CHAPTER-IV

NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE
CHAPTER-IV
NOVELS OF SHASHI DESHPANDE

Shashi Deshpande was born in Dharwad in the year 1938. She is daughter of the eminent Kannada dramatist and Sanskrit scholar, Sriranga. She began her literary career in 1970, with the publication of a collection of short stories. Her best known short story is *The Legacy* which has been prescribed by Columbia University in its literature syllabus. She started her career as a novelist with the publication of *The Dark Holds No Terrors* in 1980.

Through her writings, Shashi Deshpande gives a realistic picture of the life of contemporary middle class women. They are courageous enough to revolt against the attempts of men to marginalize them. Her protagonists reflect great sensitivity, depth of understanding and awareness of orthodox virtue in matters of love and marriage. She focuses on women’s issues; she has a woman’s perspective on the world. Creative writing allows her ‘a safe place’ from which she can explore a wide range of experience, especially in regard to woman’s status in society. She sensitively portrays the lot of women and their mute, convoluted self-abnegation in her stories. For the courageous and sensitive treatment of large and significant themes, her works are regarded as outstanding contributions to Indian literature in English.

4.1 Importance of Marriage and Family Life:

"Among some hundred and fifty novels published in the last thirty years, one finds hardly two dozen books where a marriage ceremony has not been described."

-Meenakshi Mukherjee.
Marriages, in fact are a healthy amalgam of affection, respect, tiffs, quarrels, patch ups and joys and sorrows. If there is a steadfast bond between the husband and wife, along with loyalty and fidelity to each other, marriages can withstand even the severest tempest and survive through all the shocks and disasters. Marriage is the privileged locus of the interaction of the two sexes. It is the agency that reflects and regulates our attitude towards sexuality. Marriage is the deepest as well as the most problematic of all human relations. Religiously marriage is supposed to be the holy union of two souls and bodies. Amongst Hindus, the wife is known as Ardhangini or Sahadharmini, a partner.

In order to complement the role between husband and wife each has to bring out the best in him or her. Unselfishness, endurance, forbearance, and comparison are some of the important qualities, which pay rich dividends in such relationship. According to J.S. Mill “Marriage is the worst form of slavery for women”. He says that, “no slave is a slave to the same length, and in so full a sense of words, as a wife is.”

Many women suffer from ill treatment from husbands and their relations in law. Many a time the woman has to live life with a husband who suffers from a very deadly disease. Under such circumstances, dissolution of marriage becomes the only rational solution. Women are slowly becoming aware of this solution. Woman is feeling that marriage is not the only goal in life. The effect of liberal education, the value attached to the development of personality and the urge for economic independence are some of the main causes which are responsible for generating this new outlook. Basically family
is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood, adoption or other necessities, “Marriage and family” according to Cooley, “are the means used by society to control promiscuous sex and dissipation of man’s energy.”

Marriage is an important event in the life of a woman. The importance that our society accords to marriage is reflected in our literature and it is one of the concerns of Shashi Deshpande’s novels. Though marriage is important both for men and women, woman does not enjoy the same freedom as her male counterpart. When a woman chooses her own husband, she is labelled a rebel not only by the family but also by the society consisting of both men and women. So, the society as a whole is to be blamed for the lack of freedom for woman regarding marriage. Shashi Deshpande’s focus in her fiction is essentially on women and their role in the family and society. She highlights the difficulties married women face in the family context. Her protagonists reflect greater sensitivity, depth of understanding. Saru of The Dark Holds No Terrors has reached a point in her marriage where it becomes a nightmare. The belated news of her mother’s death provides her a rationale to visit her parental home and thereby escape the impossible situation in which she finds herself. Indu of Roots and Shadows too is not exactly happy with her husband, though for different reasons. Akka’s summons from her deathbed allows Indu to return to her ancestral place and family where she can sort out her personal dilemmas. Jaya of That Long Silence returns to her maternal uncle’s flat in Dadar as her husband Mohan is facing the likelihood of losing his job and this crisis on his job-front brings to a boil, her unhappiness and silent resentments that
had been simmering in their married life for years. She portrays the difficulties of married women, who suffer within the boundaries of marriage. This problem is well illustrated through the character of Sarita in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*.

Saru, brought up in a traditional way, has married against the wishes of the family. After marriage, she has experienced the true facts of married life. These are the problems that almost every girl in the contemporary world experiences and therefore Deshpande submits the actual facts of marriage. Marriage to the man of Saru's choice brings only disillusionment when she finds her educated and progressive minded husband no different from the average Indian male. Marriage leads a woman to subjugation and slavery, women pay for their happiness at the cost of their freedom.

Another novel *Roots and Shadows* begins with the marriage of Mini. She is married in the traditional way in their ancestral home. Deshpande discusses the problem faced by middle class people in finding suitable grooms for their daughters.

*The Dark Holds No Terrors*

Shashi Deshpande portrays the middle class educated women, who represent a large segment of contemporary Indian society. *The Dark Holds No Terrors* deals with the unhappy conjugal life of Sarita (called Saru) and Manohar (called Manu). Sarita is a successful doctor, who is fettered by her marriage to a man who has unconscious sadistic tendencies. Deshpande gives clear picture of Saru's suffering due to the husband's sadistic treatment. The
novel passes through the present to the past even3. At her father’s house, Saru has a chance to review her relationship with her husband.

Premila Paul points out: *The Dark Holds No Terrors* would be considered a protest novel too... Saru’s feminist reactions date back to her childhood when she had to contend with sexist discrimination at home." In her father’s house she takes enough time to understand herself. At last, she is able to confront reality. The novel opens with a nightmarish experience of rape at the hands of her own husband. Later she understands that the frightening nightmares are not dreams but realities. After fifteen years of marriage, Saru plans to escape the role of being a wife. She compared herself to Sudama, standing at the gates of the palace of Krishna and Rukmini. Saru does not know the kind of reception she would get at her parent’s house. Saru has lost contact with her parents after her love marriage with Manu. Unexpected arrival of Saru gets a cold reception at her father’s house. The father welcomes with a look of enquiry—"a blank looking at a stranger one." After a long time, Saru has met her father to sort out her problems. She has to analyze her life, to review and re-examine her crisis, to sort out her life. Both of them meet like strangers. Her father sits gingerly on the edge of his chair and avoids looking at her. Saru feels her father to be “an unwilling host entertaining an unwelcome guest.”

When Saru joins medical college she meets Manu, a post-graduate student. He is not only a good student, but also secretary of literary association, an active member of the dramatic society, and a poet of promise. He has a firm chin, straight dark thick eyebrows, and full lips, almost
as full as a woman's. Saru is attracted by Manu's mannerisms like pushing the hair back from his forehead with one hand, showing off his slim and long fingers. At that time Manu is directing a play for the college day. Saru visits along with Smita, who managed to get a minor role. Manu gets irritated to see Saru. But Saru makes herself as inconspicuous as possible. However for Saru, "I was all female and dreamt of being the adored and chosen of a superior, superhuman male."7

After that day Saru started dreaming about Manu. She dreamt of total submission to a superior conquering male. She always imagined Manu to be a great writer, a poet, thronged by people offering him gifts, praise, and adulation. She thinks of working as a subordinate to him. It is not love at the first sight. Then Saru and Manu start meeting each other. Each meeting seems incredible to Saru that she can develop so strong an emotion for someone and that any one can care for her in that way and to that extent. Manu's words "I wake up to thoughts of you...and I know why I was born and why I am alive."8 She thought they were the most beautiful words anyone had ever said. When Manu writes a poem for her, Saru feels exultant. She finds it as her triumph over the fashionable 'Padmini' who inspired Manu to write poems earlier. She overcomes the thought of herself as, "redundant, the unwanted, an appendage one could do without. It was impossible for anyone to want me, love me, need me."9

Saru is flattered by hearing Manu's lovely words. She gave herself up unconditionally, unreservedly to Manu. She remembers the fisherman's
daughter in the *Mahabharatha*. Because she sent the king to her father, who bargained with him on her behalf. Sometimes there were dark thoughts came in Saru’s mind. The intensity of Manu’s emotion makes Saru irritated. Saru thought that marriage is the “open sesame” of all enjoyment. Till they get married, they do not go beyond holding hands not even on the beach where they found themselves surrounded by huddled shapes, soft whispers, sound of suggestive laughter and kisses. Once or twice they passed a couple of minutes wordlessly, passionately locked together. And yet they stayed physically apart. It’s her painful middle class inhibitions. She told herself that marriage should open all enjoyment.

