CHAPTER - VII

VALUES IN SM. DESHPANDE’S NOVELS

The values which Sm. Deshpande advocates in her novels are essentially existential-humanistic, with a bias towards feminism, but they are values she has arrived at on her own, since existentialism does not prescribe a code of ethics. It is a philosophy which is subjective and gives man freedom of choice and responsibility for the choice. In other words, every man has to create his own values. It should also be made clear that the values she has arrived at are impelled by humanism and animated by feminism. As an existentialist, she does not conform to the conventional, middle-class morality: as a humanist she is interested in the welfare and happiness of man in the life here and not in the life hereafter; as a feminist, she believes that man has no right to exploit woman, and women have a right to lead their own lives; as a human being she holds that woman should not destroy man. The last part of the statement sounds strange from a writer who has come to hold feminist views, but she has stated it categorically several times in the course of her novels and we cannot bypass it as a chance remark. Her background -- the
daughter of an intellectual, the wife of a pathologist and educated in a variety of faculties — convent school education, a degree in economics, a post-graduate degree in English literature, a degree in law and a diploma in journalism, not to mention the several gold medals she garnered on the way — has not only provided her with the wherewithal to absorb various philosophies but arrive at her own values.

The most profound influence has of course been existentialism. In times of cultural crisis, when there is no external support for an individual to rely upon, the only meaningful point of reference is his own immediate consciousness. His salvation lies in his search for self-identification or self-realization. With Shri Deshapande, self-realization is a psychological phenomenon, and not a metaphysical concept. She does not appear to believe in any form of the supernatural or divine. This psychological "self-realization" is considered by some to be not different from the metaphysical "salvation." In fact, Plato's division of the soul into three faculties — the rational, the spirited (feeling) and the appetitive — is called "a form of faculty
Each faculty has its appropriate role in life, and there is order and peace when they operate in harmony.

The organismic theory in psychology "emphasizes the unity, integration, consistency, and coherence of the normal personality. Organization is the natural state of the organism; disorganization is pathological and is usually brought about by the impact of an oppressive or threatening environment, or by intra-organic anomalies." K. Goldstein is the leading exponent of this theory.

"What appear to be different drives such as hunger, sex, power, achievement and curiosity are merely manifestations of the sovereign purpose of life, to actualize oneself. When people are hungry they actualize themselves by eating, when they crave power they actualise themselves by obtaining power. The satisfaction of any particular need is in the foreground when it is a pre-requisite for the self-realization of the total organism. Self-actualization is the creative trend of human nature. It is the organic principle by which the organism becomes more fully developed and more complete. The ignorant person who desires knowledge feels an inner emptiness; he or she has a sense of their own incompleteness. By reading and studying, their desire for knowledge is fulfilled and the emptiness disappears. A new person has been created, thereby, one in whom learning has taken the place of ignorance. Their desire has become an actuality. Any need is a deficit state

1 Frank Thilly, A History, p.87.
2 Calvin S.Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Personality, p.243.
that motivates the person to replenish the deficit. It is like a hole that demands to be filled in. This replenishment or fulfillment of a need is what is meant by self-actualization or self-realization."

Now self-realization is so central to \$M. Deshpande's system of values that the main concern of every protagonist of hers, except Kshama of *Come Up*, is self-realization through making choices for which she alone is responsible. The typical protagonist of a \$M. Deshpande's novel is usually a woman who is sensitive, alone, misunderstood, frustrated, fragmented, in despair and almost destroyed by the exigencies of life before actualising her potentialities. Guru, the lone male protagonist of \$M. Deshpande, is the hero of *If I Die*, which is more of a moral fable than (crime) fiction that it is meant to be. He sermonizes often enough categorically not to leave any doubt about his creator's views and values. Much of what is implied or seen in action in novels is instead clearly stated here. So what has been lost as art has been here compensated by unambiguous statements (if at all lack of art can ever be compensated by anything else). Guru demonstrates how some of the doctors have used the freedom to choose by choosing wrong intentionally and then refusing to hold themselves responsible.

