CHAPTER-VI

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The Thesis aims at finding out the similarities and contrasts in the works of Triveni and Shashi Deshpande. These women writers wrote not so much to create an awareness among women as to portray real life situations in the changing domestic patterns and social environment of ordinary life. These were the women writers who retained literary values by focusing on women oriented themes. Triveni was undoubtedly a major writer among women novelists in Kannada literature. At a time when there were not many women writers in Karnataka, Triveni’s achievement appears to be all the more extraordinary. Like the other writers of the Progressive period of Kannada Literature, Triveni was largely responsible in bringing literature out of closets and libraries and making it popular and reach the common public. Thanks to Triveni, Kannada fiction acquired a new and popular dimension.

Triveni’s first novel, Hoovu Hannu (Flower: Fruit), was published in 1954 and her last novel Sharapanjara (Cage of Arrows), was first serialized in a popular Kannada weekly and was later brought out posthumously as a novel in 1964; Sharapanjara soon won the prestigious Karnataka Sahitya Akademi Award and later it was also made into a successful film. Other regional awards for fiction also came her way. Four other novels, namely Bellimoda, Kankana, Hannele Chiguridaga, and Mukti were also eventually made into successful films. Her works are read even today and her general popularity is unabated.
All her novels are in print and they have indeed run into multiple editions in Kannada.

In her fiction, Triveni deals with a number of themes that are significant and relevant to the present day, especially, to Indian society. She forcefully advocated the woman’s point of view and was a model to a host of women writers like Anupama Niranjana and others, who followed her. Though she was not the first woman writer in Kannada, she was the first to reach a very large body of readers and to compel them, with her simple and straight narration, to understand what it is to be a woman in a male dominated society. She depicts poignantly and authentically, the aspirations and pleasures of womanhood - as a wife, as a beloved, as an expectant mother, as a young widow etc. No other writer has explored, so extensively and so deeply, the mystery of pregnancy, child bearing and motherhood as Triveni has done. In novels where Triveni delineates a female protagonist, the struggle against the oppressive environment assumes the form of a patriarchal domination in one or the other visage, revealing her feminist predilections.

Triveni also makes a strong plea for a proper attitude on the part of society towards mental illness and its patients. There is no stigma attached to mental illness, she asserts, and it is the duty of society to help these patients regain their health. Once again the mentally sick characters she portrays are women. She boldly adopts the solution of introducing a psycho-analyst as one of the characters, in order to unravel the mind of the heroine. She was a pioneer in Kannada fiction in dealing with psychological themes. It is for this
reason that her novels and stories gained not only wide popularity but also demanded more serious consideration from the reader. Triveni is remarkably successful in portraying the psyche of her sensitive, emotional, and sensuous characters. Her language runs smoothly and expresses the inner world of her select characters so impressively that the reader's attention is rarely detracted by its few minor limitations. When we try to get an overview of Triveni as a writer, today, distanced from her time by more than four decades, her limitations standout glaringly. To start with, the range of her themes and characters appears very limited. All her novels have 'woman' at their centre, and revolve around her expectations and experiences related to love, marriage, and family. Hence, excepting her four psychological novels, all her other works may be labeled as 'Domestic Fiction'. Almost all her characters are from urban, middle or upper middle class. Even geographically, her novels are situated in and around a few cities like Mysore and Bangalore. Though she attempts to depict rural life in one or two novels (Apaswara, Bellimoda, etc.) such depiction is not convincing. From the point view of Triveni's domestic concerns and her limited range, we should bear in mind that most of her works were written in the fifties; at the time women's education was not as widespread as it is today. Men, as readers and critics, found Triveni too aggressive a champion of women, today, women, as readers and critics, find her not aggressive enough. In fact, many women-critics go to the extent of labeling her as 'conventional' and 'orthodox' in her view of marriage and family. Her ideas are highly ambivalent regarding man-woman relationship and the institution of Family.
She still believes that an ideal woman is a happily married woman, who looks after her children with love and care. Similarly, Triveni does not support much the independent career for women, as the idea of women going out of the house to earn was abhorred by tradition. According to her, a woman should choose a career only when her first option, married life, cannot be exercised. As a matter of fact, Triveni cannot forgive a woman who neglects her husband and children in pursuit of her career. In Banu Belagithu (dawn), the protagonist, who is educated, opts for a career even when she is happily married and her husband is well off. In the end, she is made to regret her option, give up her career, and then she is accepted by her husband and respected by her parents. In many other novels also a career woman is seen as one who unnecessarily wrecks a happy home. However, all this is but one aspect of Triveni; and there is another aspect, equally sound and forceful. While endorsing Home, Family, and Marriage, Triveni also argues for freedom of choice and equal status for women in these institutions. In novel after novel, she forcefully exposes the exploitation of woman by man in the field of education (education being considered unnecessary for the woman), marriage (a woman having no say in the choice of her life partner, the dowry system, etc), sex (a woman being viewed as a mere object of sex) and family (a wife expected to be totally subservient to her husband). Triveni pleads passionately for love, understanding and respect for a woman — be she a wife, a lover, a mother or a daughter. Triveni began writing fiction when there were very few women writers in Kannada. She wrote her first novel amidst such adverse or even hostile circumstances, with an aggressive woman's point of view; and
she maintained the aggressive tone throughout her rich but brief career. By the
time her last novel came out in 1963, she had won both immense popularity
and, thus, recognition for women’s writing and a woman’s point of view. She
paved the way for scores of women - novelists and women writers, who
followed her. If, today, women’s works dominate the world of Kannada fiction
in sheer number as well as popularity, it is partly due to Triveni’s trend-
setting novels. Historically, this is no mean achievement on the part of any
writer.