When they got married, it was like nothing she had ever imagined. She became in an instant a physically aroused woman, with an infinite capacity for loving and giving, with a passionate desire to be absorbed by the man she loved. Gradually she discovered kisses were soft and unbearably sweet, embraces hard and passionate. Saru had found scarcity of love in her life and Manu seems to be a saviour. In the beginning, Saru and Manu are quite happy about their love marriage. Manu says, “Where we are together, its heaven, wherever we are.”¹⁰ She felt humble, sometimes a fraud. It was impossible that she could mean so much to any human being. It was unbelievable that such things could happen to her. They happened only to girls in movies and books, not to girls like her. The relationship between Saru and Manu has turned sour in the form of the lack of a house to live. Lastly they found a one-room house
in a chawl with common toilet. Whenever Manu speaks of their marriage, Saru feels trapped, 'was this not Manu whom I loved and who loved me?'

One day there was an explosion in a factory. Burnt, mutilated bodies poured in horror. The world consisted of bodies from which she drew blood, bodies into which she transfused blood: Saru successfully attends them. After this incident, almost everyday, a knock at the door, asking for doctor. The visitors came always seeking medical treatment. Saru was young and callow, and so new to her profession. Still patients came to her for treatment. They gave her a thrill she could scarcely hide. When Saru and Manu walked out of their room, there were nods and smiles, murmured greetings and namastes. Manu was almost totally neglected.

Saru understands, "...that the human personality has an infinite capacity for growth. And so the esteem with which I was surrounded made me inches taller. But perhaps, the same thing that made me inches taller, made him inches shorter." Marriage with Manu brought a permanent break in her relationship with her mother. Manu thinks that cutting Saru off from her parents will be painful for her. But Saru had already detached herself from them. For her, they were already the past and meant nothing. The third important incident that Saru recalls repeatedly is her brother Dhruva's drowning in a pond. The mother concluded that Saru has killed Dhruva.

After the marriage of Saru, the mother successfully destroys every trace of her in the household. Saru finds the album of photographs in the cupboard. She notices that there were no photographs of hers in it with the exception of
one in which she and Dhruva feature together. The mother must have been reluctant to throw this one out because Dhruva too was in this photograph. The photograph was taken on Dhruva's birthday. Lack of love and security lead Saru to look for a means of love and security in her marriage with Manu. She selects a person of her own choice without considering her parents' opinion. When Saru discloses her intention of marrying Manu who is not a Brahmin and is probably of a lower caste, the traditional orthodox mother refuses to accept Manohar. She even dislikes calling him by name but always refers to him as 'that man' as if his name would have spoiled her lips. She questions about Manu:

- What caste is he?
- I don't know.
- A Brahmin?
- Of course not.
- Then, cruelly...his father keeps a cycle shop.
- Oh, so they are low caste people, are they?12

Saru charges her mother of being responsible for her marriage with Manu. She challenges: "If you hadn't fought me so bitterly, if you hadn't been so against him, perhaps I would never have married him."13 The mother had made a forecaste of the destiny of Saru's love marriage when she said: "I know all these 'love marriages'. It is love for a few days then quarrels all the time. Don't come crying to us then."14
Saru's marriage has not succeeded but she refuses to accept her failure. Saru had decided not to return to her father's house, she recollected the reality of what her mother had predicted, which in a way signifies her failure. Deshpande's heroines, along with their acute, unusual sensitiveness, perceive and define matters of sex (such as 'love', 'marriage' etc.,) from quite a different angle. Deshpande herself calls her creations as "thinking characters." Saru finds the difference between love marriages versus arranged marriages. She attended the marriage function of her friend Manda who bowed down dutifully to touch relatives' feet and receive their blessings for a happy married life. Saru has not experienced any such thing in her life. She is not in a position to blame anybody for the unhappiness she experiences in her married life. Manda looks a contented mother and wife because she married a person who had been chosen by her parents. Saru expects the same thing from her parents. Perhaps they would have behaved in the similar way if hers were not a love marriage. Gradually Saru had lost love for her husband. The Medical profession takes an upper position and Saru is recognized as a lady doctor. Meanwhile Manu feels insecure by the independence of Saru. He suffers from inferiority complex and takes his revenge on her in bed.

One day Saru was reading in bed when Manu turned to her, pulling the book roughly out of her hands, and forced her to come to him. It was a strange kind of lovemaking. Manu fails to perform sex with Saru; his love is not meeting expectations of his female partner. A reviewer of the Dark Holds No
Terrors runs thus: "Too much verbalizing of man woman relationship on the sexual plane... has threatened to destroy much of the sanctity attached to marriage and the mystery of womanhood."\textsuperscript{16} In performing double duties Saru failed to maintain the marital balance with Manu. She becomes busy in her career. Saru's professional career does not give her enough time for herself and her family. She feels that she must give up her professional status and then hopes everything will get corrected. One day Sar-u decided to give up her job and tells Manu: "I want to stop working. I want to give it all up... my practice, the hospital, everything."\textsuperscript{17} Manu is shocked by hearing the decision of Saru. He does not want her to give up her job, because he knows his income cannot give the same standard of living. It will be difficult for them to live in his little income. Manu answers briskly to Saru's question. She struggles to maintain a cordial relationship with her husband. She becomes a lifeless puppet, which smiles, laughs and talks without any feeling or interest. Later on she tries to adjust with her relentless routine - hospital, teaching, rooms, visits, homes, and children.

She scorned the word 'love' with doubts. There was no such thing between man and woman. She finds that the man woman relationship is based not on love, but on pure lust. There was only a need which both fought against futilely. There was not a case of love dying or even of conflicts. It was a kind of disease, which had attacked their marriage. This very concealment made marriage more gruesomely disgusting and dirty. The happiness of early married life disappeared. They do not get time for friends, neighbours, and
colleagues. Saru becomes a woman who condemns her husband for his hypocrisy. Saru noticed that all expected romantic notions disappeared after marriage. Manu’s versatile personality turned glum and he wore a bored look on his face. Almost every night Saru experienced horror of rape. Manu exhibits his manhood at night. When he behaves like a rapist of his wife. He takes out his sense of inferiority and insecurity on her. When the night passes during day he is not aware of what happened in the night. He is psychologically disturbed.

It all starts with a friend’s suggestion. Saru and Manu have planned to go for a small holiday to Ooty. It is their first holiday since they had married. Throughout the day Manu behaves normally. In the middle of the night, he reveals his animal power over Saru. She can feel: “The hurting hands, the savage teeth, the monstrous assault of a horribly familiar body.” The next morning the same face smiling, and saying, ‘morning’, ‘Saru slept well?’ Saru surprises if all this is a sham, a farce, a ghastly pretence, or is it just a dream, a terrible nightmare that left behind this terrible after taste of fear. But she can not deny the signs of bruises on her body. Saru tries to analyze the two facets of her husband’s personality. Saru tries to escape the role of being a wife when she returns to her father’s house, after fifteen years of her marriage. Saru’s marriage was not an arranged marriage and she could not blame her parents for anything. But she expects sympathy from her father. In her heart of hearts, Saru blames herself: “But there can never be any forgiveness. Never any atonement. My brother died because I heedlessly turned my back on him. My
mother died alone because I deserted her. My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood."19

Saru’s father advised her to forget about her brother and her mother, both of whom are dead already. She should not torture herself thinking about them. She should meet the present her husband Manu. The critic P. Ramamoorthy comes to a different conclusion: “Saru who ran away from her husband and children, who refused to meet her husband, is now ready to confront him. This does not mean that she will go back to her husband, but it only suggests that she is capable of facing Manu and asserting her own rights and individuality.”20 As she ponders over her decision, she hears the whistle of the train by which Manu is expected to arrive. She knows she can not run away from reality. The novel ends with the assertion of her career. And as Sara resolutely steps out of the house to attend to the ailing girl she tells her father to ask Manu, ‘to wait I will be back as soon as I can’. The permission to let in Manu indicates that Sara is ready to face the realities of life. 

The Dark Holds No Terrors thus is an analysis of an almost impossible situation of a woman’s life and how she tries to find a way out. The novel highlights inner employment of the personality of the central character of Sarita.