\^Ibid., pp.249-250.
for it under an excuse. The case of Tambe, the labour leader, was diagnosed wrongly by Dr. Kulkarni and the patient was operated upon rather casually by Dr. Shyam. The tragedy was the result of complacency. Dr. Vijay changed the autopsy under the Dean's suggestion and the Shetji's pressure in the interests of the Hospital. Guru, a self-realized person, felt that the doctors ought to do two things: first, "make things right with themselves" (p.104) by coming out with the truth, and, second, pay compensation to Tambe's family. Making a choice and holding oneself responsible for it is neither easy nor comfortable unless the person has innate honesty, indefatigable courage and utter sincerity of purpose. In other words, absolute integrity and the courage that goes with it are essential. Guru tells people, "'You're always responsible for what you do.'" (p.28) He is against all false facades. This integrity comes from the faith that there is coherence and harmony in the universe. It is not enough for a man to be skilful; he has got to be a good human being, too. Otherwise, he is incomplete. There should be no misunderstanding between one and another, even less between one and oneself.
Indu, Saru, Jaya and Urmi become self-integrated in the course of the novel. Two interesting characters, Kshama and Devi (*Come Up*) are cousins, but there is a world of difference between the two. Devi is like Guru, a self-realised person before the novel opens and, like Guru again, acts like a catalytic agent to bring self-awareness to Kshama, and like Guru still again, she moves away from the scene before the novel ends.

Since existentialism emphasises the uniqueness of subjective experience and self-awareness, one would expect it to tend towards alienation rather than social communication. But Karl Jaspers holds that only through life in society and through communication can individual existence be developed and fulfilled.\(^4\) Sartre writes, "In order to get at any truth about myself, I must have contact with another person. The other is indispensable to my own existence, as well as to my knowledge about myself."\(^5\) For Julian Huxley, salvation means achieving harmony not only between different parts of our nature but between ourselves and the social world of man. He

explains, "If we translate salvation into terms of this world, we find that it means achieving harmony between different parts of our nature, including its subconscious depths and its rarely touched heights, and also achieving some satisfactory relation of adjustment between ourselves and the outer world, including not only the world of nature, but the social world of man."6

So Sh. Deshpande's interest in human relationships is clearly existential. She is so much interested in human relationships that we find in her novels the whole gamut of feelings ranging from ecstatic love to bitter hatred. She gives much significance to the closeness of relationship between human beings. Once in Urmi’s absence, Inni and Vanaa examine the clothes Urmi wears and are surprised that even going to college she wears unstarched cottons. Urmi comes in at that moment and asks them what they are doing. They tell her how disappointed they are at her wearing unstarched cottons. Urmi replies, "I hate my clothes standing away from me, as if they are disowning me. I like them to be part of

me. ' (p.128) The statement could be taken as symbolic of Urmi's attitude to persons, friends and strangers alike. It could even be taken as typical of Sh. Deshpande's idea of how people should be with each other. Society is a web of human relationships and it is beneficial for humanity. She thinks the idea so important that she has repeated the idea in another novel of hers, If I Die. The Dean of the Medical College tells Manju, "Humans ... We don't think of them enough. Ideas, we say, principles and ambitions and success. So many other things come first. But it's wrong, all wrong. It's people who matter most. Nothing should matter more than they do.' " (p.110) And Guru declares, "'I don't want any barriers!'" (p.7) between himself and anybody else and, by implication, between any two persons.

Sh. Deshpande is convinced about the intricacies and beauty of relationships. It is in the acceptance of the ideas that human beings have a right to happiness and comfort, that they show an interest in human aspirations and that they have faith in human reason and the values that they hold are the product of human relationships that her humanism becomes apparent. This may be seen in every novel of hers. Indu had
left the family and had not even visited them once during the
ten years following. She has come now, for her great-aunt had
left a will in her favour and it is the occasion of Mini's
marriage. "Families! And yet, since coming for the wedding, I
had seen the concept of the family taking shape, living, in
front of my eyes. It had struck me how suddenly, if only
momentarily, we had become an entity, a family, united by a
strong bond, a common loyalty. It was 'we' now, not 'they'
and us." (p.4) She explains what she had tried to do during
those intervening ten years. "I had rejected the family,
tried to draw a magic circle round Jayant and myself. I had
pulled in my boundaries and found myself the poorer for it.
Alienation, I know now, is not the answer. On the contrary,
too much of it and we can die of a terrible loneliness of the
spirit. 'I am alone' ... they seem to me to be the most
poignant words in any language." (p.11)

When the house was sold and Mini's marriage celebrated
and the family broke up, Atya went to live with Indu and
Jayant, for there was nowhere else to go for her. And from
her, Jayant got "undemanding affection -- something he never
got from anyone else. But isn't that always true? Does not
each relationship have something unique to offer? I think of
my own childhood, and of how I got affection from Kaka,
understanding from Old Uncle, and loving care from Atya ..."
(p.14) Sh. Deshapnde quotes the "words of a noble savage to a
civilization that defeated him : 'All things are connected.'"
(p.15) So, too, are human beings.