Shashi Deshpande’s female protagonists often perceive the gap
between expectation of their inner self and the reality they live. They develop
fears and insecurity, and gradually withdraw from the society including their
families and husbands for a while. They develop an inability to communicate and tend to
ponder existential problems and end up in alienation. Deshpande has an innate
ability to penetrate the inner recesses of the psyche of her characters. She has
contributed significantly to the growth of Indian fiction in English by
incorporating psychological aspect of her female characters who have suffered
privation and humiliations, neglect and silence. Her novels depict extreme
situations arising out of conflicts in the inner configurations of the individual –
the conflict between reason and instinct, the will and reality, involve round the
interplay of the ‘self’ with others. In all the novels she has written so far, The
Dark Holds No Terrors, That Long Silence and Roots and Shadows and others, she is
in search of meaning and purpose of life in relation to the female
protagonists’ existence.
Shashi Deshpande’s fiction is often spoken of as feministic, but she is not very happy with the label. Most of her protagonists are well educated, sensitive and culturally rooted women who face a conflict when the demands of dynamic modern society are at odds with emotional and ethical values that go back to Vedic times. She has wider reach and language of creativity in English. She states through her novels that the total surrender of the self for the good of one’s husband and children—a duty traditionally enjoined upon women is no longer meaningful to contemporary Indian women, who have their own ambitions, careers and dreams. Deshpande explores the frustration and alienation that result from woman’s incapacity to make meaningful relationships. She breaks the traditional “silence” of women to give voice to their inner compulsions and frustrations. She writes with rare insight about employed women in the busy life of city and predicament of a woman. Her women are all reflective about their condition. Their protest is not for equality but for the right to be acknowledged as individuals—capable of intelligence and feeling. They do not look for freedom outside the house but within, without painting their lives in various artificial shades of sentiments. They search for their identity in the milieu through self-discovery and self-identification. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru, a married doctor leaves her husband to return to her father’s home after her mother dies. Saru is trying to redefine her life, particularly in relation to her part in the death of a young brother when they were children. The narrator of *That Long Silence*, is Jaya, who is also rethinking her past in an attempt to find herself, at a time when her husband, Mohan is
under investigation for shady business activities. The protagonist of *Roots and Shadows*, Indu, who is independent, does not allow direct influence of her husband. But the husband instead of becoming a source of freedom becomes a barrier to Indu's development. Thus, Indu's uncompromising and paradoxical feminine self which frantically longed for self-expression, finally finds its roots in the home and with her husband. Indu has confronted her real self and she knows her roots. Like Deshpande's other works, these novels are primarily concerned with the plight of the modern Indian woman who is seeking to understand herself. Deshpande accepts working women both as subjects of victimization as well as agents of change. Working women appear in her novels not merely as the passive victims of an oppressive ideology but also as the active agents of their own positive constructs. Unlike Triveni, Deshpande supports the idea of the employment of the wife which can serve as the means of her economic independence and self-actualization.

Deshpande studies the various dimensions of the role of the typical Indian woman. Women in her novels are shown as gentle, warm, loving, caring, and yet independent in their thinking. They are educated working women. Lack of understanding and communication is the key note in husband and wife relationship. All the novels together unfold various facets of Indian women's lives and their status in society. Above all, her novels display an uncanny grasp of human relations, her concern about the gender oppression and her subtle exposure of the marginalized and repressed position of woman in a male-dominated society. She shows the society as she sees it.
Shashi Deshpande and Triveni have made a positive contribution towards understanding the psyche of the Modern Indian Woman and the trauma she undergoes in playing the varied roles in a changing society. Though Triveni is one of the progressive women writers in Kannada, her ideas are not completely modern. She stands to be ranked as a contemporary novelist. She has an unusual intensity of imagination, which creates a world more living than the one, which we live ir., so very solid and easily recognizable. She depicts woman as a frail creature and marriage as a career. She does not project strongly feminist views and both conjugal love and strong family ties are also viewed as important ingredients for a happy whole woman. Triveni does not favour revolts and highlights the nurturing and caring qualities of a woman and sees the salvation of woman in it.

In contrast, Deshpande favours rebellion against subjugation. She creates women characters, who is no longer satisfied with just being a mother and a wife. Her horizons have widened and so have her tensions. Deshpande has given revolutionary pictures of the new woman which do not conform to any traditional code of conduct. These women like Indu (Roots and Shadows), Sarita (The Dark Holds No Terrors), have their own ideas about love and marriage. These women have shattered the myth of weak, clinging, dependent woman but they are not tied with limited feminism's perspective which tends to freeze woman in reaction against men and family life. There is a large concept of humanity to be found in her novels. Thus Deshpande expresses a distinctively assertive feminine sensibility even if she does not assume any
feminine stance or ideology. Hence Shashi Deshpande may be considered to be a distinct novelist. Educationally and culturally Deshpande was better qualified to deal with social problems. Triveni's criticism of feminism is more implied than categorically stated. And if the limitations of the time and social background, in which Triveni produced her novels, are taken into account, her achievement, and contribution are in no way inferior. Writers like Triveni paved the way and writers like Shashi Deshpande take up writing where the earlier generation had left off, and thus, together they form a tradition of women's writing.