A Matter of Time

A Matter of Time is an interesting story of four strong women representing four generations in a family: Manorama (Kalyani’s mother), Kalyani (grand mother), Sumi (mother), and Aru (daughter). The novel depicts their conflicts and also their endurance, suffering, pain and love,
understanding and support extended to one another. The novel *A Matter of Time* was published in 1996. The novel begins with the description of 'The House': "The House is called Vishwas, named, not as one would imagine for the abstract quality of trust, but after an ancestor."21

The marriage of Sumi and Gopal was a love marriage. They have three young daughters- Aru, Charu, Seema. Sumi also has, her mother Kalyani, grandmother Manorama, her aunt Goda and her sister Premi. The older generation has coped in its own way with the problem of identity through marriage. When Gopal tells Sumi that he is leaving the house, Sumi doesn't know the reasons and even he can not articulate. Sumi returns with their three daughters to the shelter of the big house, where her parents, Kalyani and Shripati, live in a strangely oppressive silence; they have not spoken to each other in the last thirty five years. Sumi's daughters, abandoned in mid stream by their father, look at her in bewilderment. Sumi seems to accept Gopal's walking out quietly. But Sumi's acceptance is not passive. Outwardly she is hurt but is also proud. She is more concerned with getting on with life. She does not want pity.

Deshpande's women do not resort to suffering stoically. Neither does she find a radical way out of the problem paradoxically. She chooses and rejects both ways of staunch rebellion or meek acceptance. In Deshpande's own words, her heroines are characterized as "middle of the road kind."22 While Sumi's mother pleads with Gopal and Sumi's daughter Aru threatens her father with legal action, Sumi herself remains silent. She does not try to force
him to come back. She lets him go and begins to look for a job and a house so that she can be on her own. The novel also exposes the intricate relationships within an extended family, encompassing four generations of women. Many of them move into the past: Kalyani's life, Gopal's childhood; Romesh, Gopal's nephew's relationship with Gopal whom he calls Guru; Romesh's parents, and their relationship with Gopal, Manorama (Kalyani's mother), her marriage to Vithal etc. Families have a wonderful way of coming together at times of crisis and of dispersing once things are settled down. Houses also have a formidable presence and hold memories. Sumi, though immensely hurt by Gopal's desertion, endures the pain within herself and tries to keep the things normal for her daughters. Kalyani is the most powerful character in the novel. She seems to have an endless capacity to bear pain. Even Sumi remembers: Kalyani's past, which she has contained within herself, careful never to let it spill out, has nevertheless entered into us, into Premi and me... it has stained our bones.  

It is Kalyani who carries within her a sense of history. The Big House is the place where women can record their lives but, more importantly, it is a longed for space where they can live without men. Aru, though disturbed by the 'strange' relationship between her grand parents, not only accepts them but relates herself to Kalyani and her past. The novel is a fine study of the complexity of human relationships in a family. Aru is upset over the break up of her family. Kalyani is shattered to know about Gopal's desertion. She reacts violently to Gopal's decision of walking out:
"No, no, my God, not again," she begins to cry, Sounding so much like an animal.24 She observes that the neighbour’s eyes are following her family’s movements. But the reader understands the extent of her agony. Gopal himself seeks an explanation of his odd behaviour. Gopal asks question to himself: “Why did I marry Sumi? Because I met her— it’s as simple as that.”25 Gopal could not give the reasons of his desertion. Kalyani uses a word ‘fate’ to describe the situation, Sumi handles the crisis by keeping herself silent. It is her daughter Aru who decides to punish her erring father. The house ‘Vishwas’ has always lacked male, an heir. Manorama emerges as an insecure woman and ironically, it is she who represents patriarchal attitude in the novel. Kalyani. In fact Kalyani survives victimization and emerges whole and intact. For Manorama, Kalyani became an invisible symbol of her own failure to have a son. Not only this, Manorama had wanted her daughter to be beautiful, accomplished and to make a wonderful marriage so that she could show all those who looked down upon her as the daughter of a poor man.

Because Manorama came from a much poorer background than her husband, after her marriage she had broken off all ties with her own family, except the youngest brother who had been left motherless at the age of one. Coming from a humbler background than her husband, Manorama never got over her fear that her husband might marry again. Moreover she could never give him a son. Kalyani was intelligent and good in studies. But because of her mother’s insecurities she was not allowed to complete her studies and in order
to keep the property in the family, Manorma got her brother Shripati to marry her daughter. A mentally retarded boy is the other child of this couple beside Sumi and Premi. While going to Bangalore to her parental home, Kalyani lost her four year old mentally retarded son. This happened at the railway station. The son wandered away as she was attending to the crying baby and Shripati had gone to check the reservations. Since that day, Shripati has inflicted silence as a punishment on Kalyani and she has accepted it silently.

Later Kalyani gives moral support for Sumi and her three daughters.

The age-old institutions of family and marriage have been under a tremendous strain in the modern times. Commenting upon the breaking up of the family, David McReynolds observes: “Nor can a person find his identity in the family-for that institution is breaking up.”26 During the last few decades, the institution of family has been under a process of social change, which can affect man woman relationship. This social change has touched the fringes of the family and various relationships in a family unit. The role of husband and wife is the principal component in a family context that has undergone a vital change due to growing movement for emancipation of women.

Aru and her younger sister Charu had discussion on Kalyani’s tragedy, the loss of her son Madhav. The two go over the possibility that Kalyani may have deliberately lost the abnormal child. Charu comments: “She (Kalyani) loves children”. Aru retorts: “Babies are different.” Then Aru thinks: “Babies are Nature’s trap, the fly-paper to catch women and pin them down to the nurturing role Nature needs them to take on for her purposes.”27 The overall
effect of the tragedy is brought home to the reader. It is the loss of the son in an accident and one can imagine the trauma such a loss may have inflicted upon the mother. The background of family history, the context in which Aru tries to shape her own identity is important. Aru is an observer and the focal point. It is through her parents’ story that she reaches her grandparents’ story. Two different generations standing on the same ground. Aru is angry with her mother, puzzled by her grandmother. She sees Kalyani not as a victim but as a woman who has come out of victimization intact, like the end of the story.

Aru meets a woman lawyer whose help she has sought to take action against her father. Gopal’s resignation from university and reasons for leaving Sumi may never be clearly stated. Gopal himself seeks a justification for his unexplainable behaviour. He has been vexed about his father, his early childhood: “This father of my dreams smiles at me, we walk the streets together, he waits for me when I log behind, he holds my hand when I am tired he looks at me affectionately.” Gopal continues living above his cousin’s printing press in his self-sufficient manner. Sumi is just beginning to involve herself in the job and then writing a play for a class performance. Sumi’s decision to learn to ride a scooter is her first step towards a more independent existence.

The novel also comments on relationships within marriage, with siblings, parents and relationships with one’s self. Sumi’s father and her husband, both withdraw suddenly from their responsibilities. In both cases there is the absence of a male child. Why is the male presence so essential? And
women, is it possible for them to look beyond marriage? Families and Marriages are made up of individuals, who act as disruptive factors. Gradually Sumi’s father begins to develop a relationship with her when she is back in the house with her daughters. Thus he has once again picked up the threads of life with the presence of his grand children.

When Sumi and Gopal, meet after their separation, there are no tears, no abuses, no questions, or explanations. When Sumi enters his room, Gopal is having his lunch. Asking Sumi to wait, he goes out to wash his hands. When she is looking out of the window into the courtyard: “She hears his voice. He is responding to some one, perhaps servant woman, offering to wash up for him. The children call out to him and she hears him laugh. And, as if his voice knits everything together, she can suddenly see the substance, the reality of his life apart from her and their children. All these lives, contiguous to his, spell out the actuality of their separation.”\(^{29}\) It occurs to her with its finality that they can never be together again. At the end both Sumi and her father die in a scooter accident and Gopal continues with his ascetic withdrawal. The fact that Sumi dies just as she is about to begin a new life, is a little hard for the reader to reconcile to -the death being so abrupt. The revelation about her father’s real vulnerable self which lay behind the grim, silent, exterior is too brief to be convincing. But Sumi has established her identity and found a meaningful existence before she dies. Death an important theme in Shashi Deshpande’s novels, strikes us with a sense of finality.
Through education, determination, and inner strength, Sumi's daughters find their voice and establish their identities-Aru as a lawyer and Charu, who is already on her way to becoming a doctor. Aru and Kalyani have the strength with which they face suffering, the novel ends on a note of hope. The last impression on which the novelist closes her story is not of Sumi's death but of Aru and Kalyani standing together at the door and the 'smile of encouragement,' which they have for Gopal. The novel tries to penetrate and analyse the very predicament of human existence and solve the riddle that is life. The important truth revealed is that self pity is not the answer. It is only through a process of self-examination and self-searching, through courage and resilience that one can change one's situation from despair to hope.