Kshama and Devi are cousins but there could not have been
two cousins with less in common. Kshama is as egocentric who
assumes that she knows everything and her behaviour with
others is in accordance with this assumption. Her brother
Pratap is not all right in the head and Kshama thinks her duty
is over when she has brought him home from hospital. It is
Devi who takes care of him. When later Pratap is accused of a
crime which he has not committed, Kshama believes the charge
without a second thought, but Devi does not believe it. The
younger teachers in the school and Sonali give Devi their love
while for Kshama they have respect mixed with some dislike.
Devi's goodness is to be seen in her going to Mrs. Girish to
hand over the office keys which Dr. Girish gives her before he
is taken away by the police just before he can kill Devi.
When Mrs. Girish suffers a shock, Devi holds her to her heart.
so that the pain might pass into her own body. Devi owes no obligation to Mrs. Girish, for Dr. Girish had tried to murder her; Mrs. Girish had only contempt for Devi. She had refused to attend a dinner to which Dr. Girish had invited Devi and Pratap, for Devi was only a cook in Kshama's house, and also probably because she was conscious that she was exquisitely beautiful while Devi was plain. But Devi sees in Mrs. Girish only a woman suffering and holds her in her arms to assuage her sorrow. On Devi's part, it is an act of genuine humanness.

In *If I Die*, there are seven couples, one of each being a doctor, and in the case of one couple, both. No two persons are alike, no two couples are alike in their relationship with their colleagues or their wives. There is a slight misunderstanding between Dr. Vijay and Manju; Meera loves her husband Ashok, but Ashok, an irresistibly charming man, flirts with other women; Dr. Shyam always thinks of himself while his wife, also a doctor, wants to live in India and take care of her old, lonely, diabetic mother. Dr. Cynthia's husband Tony is only a physical instructor but there is genuine love between them. Both are unhappy because they have no children and Tony
goes to pieces through drink. Sumant and Vimala keep themselves to themselves because there are false rumours that he had murdered his wife to marry Vimala. The Dean and his wife Rani lead independent lives — he has the Hospital and she has her social life plus a love affair with Dr. Kulkarni, a colleague of her husband. Dr. Kulkarni is the one really unlikable character who looks down upon his wife because she has given him a daughter and not a son to carry on the family heritage. He is so indifferent that when Guru is murdered, he suggests that he must have died of cancer, and when Tony is murdered, he suggests that he must have fallen into the tank because he must have had a drop too much. He is happy they are removed from the scene because he was uncomfortable in their presence.

The Dark depicts the life of Saru unfairly hated by her mother who on her death-bed prayed for her daughter's unhappiness. Saru marries Manu, the man she adores and loves, but her success as doctor and his failure as poet and lecturer turn him into a sadistic brute at night, of which he is completely unaware during day. The only escape for her is to go to her father, to whom a poor boy by the name of Madhav has
become a surrogate son. There is better understanding between father and daughter, but whether she will go back to her husband is not made clear. Most probably she will not.

Understanding another's point of view is important even when there is no agreement. Urmí and Vanaa were childhood friends, inseparables always and later became sisters-in-law. Urmí marrying Vanna's brother Kishore. Urmí's mother Inni once remarks that Urmí probably married Kishore to avoid being separated from Vanaa. There are petty disagreements often between Urmí and Vanna, but they never cease to love each other. Urmí loses her little baby-daughter and she cannot forget her. She cannot even accept that she is no longer alive. She shows real sympathy for Shakutai whose daughter is in coma as a result of a brutal rape. She spends time with Shakutai consoling her, goes to her house and even brings her to hers. Inni and Vanaa feel that Urmí is going too far, but she does not bother. She has unconsciously identified herself with Shakutai who has lost a daughter like herself. Her own grief becomes assuaged because of her sympathy for another. It is said sorrow shared is sorrow halved, happiness shared is happiness doubled. It is, therefore, good for the one who is
suffering to share his sorrow with another, because his sorrow
will become less; it is perhaps even better for the other
person because he will forget his own sorrow by sharing the
sorrow of another.

Indifference is a sin, probably a worse sin than cruelty.
Cruelty shows a positive attitude towards another person, even
if the attitude is bad for the other man, but indifference
reveals the absence of a heart. Amrut explains the idea to
Urmil.

