracts the attention and becomes noteworthy.

The first thing that comes home to the reader, when he thinks of the often dealt with subjects in the novels of Triveni, is the natural feel of day to day life that surrounds the characters and their reactions to the situations they
are placed in. The man–woman relations and the woman attaining ‘completeness’ through her motherhood are the subjects of most of Triveni’s novels. Society has to be taken into account for understanding an individual and his behaviour. The novel *Keelugombe* exemplifies the kind of mental set up with which a wife suffers because of the behaviour of her husband. The behaviour of Sita and Narasimha can be studied against the background of the social status of woman, the family, and social pressures that were there on Sita (the woman) in those days. Of course, the age, caste, and class system contexts that these novels present cannot be overlooked while reading these novels. The social framework is broadly divided into internal and external worlds and it appears that woman’s life is bound by the laws of internal world.

*By introducing the concept of marital rape in The Binding Vine,* Deshpande not only anticipates the surfacing of this issue in feminist discourse in India, but also reflects upon feminist history in the Indian context. The marginalization of women takes place in several contexts. In novel after novel women are given new names at the time of marriage. This happens to be a common Indian practice very much in force at least till the early decades of the present century. There are bound to be some differences from region to region, class to class and in accordance with levels of education. Urmi’s mother-in-law is named Nirmala after marriage. The naming ceremony symbolizes a change of role, a new birth, as well as a new house. Women learn to live for others and in the process erase themselves.
Rama Mehta analyzed in her book 'The Divorced Hindu Woman', the changing attitudes and norms of Hindu women. She examined in detail the growing rebelliousness among Hindu women. The increasing self-awareness of educated women makes them impatient of orthodox images of man-woman relationship and traditional roles in the society. The educated women are, Mehta observes, less keen to uphold older values which they find repressive, harsh, and mostly meaningless. She points out: "The younger generation is looking to maximum opportunities of prosperity and status and is less concerned with maintaining the socio-religious obligations towards caste and community."17 Shashi Deshpande does not believe in the theory that ‘women are victims’. In India, women's identity and their well-being depend on her producing a child, especially a male child. Swami Vivekanand glorified motherhood in these words:

The ideal of womanhood in India is motherhood that marvellous, unselfish, all-suffering, ever forgiving mother. The wife walks behind the shadow. She must imitate the life of the mother, which is her duty. But the mother is the ideal of life, she rules the family, she possesses the family.18

In Triveni's Apaswara, Meera's grieving over her daughter Veena's death is also indicative of her sense of loss, at the double disruption in the feminine tradition. She has failed to relate to her motherhood. And now this failure has disturbed her relationship with her husband Shamu. Deshpande works out the tangle of relationships through a double narrative in Small Remedies which also
takes up for its theme the subject of bereavement. Madhu is a journalist, a part-time writer like Jaya and Indu in her previous novels, and has recently lost her son Aditya in a riot. This has affected her relationship with her husband.

When we come across the theme and technique of the novels of Shashi Deshpande and Triveni, as Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly observes: "Theme is not something that can be examined separately from the technique of a novel because the theme is determined by the novelist's choice of point of view."19

Most of Deshpande's novels are first person narrative with the protagonist herself narrating the events. Through this technique, she attempts to convey the inner life of the characters. They are devices who reveal the character's thoughts and feelings which are otherwise unarticulated in the text. In *A Matter of Time* Deshpande's narration swings backwards and forwards as the main thread of the story is interspersed with reminiscences of the characters and the forecasts of the authorial voice. Description of past and present events is an accepted norm in narration. In *Roots and Shadows*, the point of view is that of the first person participant. Indu, the protagonist narrates the story; we get an insight into the working of her mind, her view of the members of her family, her reasons for her behaviour, including her adultery. Usha Tambe comments about Deshpande's use of first person narrative:

> It is true that when the protagonist tells his/her own story, he does not have the mobility or sources of information that a witness narrator has. He is limited entirely to his own thoughts and feelings and the angle of view is that of the fixed centre. But,
when the aim of the novel is to pursue the protagonist's personality development, the first person narrative suits it well.\textsuperscript{20}

The strength of a first person-narrative is that at once it secures our sympathy for and understanding of the narrator, without curtailing our sense of judgement. What could have been a simple tale becomes a moving human document with the major actors of the human drama unfolding before us their own versions of the story. Triveni's \textit{Modala Hejje} has four sections, of which the first and the last are narrated by the unnamed protagonist herself, whereas the second is narrated by seducer and the third by a nurse in a maternity hospital. Triveni lacks Deshpande's acute sense of irony and she, often emotionalises the issues in the novels. Moreover, Triveni's act of narration is too hurried and simplistic to weave intricate and complex plots that we find in Deshpande. However, both Deshpande and Triveni attempt to see a woman against a fast changing, transitional society, and document her conflicts as well as her dilemmas in such a society. Both assert a woman's equal status vis-à-vis the status of a man. Both plead for the recognition of a woman's point of view—Deshpande with a cool sense of irony and Triveni with vehement passion. Deshpande's description and narration are so simple and direct that no word can be left out without affecting the passage. In \textit{Binding Vine}, she describes how Priti talks: "She went on and on... a hundred words where ten would do, a hundred gestures where one would suffice."\textsuperscript{21}

Triveni started writing before the feminist movement was launched in the sixties, yet she independently takes up issues concerning women which
were to become major issues later in the feminist movement. As a novelist Triveni had certain similar experiences in her life as a woman. And we find that her female protagonists also, though they come from different social classes, face similar problems in a sexist society. Most of Deshpande’s protagonists are aware, assertive, intellectually independent women who resent gender discrimination against women which begins right from their childhood.