4.2 The Woman's Point of View:

Let no one be born,

But if one must
Let no one be a girl
If one must be a girl
Then may she never fall in love,
If she must fall in love,
Free her from her family.

Vidyapati (Early 15th Century A.D.)

Traditionally, the Indian woman has been presented as a spineless, wooden creature, subjected to male-dominance. The woman has been the focus of many literary works. The wide variety of the portrayals of women in
the Indian novel in English now reflects the shift in the sensibility of the writer as well as the reader in modern times. Women have been described earlier as the embodiment of purity and spiritual power and respected as godly beings on the one hand and on the other, viewed as being essentially weak creatures constantly requiring the protection of man as their lord and master. The modern women novelists explore the psychological and moral dilemmas of their women characters who try to achieve a new harmony of relationship with themselves and their surroundings.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the foremost voices to deal with the problem. Her novels deal with a woman's attempt to assert her individuality and realize her freedom. They depict how it brings her into confrontation with the family, with the male world and the society. Shashi Deshpande presents the Indian version of the modern woman who searches for the whole of her 'identity', rather than the western feminists' concept of emancipation. She takes a balanced view of life. Self-realization and resistance to Patriarchy are important themes in Shashi Deshpande's novels. These themes are worked out differently in different novels.

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru establishes herself neither as a totally liberated woman, the typical western nor as an orthodox Indian, the submissive female. The entire novel is based on the Indian woman's feminine sensibility. Shashi Deshpande's protagonists are not rebels in the stereotyped sense but they learn in the course of their encounter with the harsh realities of life to generate in themselves the power to cope with their self and society.
They undergo through a variety of situations, conflicts, and resolutions of the feminine self. The protagonist Urmi in *The Binding Vine* exposes the suffering of her long dead mother-in-law subjected to rape in marriage and the unmarried girl Kalpana also the victim of rape.

The novel *That Long Silence* is mainly concerned with the silence of an Indian housewife. The inner conflict in Jaya's brought out; there is a long suppressed anger in her. Shashi Deshpande says about the novel: “And then I wrote *That Long Silence*, almost entirely a woman’s novel, nevertheless, a book about the silencing of one half of humanity. A life time of introspection went into this novel, the one closest to me personally; the thinking and ideas in this are closest to my own.”

*That Long Silence*

The Sahitya Akademi Award winner *That Long Silence* (1990) tells the story of an Indian housewife, who maintains silence throughout her life. The publication of *That Long Silence* by the Virag press gave it great publicity. Deshpande herself regards the novel as: “More meaningful than any other of my novels, for it deals with a much larger issue: the long silence of women.”

Jaya Kulkarni is a satisfied housewife. Having married Mohan, and blessed with two children, Rahul and Rati. In her married life, Jaya recalls the words of her aunt: ‘A husband is like a sheltering tree?’ Her image for the marriage relationship is that of a pair of bullocks yoked together. *That Long Silence* is a narrative with highly symbolical strands. The protagonist was named by her father as ‘Jaya’ specifically to denote victory.
Jaya’s journey on the way to complete victory begins the moment she is yoked like a bullock together with Mohan for the journey of life. The two bullocks make a perfect yoke and in the failure of either one the stratagem never works. For Jaya, Mohan alone gives meaning to her life, her status as a wife, as a mother, as housewife. The major characters of Mohan and Jaya represent certain concepts and the whole exercise is based on the struggle between these two forces, “tending to acquire different significations in different situations.” Mohan had indulged in certain malpractice, as a result of which he is advised to stay away from the office. Luckily for Mohan, the children are away on a tour with their family friends. Mohan, therefore, decides that he and his wife Jaya would go and stay at the flat in Dadar. This flat had belonged to Jaya’s maternal uncle. Jaya lived with Mohan at different places till he went away from her to clear himself of the charge of malpractice.

When Mohan fails to get a decent accommodation allotted at Lohagarh, he attributes it to the failure of his wife in winning over the favour of his Boss. He has been indulging in corruption but when in the danger of being apprehended, he escapes by declaring that he has been doing it not for himself but only for his wife and children. To Jaya the experience turns out to be a great shock. The insecurity is caused by the possibility of Mohan’s losing his job. As Veena Sheshadri of Shashi Deshpande 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 find for themselves.”

The protagonist Jaya has been a writer of moderate success who writes about herself and her family. She is determined to break the long silence. In other words the novel depicts frustration in the married life of Jaya, who failed to come closer to her husband mentally. She suffered from isolation. Despite of her marriage to Mohan and subsequently becoming a mother of two children, she was lonely. Her husband failed to understand her feelings as a result of which she was torn from within. Shashi Deshpande beautifully describes Jaya’s married life, as:

A pair of bullocks yoked together... a clever phrase, but can it substitute for the reality? A man and a woman married for seventeen years. A couple with two children a family some what like the one caught with two children. A posterity by the advertising visuals I so loved. But the reality was only this. We were two persons. A man, a woman.

Jaya never accepted the traditional roles of woman, but she learnt to adjust with Mohan. Sometimes she wants to compare herself with the image of Sita, Draupadi and other ideal mythological characters. She tries to keep a balance between husband and wife. The fact that Jaya was renamed as Suhasini by her husband on their wedding day confuses Jaya in her search for an identity. Jaya stands for revolt whereas Suhasini symbolizes submission. ‘Suhasini’ has been her marital identity. But Jaya does not adopt the name
Suhasini. The name Suhasini becomes the manifestation of resistance to the stereotyping that is inflicted on every woman in the Indian society. However, the rejection of the name Suhasini remains only a token of victory.

Mohan takes pride in the fact of being the husband of a writer. But he interferes with her themes, which he suspects to have strong autobiographical overtones. On a particular occasion, he comments: "How could you, how could you have done it? How can you reveal us, how can you reveal our lives to the world in this way?"35 Jaya's attempts to carve out a space for herself in the world of writing but meets with a bad fate. She tries her hand at writing but has to very soon make a choice between success at work and marital harmony. She wants to give up her writing as her husband disapproves of her attitude in her writing. She is silenced even before she has an opportunity to voice her opinion. Jaya's writings get rejected, for they are superficial as she is afraid to express her anger and her true feelings. Ultimately, she writes for a woman's magazine. Jaya cuts her hair short because it is liked by Mohan. She had come to believe that Mohan is her profession, her career and her means of livelihood.

Mohan wants to find all happiness at home. He dislikes Rahul crying at home. Rahul is a naughty and unquiet baby. He wakes up and starts crying. So Jaya takes him to the kitchen to let Mohan sleep undisturbed. As a good wife she never asked Mohan how he managed to get a job. Shashi Deshpande declares: "My characters take their own ways. I've heard people saying we should have strong women characters. But my writing has to do with women as they are".36
Jaya's silence is symptomatic of alienation and apprehension rooted in every woman's soul in different forms of silence, which is often misunderstood by men as a symbol of woman's acceptance. Jaya was aware of hollowness in her life, even though it was covered by the deceptively beautiful screen of her social graces and obligations. Deshpande has showed women's condition as endemic, chiefly by drawing similarities among Jaya and variety of other female figures of different generations of women in her family (Jaya, her mother, her grand mother); among different classes of women, of the same class and generation (Jaya, her cousin Kusum, her widowed neighbour Mukta), who have all been trained in silence.

Deshpande uses the first person point of view. This provides shape and significance to the intense agony that Jaya experiences. She ironically explains the patriarchal conventions; her child she hopes must be a boy. She is tormented by an abortion concealed from her husband. When her young son Rahul runs away from home she suffers by a sense of inadequacy as a mother. Jaya does not know her identity and does not enjoy individuality of her own. She sees herself as someone's daughter, wife, and mother, having no status of her own. She therefore says: "I was born, my father died when I was fifteen. I got married to Mohan. I have two children, and I did not let a third live." Jaya plays a role of a dedicated wife, even at the cost of losing her own identity.