"...When people say 'Mind your own business,'
it always makes me think of snails -- crawling
away blindly, you know, enclosed inside their
shells. But snails get trampled over too, don't
they? Squash, and it's all over for them."
(p.182)

In spite of the indispensability of relationship between
human beings, it is only natural that no relationship can be
perfect, since no two human beings are exactly the same. Each
one has his own personality. "Each relationship, always
imperfect, survives on hope." (Vine, p.141) "It's only with
the dead that we can have a perfect relationship. There are
no knots, no awkward tangles here. We can mould the dead to
our desires, to suit our purposes." (Silence, p.151) But
nevertheless Saru feels, "The urge to confide in someone, to
talk to someone, was growing in her." (The Dark, p.43)

Shí Deshpande gives much importance to relationships
probably because everyone, when he dies, dies alone. "...her
mother... had died alone in the middle of the night... Perhaps
the only truth is that man is born to be bold and lonely and
alone." (The Dark, p.219) Whether the death be by accident or
through natural decay, whether it be a quick one or a slow
lingering one, man dies alone. When he is alive, nothing can
be worse than loneliness, for it is worse than death. "We are
alone. We have to be alone... We come into this world alone
and go out of it alone," ruminates Saru. (The Dark, p.208)
Her mother probably realises this when she is about to breathe
her last. She asks her husband to read for her from the
Mahabharatha the section that deals with the death of
Duryodhana to find perhaps a kind of consolation that it is
not only she that dies alone. "The loneliness of a man facing
his death -- is there anything like it in this world?"
(Silence, p.186)

Death is common, for everyone who is born has to die, as
the Sanskrit axiom runs, but we never get used to it. Buddha
tries to convince us death is common and inevitable and to make us familiar with it, but Urmi is right in commenting that his advice is not very helpful in the early days of bereavement because of the acuteness of grief over the loss of a near and dear one. "'How does it help me,'" cries Urmi, "'to know that others have suffered like me?'" (Vine, p.18) There is a finality about death that is above reason or faith. "I have to live with the knowledge that it's real, that Anu's gone, that she will never return. It's cruel to leave the dead behind and go on, but we have no choice, we have to let them go." (p.21) "But to go on like this is to wrong the living." (p.22) After all, "it is not the dead who need our loyalty, but the living." (Roots, p.13) Most human beings are too tiny to deal with a thing as stupendous as death. Nature has fortunately given the living the ability to get used to death. Routine, too, helps, for it is the routine of daily chores which is the crutch that supports us in our calamities. "You can never opt out, you can never lay it down, the burden of belonging to the human race." (Vine, p.202) Shakutai cries she cannot carry on, but in the morning Urmi finds her going on with the chores. About herself Urmi says, "I race through my chores in the next one hour ....
This is how life is for most of us, most of the time; we are absorbed in the daily routine of living. The main urge is always to survive." (Vine, p.203) Life is always worth living even if one has to bear all the fardels of which Hamlet gives a list, but "life has always to be made possible." (Silence, p.193)

One, of course, has to live in order to attain self-realization. In the very first novel written by S\emph{M.} Deshpande, Roots, there is quite an unambiguous reference to this:

"Is that what we should live for ... one's own self?" [Narendra is speaking]

"Isn't that the ultimate truth? That's what really matters ... one's own self." [Indu] (p.115)

And the references in That Long Silence to Maitreyee should leave no doubt about it.

Why is it that some critics have missed such obvious references to self-identification? Probably because of the critics' preconceived notion that S\emph{M.} Deshpande is a feminist and the consequent inability to lift their eyes to see
anything beyond it. That she is a feminist is beyond doubt, though unconsciously in the early stages and consciously in the later. But her concept of feminism does not go as far as the Western.

If there are women who have not developed a positive attitude to life, the hegemony of men in India is responsible. Women are no better than hewers of wood and drawers of water but without enjoying rights particularly individualistic. From their birth they have to play their allotted roles of daughter, sister, wife, mother, mother-in-law, etc. Their models are supposed to be Sita who went with her husband to the forest for fourteen years, Savitri who followed Yama to recover her husband’s life, Gandhari who bandaged her yes not to see anything which her blind husband could not. No doubt women today have earned the right to vote, to hold posts, the right to education and the right to have property. The one important difference between what the women of the West demanded formerly and what they demand now is: formerly they wanted to restrict the licence of men in extra-marital affairs; now they want to enjoy the same licence. On the other hand, Indian women would be satisfied if their husbands
could be loyal to them and treated them as equals having an individuality of their own. Not that women in India do not feel sometimes attracted by men other than their husbands, but actual indulgence is not common. Of Shri Deshpande's heroines, only Indu (Roots) has an extra-marital affair; Saru, Jaya and Urmi are almost tempted but they do not succumb.