The subordination of woman begins even before her marriage when she is groomed by her parents, and ironically more often by mothers who are orthodox in their thinking. While some girls bow to this conditioning, those who are aware (like Triveni’s protagonist Indira in Bellimoda) resent it and look for ways to answer the needs of their personalities. The bolder ones (like Deshpande’s heroine in Roots and Shadows) openly revolt against the kind of conditioning and take their own decisions over the issues of job and marriage. The novels of these writers uphold the feminist assertion that femininity is a cultural not biological construct.

Shashi Deshpande’s treatment of her themes begins as a simple personal story of an individual woman gradually developing into a wider conflict for sake of the her identity and ends up exploring possibilities of transition in the tradition bound Indian society. A more pitiable and resentful phase of a woman’s marginalization begins after marriage. In Triveni’s Keelugombe, Sita is never recognized as an individual, an equal, and a human being with her own needs and desires. She is usually seen as an object providing sexual pleasure to
man, a decorative piece and a nurse to bring up the children and to shoulder all
the responsibilities of the household. Sita begins to loathe man - woman
relationship which has no love in it.

Both Deshpande and Triveni expose the hypocrisy, meanness, and
doctrine standards of the patriarchal society in their novels. A married woman
often feels greater loneliness than a single woman because her loneliness
springs from the emotional injuries and sometimes physical injuries as well
which she suffers at the hands of her husband. As a result, woman often feels
suffocated and deprived in marriage. If Triveni's women are dependent on
men, although their relationship often brings suffering, Deshpande's women
are very articulate, bold, and frank about their sexual needs. The female
experiences which were considered taboos have been frankly discussed by
Deshpande in her works.

Triveni's women characters never become defiant of conventions and
she usually discusses the broader needs of independence and self-realization
in her women. As P. Ramamoorthi aptly remarks: "The attempts to create
'female enclaves' are extremist reactions but the recent trends in feminist
literature are an indication that it is possible for a woman to live in the world
where men also live."22 Shashi Deshpande works out her feminist themes on a
much broader canvas, juxtaposing the woman's question with larger political
and existential issues. The quest for meaning, the search for self in Deshpande's
women is linked with larger issues than only sexist conflicts. As a result we
find that Deshpande's women are politically more conscious and socially very active.

Triveni, on the contrary, works out her feminist ideas in a limited world. Her world appears limited if her time and the historical context are not taken into account. The struggle for identity and fulfillment in her women is worked out more on a personal level within the family. There too, we find that she restricts herself to the study of women of one class, namely the middle class. But then this is the class of which she has first hand experience and she does make a close and sensitive study of the suffering and responses of women of this class in a sexist society. Nirad Chaudhuri in his essay *The Continent of Circe* discusses the influence of westernization on the contemporary writers: "The impact of the west and its individualistic ideals made possible the emergence of some curious adaptations in Indian life and literature." Such an adaptation of feminist ideas may be seen in modern Indian writers. Interestingly, the educated, affluent women in the more tradition bound country India as depicted by Deshpande have similar uneasy, unfortunate experiences as the middle class, working women living in the metropolitan cities and women in both the worlds refuse to remain chained to their subordinate roles and defy the traditional norms in search of emancipation.

Though both Triveni and Deshpande reveal the suffering caused by the oppression of women by men, they are not against men as such, nor do they advocate a separatist stance. Even though many of their women opt out of marriage, yet they do long for the company of men and either have love affairs
with them or get married again. Their women look for happiness and self
fulfillment again in a world shared by both the sexes. The call is for a
recognition of woman as an equally important partner in marriage or in any
other relationship. Her needs, her freedom, her personality, her individuality
should be equally valued. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru’s feminine
sensibility crumbles. Love disappears from her life. Cut off from her husband
and children, she fails as mother and as wife:

“I came home late that night...when I came home, I found him (Manu)
sitting with a brooding expression on his face that made my heart give
painful quivering little jumps.”

Triveni’s world consists of two types of women characters. The first
group consists of women who are happy in the confines of Hindu orthodoxy,
and the other of those who have a strong sense of individuality and an
analytical mind but are shuttling between traditional and modern values. As
the novels of Triveni reveal, the feminine literature becomes so effective and
important because it reflects the day to day world. The misery and
contradiction which rift day to day life lose their significance here though they
are present. We can rightly understand the style, language and the hidden
meanings in the perception of life, only if we consciously make our reading
techniques critical. It has now become possible only to identify the outlines of
the thoughts about womanhood; but the symbols there in the novels may
become representative and suggest dominance, control and subordination
present in social life. The feminine literature has become so effective because of
its objectivity and accuracy of thought. Women writers have played an important role in framing the better lives of women and in restructuring the social frames and customs in regard to the lives of women.

Deshpande is basically an urban novelist, revealing the tensions existing in the cosmopolitan jungles of Bombay, Calcutta, and Delhi. But she is equally adept in presenting nature in village landscape. In *Small Remedies*, Bhavanipur, steeped as it is in tradition, is symbolic of the presentness of the past while Bombay stands for the future and the forces of progress. Hence the paradox of old and new India is presented.

An in-depth comparative study of Triveni and Shashi Deshpande reveals the complex nature of the feminist point of view. In her own time, Triveni was thought of as a highly progressive writer. But today may appear as an artist without much subtile or serious opinion about feminism. Shashi Deshpande, on the other hand, has all the advantages of modern day exposure to theory and the activities of feminist movements. Besides she writes with all the artistic innovations in fiction behind her. In spite these differences, Triveni and Shashi Deshpande share an inescapable concern and compassion towards a woman's predicament in a strongly patriarchal social context. Both explore women's realities and experiences and attempt to throw light on the efforts of women to create an identity for themselves in spite of the overwhelming familial and social pressures.
REFERENCES