The novel That Long Silence presents the condition of woman in Indian society. It also gives the clear picture of the different types of women and how they act out their roles with their silence.
alone above the apartment at Dadar, Bombay. Jaya’s attachment to him cannot be termed Platonic although it falls short of a full-fledged affair. The relationship begins as a chance encounter at their Dadar flat on the first occasion, after their marriage. Kamat is a lonely man whose life is, as Jaya says, “structured to loneliness.”38 Jaya feels a compulsive urge to reveal her thoughts before him and a need for his companionship. In spite of the ‘asexual’ nature of their relationship, Jaya has never known to now address him. He always encourages her like an elder brother and compliments like a lover. Kamat warns Jaya, of her, ‘Women are the victims’ theory, her sense of self pity and insists, “Take yourself seriously, woman. Don’t skulk behind a false name. And work if you want others to take you seriously.”39

In fact Jaya was freer with him than she was with her husband. But in our society, this kind of friendship between a married woman and another man is always looked upon with suspicion. When Jaya had found Kamat lying dead on the floor of his flat on one of her visits to him, she had left the place in silence. She cannot even stay and pay homage to her best friend in his death for the fear of ruining her marriage. Thus Jaya plays the role of wife to perfection, but fails as a human being. She had also failed to fulfil her roles of a wife and a mother, and not even done proper justice to her own talents. Her mother-in-law who silently beat herself upon her face in despair and died of a botched abortion, her sister-in-law who died of an untreated tumor, Kusum who threw herself into a well - are all victims of patriarchy. Unlike Gandhari in the Mahabharata who blindfolded her eyes because her husband was blind, the
legendary Sita, Savitri and Draupadi who followed where their husbands led,
Jaya is the symbol of resistance.

The difference in the attitudes of Jaya and Mohan is the main cause of
their failure to understand each other. Mohan wanted a wife who was well
educated and cultured and never a loving one. He made up his mind to get
married to Jaya when he saw her speaking English fluently. He tells Jaya: “You
know, Jaya, the first day I met you at your Ramukaka’s house, you were
talking to your brother Dinakar, and somehow you sounded so much like that
girl, I think it was that moment that I decided I would marry you.”

Deshpande is always aware of the particularities of women’s experience. Her
work is not limited to themes of the relationship between the sexes. Jaya wishes
to reach a stage where she could write about human beings not about women
or men. The title suggests the silence that the protagonist Jaya wishes to break
and to search her real individual self. Jaya’s whole life had revolved around the
wants of her husband.

Deshpande presents the meaning of silence: “You learn a lot of tricks to
get by in a relationship. Silence is one of the...you never find a woman
criticizing her husband, even playfully, in case it might damage the
relationship.”

The novel is not only about Jaya’s deliberate silence that is suffocating
her. It is also about the despair, and resignation of women like Mohan’s
mother, Jaya’s servant, Jaya’s mentally disturbed cousin Kusum. When Mohan
leaves the house without informing her, she feels that she is being neglected by
her husband. There grows a silence between them despite material comforts. Life has been reduced to a meaningless repetition and routine. She remains a passive, silent partner during their seventeen years of married life. She can follow the theory of ‘yathechchasi tatha kuru’ - do as you desire, as lord Krishna giving the message of ‘Karma’ to Arjuna on the battle field. When Jaya’s self as a writer is being crushed it leads her to a rebellion.

Deshpande has shown her male characters mostly as narrow-minded, ruthless, careless husbands who make their sensitive wives experience acute sense of loneliness, emptiness, and boredom in life. They suffer in a wrong marriage due to loneliness or lack of communication. The novel ends with Jaya’s decision to end the silence, which had distorted her communication with her husband, when she hears the news that all ends up well in the office of Mohan, and Rahul also comes back, she continues as a writer. Thus Jaya opts for a compromise. However, it is not done under social pressure. Jaya is now renewed women with a clarity of vision and the choice she makes is her own choice.

*The Binding Vine*

“Men, in general employ their reason to justify their inherited prejudice against women, rather than to understand them.”

- Mary Wollstonecraft

*The Binding Vine* begins in a personal loss - the death of Urmil’s daughter Anu. She suffers from the terrible reality of her little daughter’s death. Urmila is a lecturer in a college. She is married to Kishore whom she had been in love
with and whose sister Vanaa had been her close friend. Vanaa later becomes a medical social worker, while her husband, Harish is a doctor. Urmi is the narrator of the story. The novel presents the initial trauma and the intense anguish that Urmi goes through the various stages in life. She is unable to forget her one-year-old daughter because her memories haunt Urmi. She fights with the memories but also realizes that her living son Kartika who needs her love watches her anxiously. Urmi is staying with her mother, Inni. Since Kishore works for the Merchant Navy he is more of a visitor than a regular member of the family. Urmi wants to find pleasure in her home with her husband and children. But job never allows her husband to stay with her. Urmi feels loneliness about it. Her psychic problem is converted further by her physical problem i.e. asthma.

The Binding Vine also deals with the various shades of a woman's life. Woman has sets of limitations in the changing scenario of the conservative society; the process of emancipation of woman is slow. Women for their emancipation need the support of their male counterparts. Sometimes men do not allow the liberation of women from the labyrinth of family ties. Even a working woman is expected to fulfil her duties towards home and her children. Man is always considered the bread winner of the family. It is the woman who has been performing the duties towards home efficiently. This traditional role carried up to this date, hinders the emancipation of woman as it weakens the roots of a woman's progress, and fades her identity. For a woman, the role
model is often a man, as the emphasis is not on respect for valid authority but on an exaggerated need to submit to some external power or control. 42

The Binding Vine shows how women are the victims of male hegemony-Vanaa, Akka, Inni, Shakutai, Sulu, Kalpana, and Mira. Vanaa's mother Akka marries a widower and comes to take care of his first wife's child Kishore. She is twenty seven and her parents were happy because they were afraid that she may never get married. But she has failed to get any room in the heart of her husband because it is entirely occupied by his son. Her husband totally neglected her existence. Like Akka, Inni, too is the second wife of Urmi's father. Who takes away Urmi for no fault of Inni's and leaves her with her parents. This kind of emotional cruelty is seen in the life of both women. Thus neither Akka nor Inni is given her due. They are treated as second class citizens. Once Urmi comes across a trunk which contains many books and diaries of Mira, her mother-in-law. There she finds poems, which are in Kannada and the diaries in English, and a photograph of Mira. Mira's inner life is made available to Urmi through the diary and poems. Urmi observes:

Mira was only 22 when she wrote this. She had been married at the age of 18. Since then, she had lived a life, which even if normal to most women of that time, must have seemed terrible to her. Cloistered in a home, living with a man she could not love, surrounded by people she had nothing in common with how did she go on?43

Urmi comes to know that, what had sustained Mira in the claustrophobic atmosphere of her marriage was her writing. Mira started writing poetry since her college days. She had in fact aspired to become a poet.
She had even met a promising poet Venu, and given him some of her poems to read, hoping to get a word of encouragement from him. But Venu's advice to Mira was: "Why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is your poetry. Leave the other poetry to us men." Venu's response is a typical patriarchal response.

According to traditional Indian belief, the only redemption for a woman is her achievement of motherhood. She should not aspire to anything beyond her wifely and motherly roles. Deshpande does not deny the role of mother, wife or daughter or sister. But she has created an imaginative female historiography, which fills in the gaps and absences found regarding women in our socio-cultural history. This reflects the agony of a creative woman in an endocentric world. It connotes: "The handicaps of women writers in a male chauvinist society." For Urmi, Mira's diary is not a daily account of her life but a companion to her. Temporarily she forgets her own suffering and tries to probe into Mira's poetry to visualize the kind of troubled life she had lived. The poetry records psychological fears and physical suffering of Mira. Urmi wants to share this suffering with Vanaa, her friend and now her sister-in-law but she cannot, because "I cannot speak of Mira, of Mira's writing to her. That is another pocket of silence between us. One can never see one's parent as a sexual being; he or she is merely a cardboard figure labelled parent."

Mira uses her pen as a weapon to save herself from the sexual abuse and mutilation in the prison house of her husband. The title of the novel *The Binding Vine* is borrowed from one of the poems of Mira, which is about the womb
piercing joy of her pregnancy - the binding vine of love. The poems of Mira haunt Urmi so much that she decides to publish them. But when Vanaa comes to know about this plan, she is enraged. She feels that Urmi is a traitor who would destroy the honour of the family by publishing the poems. Of all the female characters in the novel, Urmi is the one who has the integrity to act according to her feminist conscience. Feminism for Deshpande is more a humanitarian and sociological issue. The other persons in whose predicament Urmi gets involved are Kalpana and Kalpana’s mother Shakutai. Shakutai hails from the lower stratum of society - the class of Mill-workers and domestic servants from the rural areas of Maharashtra. The women of this class are often abused by their husbands.

Urmila tells us about the rape, about which she learnt from Vanaa at the hospital. It was a tragic case of a violent rape by Prabhakar, the husband of Sulu, the younger sister of Shakutai who is the mother of the abused girl, that is, she has been raped by her own uncle. Urmi wants to help Shakutai. Although Urmila is neither a friend nor a relative of Shakutai, she develops a concern for her and her daughter Kalpana. The major characters in this novel confront the anxieties of life with a lot of courage and face it boldly. They suffer miseries inflicted by their men as a matter of their fate. Shakutai’s husband had deserted her for another woman. Shakutai since then had put up with hardships to bring up her three children. Kalpana is her eldest daughter. She has been brought to hospital in an unconscious state. It was a rape case.
Shakutai requests the doctor to suppress the fact that Kalpana had been raped, because:

"If a girl's honour is lost, what's left? The girl doesn't have to do anything wrong. People will always point a finger at her...I have another daughter, what will become of her...?"47 Shakurai does not want to ruin the chances of her daughters in the marriage market by speaking the truth. At the same time Urmi wonders to see Shakutai, whose husband has already deserted her for another woman. She worried about the marriage of Kalpana who is neither dead nor alive. But Urmi soon understands that women like Shakutai find security in marriage. As Mulk Raj Anand comments: "No woman in our land is beyond the treat of rape, because of the suppressed energies of the male, through the taboos of patriarchy, which deny sex before marriage and make male young into wanton animals who assault any possible victim, when possessed by lust."48

Urmi, who has been smarting under the loss of her daughter, can easily respond to a mother's pain and agony. She understands the value of a daughter for the mother. Shakutai and her sister Sulu were guilty of the same act as far as Kalpana was concerned. Sulu, when she comes to know that it is her husband Prabhakar, who has committed rape on Kalpana, breaks her heart about her husband's shameful act and commits suicide. Shakutai, who was most of the time blaming Kalpana for what had happened in the end is left with the terrible knowledge that it is not her daughter's fault, but her own
ignorance that has destroyed her daughter's life. Sulu's suicide expresses the weakened soul of the typical traditional woman.

The authorities of the hospital decide to discharge Kalpana from there. But Shakutai does not know where to go, because she has no money to support her. Urmila wants to help Shakutai in this matter. She introduces her to her classmate, Malcolm, who is a journalist. He helped Shakutai by publishing the news in the local Newspaper much to the chagrin of the poor mother. As a result of publicity in the newspapers, the authorities of the hospital decide not to shift Kalpana from there. Thus *The Binding Vine* dealt with social issues that go beyond the personal tragedies. Shashi Deshpande herself stated that the novel is about a rape. But in her interview to Lakshimi Holmstrom, she qualifies her statement:

But at the same time this is not the only theme or the central theme. This novel has got three strands, the stories of three women: Kalpana, who is unconscious throughout; Mira, a poet who is now dead; and Urmila, who discovers Mira's poems and also learns about Kalpana. But Urmila is more than a filter, a medium through whom the other stories come; she is also part of the overall theme. The biggest problem was weaving them together, bringing out what is common to all three...

Urmila has also suffered in her own married life like Shakutai and Mira. But she acts as a spectator of all these women characters in the novel *The Binding Vine*. She contemplates on their conditions and situations and helps us
to reach the conclusion. Shashi Deshpande deals with rape, cruelty, indifference to women's feelings, their exploitation, and desertion, in this novel. The novel does not end with any platitudes but with the psychological truths that Urmi, through her experience of life, has arrived at. Most human beings are a complex dichotomy of love and cruelty.

**Small Remedies**

*Small Remedies* is a story of three women—Leela, the trade union activist, Savitribai Indorekar, a classical singer of Gwalior gharana and Madhu Saptarishi, a journalist. These three women attain 'sense of self' through their occupations and skills and continue to defy the servility of men. Shashi 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. She portrays a picture of Indian woman who is sensible, educated, attached to her roots, economically independent and yet differs from her image as a 'full-time home maker.' Malati Mathur writes: "In portraying struggles of these women for identity, Shashi Deshpande waves no feminist banners, launches into no rabid diatribes. She drives her point home with great subtlety and delicacy."51 Through this novel Deshpande explores a journey which will heal the wounds even if it does not provide all the answers.

Savitribai Indorekar started her adult life as a dutiful daughter-in-law in an orthodox Hindu household, but eloped with her Muslim lover and accompanist Ghulam Saab. However, the novel is less about music and more
about the vocalist, Savitribai Indorekar. Extremely devoted to her practice she left her in-laws' house and moved to Bhavanipur with her lover Ghulam Saab. They have an illegitimate child, Munni. But there is no place for her daughter Munni in her new life. Somehow Munni manages to forge a new identity for herself as a conventional Hindu woman. Malati Mathur, a reviewer, writes: “At the other end of the spectrum is Munni, Savitribai’s daughter who turns her back on her mother and all that she stands for, in a desperate desire to conform, having encountered early in life the poisoned barbs that society levels against those who dare to be different.” Savitribai acts as a feminist who lived her life on her own terms. She is the great artist who sacrificed everything for the cause of her art.

Madhu’s publishers want a trendy feminist biography of the great musician, Savitribai. In the course of writing biography Madhu comes to know that her own biography will be involved in the musician’s. Even as a child Madhu had been intrigued by Bai’s relationship with Ghulam Saab and with their daughter, Munni. During the course of this journey, we come across the various stages of Madhu’s life; as the mother of a successful doctor in Neemgaon, her friendship at the time with Munni, Savitribai’s daughter; her moving to Bombay to Leela and Joe’s place. Her father dies; she shows love for English literature due to Joe’s influence. Her job as the assistant editor of ‘City News’, her friendship with Tony’s friends Chandru and Som leads to her marriage to Som. Then she gives birth to their only son Aditya, who fills Madhu’s life with happiness.
The novel is not a story told along a straightline, but it cuts across memories of all those incidences, words, gestures that have shaped her life. It is a novel in which past and present are intermingled, reflecting Deshpande’s own thoughts. She has the heroine Madhu, as the narrator and employs a kind of stream-of-consciousness technique. Madhu has to face the sudden death of her seventeen-year-old son Aditya in a senseless act of communal violence. He is killed in a bus that is burnt down in Bombay in the riots, which followed the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Madhu is now in Bhavanipur to write a biography of Savitribai Indorekar partly to divert her mind from her son’s death. It is a meeting between two people after a gap of many years—a meeting in which Savitribai avoids any mention of their earlier association because that would reveal the existence of Munni. As a biographer, Madhu has to be conscious of these empty spaces, these gaps in order to write a true, complete biography. Madhu writes about Savitribai: “I can make Bai the rebel who rejected the conventions of her times. The feminist who lived her life at her terms. The great artist who struggled and sacrificed everything for the cause of her art. The woman who gave up everything—a comfortable home, a husband, and a family—for love.”

Munni and Madhu were neighbours in Neemgaon, where Madhu’s father was a doctor. All those years ago in Neemgaon, Madhu could not comprehend why Munni so disliked her father, Ghulam Saab with whom Bai was living. Munni has always denied her parents and has attempted to run away from the shadow of her famous mother. The mother is almost ruthless in
the pursuit of her talent. The daughter is equally determined to seek anonymity in the folds of a family. Munni insists on calling herself 'Shailaja Joshi'. She is trying to wipe out any connection with her past. Now in Bhavanipur, Madhu is taken aback at the business like reception she gets from Savitribai at their encounter, at the manner in which she has wiped out her years in Neemgaon.

Madhu is searching for the real Bai in the jungle of words she has collected. She realizes that Savitribai has mapped out the story that she wants her to write: "Firstly, there is Bai’s book, the book Bai wants to be written, in which she is the heroine, the spotlight shining on her and her alone. No dark corners anywhere in this book, all the shadows kept out of sight, backstage. Then there’s Maya and Yogi’s book. A controversial one. Trendy, politically correct, with a feminist slant". The novel explores a host of issues like Madhu’s marriage and her husband’s jealous, The guilt she feels is not actually at the death of her son but at the breakdown of communication between her and her husband. Her husband looks upon her with suspicion regarding her pre-marital friendship with a man. The distrust arising out of this suspicion destroys their relationship.

Madhu’s aunt Leela is another non conformist who participated in the 1942 Quit India Movement. She is a widow, who remarries a Christian. When Madhu’s father died, it was Leela and Joe who had pulled her out of the emptiness. The life had not taught much about those aspects of her beloved aunt. Though Leela was a generation older than Madhu, she was financially independent and supported herself. When her first husband, Vasanth, died she
took up a job. She lived in the crowded chawls among the cotton mills and worked for the welfare of the women afflicted with TB. After putting in years of hard work, she has reached the top of the hierarchy, while men who worked under her reached there easily enough. Savitribai too understood how much more difficult it was for women to rise to the top when compared to men. Madhu narrates parallels between the lives of Leela and Savitribai:

I’ve begun thinking that in writing about Bai, I’m writing about Leela as well. And my mother and all those women who reached beyond their grasp. Bai moving out of her class in search of her destiny as a singer, Leela breaking out of the conventions of widowhood, looking for justice for the weak, my mother running in her bare feet, using her body as an instrument for speed—yes, they’re in it together. But they paid the price for their attempts to break out.\textsuperscript{55}

Madhu realizes that both were courageous women that both were women who worked for and got the measure of freedom they needed. This shows societal ambivalence towards women’s changing roles. Madhu’s desire to write an honest biography of Bai helps her to overcome her sense of loss after the death of her son Aditya and her husband’s distrust. Madhu leaves her home to come to terms with herself. Savitribai’s true heiress is Hasina, a grand daughter of Ghulam Saab, who devotes herself to looking after the singer in her declining years. At the end of the story Savitribai loses her voice, falls ill, and is superseded by her pupil Hasina. Incidentally, Savitribai never allowed
Hasina to perform in public. But after Hasina performs in the presence of a knowledgeable audience she is hailed as a great musician. Thus Deshpande reflects feminist issues and individual women's rebellion to find an identity. She gives a certain image of middle class ethos; still one can read here the theme of resistance and struggle of women. She stresses that through education and self-dependence Indian women can come out of the servility syndrome.

4.3 The Conflict between Tradition and Modernity:

The term 'tradition' means, according to the Oxford English dictionary, 'handing down or being handed down', something handed down by predecessors. The current debate about tradition versus modernity, which has also occupied much of nineteenth century intellectual life in India, displays a partial understanding of the processes of social change in the country. 'Modernity' as well as the related terms 'modern' and 'modernization' represent highly condensed historical experiences. They are sometimes used in a purely chronological sense. In this sense, 20th century is more modern than 19th century. There is no qualitative consideration in this. In other words, "Modernity is a matter of sensibility. To be modern is to be aware of the contemporary scenario as changed by the growth of knowledge, a sensitive perception of the world in the present state of knowledge." It is observed that anything, which is a fashion at present is considered modern whether it is desirable or not. Certain attitudes and ideas are more progressive and hence it is natural to consider them modern in comparison. Poised delicately between a nostalgic idealization of traditional values and a new compulsive urge for modernity, Indian society has yet to choose between these two postures:
The assumption that modernity and tradition are radically contradictory rests on a misdiagnosis of tradition as it is found in traditional societies, a misunderstanding of modernity as it is found in modern societies and misapprehension of the relationship between them.57

In today's Indian society, the greatest drawback to the free development of a woman as a human being is the traditional image of a woman as an ideal housewife, as an ideal mother or as a prostitute. This means that women merely accept the traditional roles given to them by the society. Why do they accept this role? Why do they not assert themselves? The answer to these questions is that they accept the given role because they have been trained for thousands of years to accept the tradition. A person's self image is deeply affected and influenced by the society's image about that person. Any individual in the society forms ideas about self and his/her relations with other individuals through the roles assigned to that person by tradition. This is the reason why women find the aim of life is becoming an ideal wife, an ideal mother or in giving sensual pleasure to man.

The necessity is of looking at ourselves very objectively. Women must ask themselves deep-rooted and perhaps hard and painful questions. If women want to make something worthwhile of their lives, and of their capacities as human beings, going through this difficult process will be essential. So, modernity can be considered "as the experience of living with rapid, extensive, and continuous change."58 Our society is changing very fast. It is changing in
many respects—science, technology, the system of production, education, political systems. But the basic traditional role of woman has not changed. The traditional image of woman is at the base of this stagnancy. We need to change that. Those who confront tradition and opt for modernity are called non conformists. Conformity does not mean dumb acceptance of all that is imposed on them. It takes for granted a certain degree of willingness and wholehearted acceptance. Sometimes a tradition-bound woman may sacrifice her happiness for the sake of the welfare of the family as a unit, but at the same time she may retain her individuality.

The Indian woman is bound by traditions and conventions. Usually she does not think about her own personal happiness and comfort. She surrenders herself to the task of making others happy and upholding traditions and conventions. The modern woman does not find any sense in being a traditionalist. She does not imagine herself to be a suffering or sacrificing individual. As she gives importance to self-expression and individual-fulfilment she starts to question the conventions and refuses the traditions which tend to undermine her individuality. Shashi Deshpande’s protagonists do not choose to break away violently, but for identity is an important concern to them. The novels end with an optimistic note with the possibility to some positive action in future. The novelist emerges in them as a bridge-builder between the old and the new, between tradition and modernity.
Shashi Deshpande’s first novel (though published after The Dark Holds No Terrors) received a prize for being the best Indian novel in English of 1982-83. It is the story of Indu, a middle class young girl, brought up in an orthodox Brahmin family headed by Akka, who is the traditional mother figure and the unquestioned ruler. Indu returns to her ancestral house after eleven years to find herself an inheritor of Akka’s property Akka is a sister of Indu’s grandfather. Herself a childless widow, she came back to her parental home ages ago to be the ‘ruthless, dominating, bigot and inconsiderate Akka’. She could reduce the elders like Kaka, Atya and others to ‘red faced stuttering children by her venomous tongue.’

Her simple wish was command. She gets respect not only because of her age but also because of her wealth. Akka returned to her parental home as a rich widow after the death of her husband. Since then she established herself as a formidable authority, treated her family members as puppets. It was Narmada-Atya, daughter of Indu’s grandfather, who tells Indu about the pathetic story of Akka. At the age of twelve, she got married to a man and had become the victim of the evil patriarchal practices. As a young girl she suffers from the real trauma of child marriage. Her girlhood withers when she has to tolerate the harsh and bestial sexual advances of her husband. Narmada-Atya describes the frightened situation of Akka, when she tried to escape from her husband’s brutality. But her mother-in-law whipped her for that and locked her up for three days. Her husband had a weakness for women. He always had
mistresses. And Akka failed to give birth to a living child. Her mother-in-law blamed her for it and made life hell for her. When Akka had been married for more than fifteen or twenty years, Akka’s husband took another woman. He would have brought her home but for the fear of his mother: “But there was nothing he wouldn’t do for her apart from that. He even tried to give her Akka’s jewels.”

The chains of traditional marriage are heavy and the escape routes are not available to a wife, who often seeks consolation and refuge in obsessions or mental slavery often leading to her physical decay and death. The social belief which has been to the continuity of women suppression sees to it that unrecognized martyrdom becomes a part of a housewife’s existence. She develops a notion of subordinate importance to her own needs to those of her family. She is supposed to bear her exploitation silently. Akka too has to undergo such insults, injuries, and humiliations with a stoic patience. As Mrinalini Sebastian observes:

The world of Deshpande’s novels is a world that is rooted in a certain idea of tradition, of culture and even though there exists a kind of conflict between tradition and the changed values, it does not really suggest transnational or translational elements because nowhere do we really see this culture coming into conflict with any ‘other’ form of culture.

Her husband becomes obsessed with a woman, which destroys Akka’s life. Akka looks after her husband with great care when he has a stroke. But she
never permitted the woman to see him nor submitted before her husband’s desire to meet her. This situation has brought a drastic change in her life. Earlier Akka was weak and timid and so he controlled her, but now he was dependent on the mercy of Akka. Thus she was not ready to succumb before his demands. Since then Akka learned the principle of domination. She takes full control of the family in her own hands. She has rejected the masculine power and the secondary role of women. In an interview Deshpande admits that all her characters are concerned with their ‘selves’ and they learn to be ‘honest to themselves’. Woman’s passivity and submission in the traditional roles of wife and mother terminate in their self-criminalization.

Indu is an independent woman and a writer, and her shadows are-a daughter, a mother and a commercial writer. She rebels against Akka and breaks the rules of her commercial world, her rigid values and marries Jayant. She seeks marriage as an alternative to the bondage in order to escape from the parental family. She thinks marriage will help her in winning her freedom. She wants to achieve a complete personhood as explicitly suggested. The conflict between tradition and modernity plays a significant role in the portrayal of women by women novelists. Indu in Shashi Deshpande’s Roots and Shadows, rejects the family because of her desire to marry the man of her choice. Marriage reveals her only hypocrisy. She learns to “reveal to Jayant nothing but what he wanted to seek, nothing but what he wanted to hear.” Such women rebel against the accepted and existing social norms, which either in theory or in practice exists to keep women in a secondary place. A woman with
modern outlook may strive for self-identity. This kind of individuation might cause a clash between tradition and modernity. In their quest for self-fulfillment, they may have to undergo the painful experience of severing the family bonds and reestablishing themselves. In this novel, the writer has created two sets of women in the Indian setup. One set is represented by Akka, Narmada, Sumitrakaki, Atya, Sunanda Atya and the other set is represented by Indu. To the old generation, a woman's life is nothing, "but to get married, to bear children, to have sons and then grand-children." 62 Indu analyzes the ideal of detachment and reason: "A woman who sheds her 'I' who loses her identity in her husband." 63

In other words, it projects the educated women who are unable to enfranchise the traditional background in which they are reared. Here women play two types of roles, traditional and unconventional. The unorthodox suffer for their flouting of accepted norms, for their rebelliousness. The conventional suffer too. But their suffering is sanctified by the norms of a patriarchal, male-oriented culture. Through this novel Deshparde presents the middle class educated woman, may be because she herself comes from a middle class family or because the middle class women create a large segment of contemporary Indian society.

Indu's mother belonged to a different caste which is not liked by her father's family. It leads her father, Govind to develop a feeling of disgust towards them. After the death of his wife, he leaves his motherless daughter at the disposal of his family. Indu is shocked to see her father's unconcerned
attitude towards his fatherly duties: "How else could he have parted leaving me, a fifteen day old motherless baby, with the family he hated and despised? He had not even come to see me until I was more than a year old. But that, perhaps, was because I was a girl. If I had been a son..." \(^{64}\)

Indu does not remember her mother and Akka, a childless widow becomes the surrogate mother for Indu. After her education in convent school, Indu reacts by leaving home to go to college and stay in a hostel. As a modern woman of changed times, she has imbibed in her the questioning spirit of a rebellion, free from the bondage and restriction of culture. She desires to realize herself as an emancipated, an educatec 'New Woman'. Indu revolts against the ancestral home, a symbol of patriarchal tradition of authority. She rejects Akka as a role model. She questions the very concept of marriage, love, and sex. They are the traditional institutions symbolizing power and authority. Sex is a taboo in traditional Indian society. Indu is a modern woman and expresses her desire for sex with Naren.

Indu's revolt against Akka's traditional values and compulsive urge to dominate bring her in conflict with Akka's authority. Indu does not marry Jayant out of her love for him, but to show that she has been a success in asserting herself and defying Akka's authority. Indu had left home to marry the person of her own choice against the wishes of the whole family, especially the old matriarch Akka. Akka had said at her marriage, 'such marriages never work.' Indu was bent on showing her that theirs did work. But later, she realized that marriage with Jayant proved to be the surrender of 'one's own
self. Marriage for Indu brings only disillusionment, when she finds her educated and progressive minded husband is not different from the traditional in outlook. He indirectly moulds her identity according to his prescriptions. Marriage is considered the promised end in traditional society. Indu realizes that love is purely based on physical instinct only: "Love, that's a word I don't really understand. It seems to me an overworked word." She realizes: "The sexual instinct. That is true the material instinct... That is true too. Self interest, self love...They are the basic truth." Indu suffers from a silent sexual humiliation and she finds no guilt in her extra-marital relationship with Naren. She also decides not to tell Jayant about it.

Indu tries to express her feminine voice through her creative writing in which she is interested but her interests are ruined by her husband, because it needs money. In other words Jayant betrays her hopes, peace, and happiness. Shashi Deshpande writes in her essay, 'The Writing of a Novel' about Indu: "Indu sprang out of the claustrophobic world with a courage I admired. She was free but often to be free is to be lonely. I shared this bleak thought with Indu." Her longing to be her true self culminates in her intimacy with Naren, her cousin. Naren's death seals it in secrecy. Now apart from her true self, she has an extra guilt to be hidden from Jayant. Indu's unconventionality does not help her to reach out to Jayant, but it is a sign of her independence. Indu's character portrays the predicament of a woman who faces the pull of the opposite forces. Indu's love affair with Naren becomes the result of the influence of the new woman.
Indu has returned to the ancestral house, mainly because of the old building which houses this huge family. Indu keeps herself away for ten years from the family. Akka might have been extremely old fashioned and despotic. But she must have had an intuitive insight into the character of the people around her, to entrust the entire family property to a young woman who had left the house years ago with no intention to return. Indu’s father visits the family very occasionally. Indu’s relative Naren, is almost an outsider to it. The orphan boy, Vithal is not a part of the family, even though he is given shelter and food here. Indu wants a change in the form of freedom from the joint family. But she has not been very successful. As Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan comments: “We Indians can never get away from caste. If we’ve rejected the old ones, we’ve embraced new ones. Do I think of myself as a Brahmin? Rarely if ever. But I’m the educated, intelligent, urban, middle-class. We have our own rules, our own pattern, to which I adhere as scrupulously as Atya and Kaki observe their fasts and pujas.”

It is this Akka, who comes out as the most powerful figure in the novel. She refuses to go to the hospital when she is sick because she wouldn’t know what caste the nurses and doctors belonged to. It is through the money that her husband left her that Akka changes the traditional image of the Brahmin widow and it is in this way that the image itself is rendered ambivalent. In this family four generations of family members throw up issues related to kinship pattern, individual freedom familial support, and dictates of tradition. Indu’s
cousin Mini has to get married according to her parents' choice. Mini herself realistically asks, 'What choices have I, Indu?'

Indu feels sorry for the helplessness of Mini. Thus Mini has adopted in herself all the traditional feminine qualities. Women like Mini who are always involved in the fetishes of tradition and household work, have no other option but to remain satisfied with the things provided. At a deeper level the novel shows a conflict between tradition and modernity, where an educated carefree, modern girl breaks the tradition. The novelist brings in two opposite poles of tradition and modernity. At another level it reads like a personal thesis on a major sociological problem of that time in which tradition and modernity stood against each other. The novel is an attempt to evaluate how the protagonist Indu seeks to synthesize tradition with the modern values, which are the needs of the hour and how it results into a cross cultural fertilization in which Akka, who stands for tradition and Indu who represents modern ethos influence each other and bring in remarkable changes in each other. Indu conforms to the modern values of education and marriage. But she becomes a conformist when she takes over charge of her ancestral house to continue its age long tradition. She makes herself fit in the unbroken chain of the cultural heritage.

Through the character of Akka, Deshpande seems to be exposing conventional narrow-minded traditional woman. But Akka also has an individuality, and broken tradition in her own way. On the other hand Indu is brought up in accordance with the modern life style. Her extra marital involvement is not the result of the western liberated life style. It is an attempt
to fulfil her inner desire for love and communication. She is a woman with a strong sense of individuality and has bold, self-reliant attitude, which separates her from the traditional women who religiously follow the footsteps of their ancestors. Thus Deshpande’s women characters try to hammer out the ways of discovering their identities within the framework of the tradition of the family system. An attempt to break away from the traditional image is present in all her novels.

Shashi Deshpande concentrates on the experiences and sufferings of middle class Indian women who happen to be educated and sensitive and who are conscious of their legal rights. She highlights the relationships of wife and husband, and this conflict operates at the emotional, intellectual, and sexual levels. She 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. Though her novels are cast in the feminist framework, Deshpande does not cross the limits of Indian socio-cultural reality. As such, the novels are of immense relevance to us in the present day socio-cultural context and underscore her place in the scene of international literature in English as a writer to be read, to be respected.
REFERENCES


8. Ibid, P -65.


10. Ibid, P -38.

11. Ibid, P -42.


13. Ibid.


18. Ibid, P -112.


24. Ibid, P -12.


28. Ibid, P -42.


35. Ibid, P-144.


40. Ibid, P-90.


44. Ibid.


47. Ibid, P-59.


52. Ibid.


54. Ibid, P -125.

55. Ibid, P -284.


62. Ibid, P-128.

63. Ibid, P-54.

64. Ibid, P-163.

65. Ibid, P-97.