In India women have little real liberty. They are more or less second class citizens in practice. They get an education of course, but they are married off as early as possible. Jaya's brother, who was the head of the family and whose responsibility it was to get her married, chooses the first man who is interested in marrying her. Shri Deshpande's choice of words to describe Dada is important: "Nor had I known Dada's motives. Only later had I come upon them with a painful awareness. Dada had wanted me off his hands, he had wanted to be free of his responsibility for a unmarried (sic) young sister, so that he could go ahead with his own plans."

(pp.92-93) (Italics added). Similarly, Akka is married to Vanaa's father who is a widower, because she is already twentysix and her parents do not expect another proposal. Then the husband changes the bride's name as though by giving
her a new name, he can change her personality to suit himself. The husband is supposed to be like a sheltering tree. She is there for his convenience. Her life has to be one of "silence and surrender". (Silence, p.36) The only difference between the way Kalpana (Vine) was raped and Mira (Vine) and Mrs.Raman (Come up) were is that the rapes of the latter two are within marital bonds. Mohan does not want Jaya to write stories, which may appear autobiographical; Jayant wants Indu to continue her journalistic work instead of taking to writing novels.

Ideas

Things are sometimes even worse. Dr.Kulkarni (If I Die) ill-treats his wife as though she is trash, though he made his start in life with her father's money. She becomes almost faceless. Even her daughter Mriga has contempt for her because of her utter gutlessness and inability to stand up to her husband. There is a similar faceless character in The Dark whose name even is not mentioned by the author, obviously intentionally. The incident is described in a splendid passage (quoted already in Chapter II) difficult to match in its effectiveness from any of her other novels.
Even when Sh. Deshpande thinks that women should go and work outside, she is not unaware of the problems that are created for the children when both the parents go out to work. Mridula's (Come up) is a case in point. Pratap tells Devi what Mridula told him that when her father (a doctor) suggested to his wife (also a doctor) that she should not practice in the evenings in order to be at home to look after their daughter, the wife retorted that she was not interested in staying at home if he was not. And when Inspector Prasad met Mridula's parents in the course of the investigation, the father told him that it was doubtful whether there had ever been a family. Tragic words, indeed.

Similar is the case with Inspector Prasad's own little daughter who is resentful that he is so little at home.

Again, Mandira's father Harish (Vine) is a doctor and her mother Vanaa is a Medical Social Worker. Mandira feels she is neglected because neither is at home much of the time. She declares, "'You know ... when I grow up, I'm never going to leave my children to go to work.'" (p.72)
Perhaps the only way for women to avoid such complications or sexual exploitation by men and be able to lead their lives as they like is to stay as spinsters. But nature appears to have played a trick on women by giving them "the eternal female dream of finding happiness through a man." (The Dark, p.124) And if they do not get married, some of them develop warped minds. Miss Pai, one of the teachers in the school (Come up), is an instance.

But to assume that arranged marriages are a business and end up in misery is not necessarily correct. Urmi describes such a marriage:

The couple sat stiffly, side by side on the bed, while the women performed an aarti, singing the song in subdued notes. In fact, a funeral solemnity hung over all of us during the ceremony. I could not see the girl's face, for she looked steadily down throughout, but I could see that her hands were trembling uncontrollably. And the back of her neck, I can remember that, looked like a lamb's, waiting for the butcher's knife to come down upon it. And yet, when I saw her with her husband a few days later, she looked -- only the cliched words fit -- flushed and radiant. Yes, it works, most often it works (Vine, pp.63-64)

Smt. Deshpande can write this because she is not a hidebound feminist. There is another passage, quoted in an
earlier chapter, about Urmi's father and her step-mother Inni. When Urmi charges her father about being cruel to Inni, he puts his arm round Inni and asks her if he is cruel to her. Inni's face becomes so radiant that Urmi admits defeat.

For feminists who demand all kinds of freedom and rights for women, to admit that an arranged marriage can be a happy success sounds strange though they know fully well that on the contrary all love marriages are not a success. Otherwise how does one explain the rapidly increasing number of divorces?

Sh. Deshpande holds a view even stranger than this — women destroy men not physically but psychologically. The kind of pressures that women bring on men destroy men, but the same pressures brought on women do no harm since nature appears to have gifted them with a kind of resilience which is almost indestructible. Indu, Saru, Vanaa, Manju and Devi survive because of their tensile strength. The pressures that women bring can be not only against their husbands who are their most natural victims, but against sons, brothers and fathers. Saru remembers how she treated her little brother sometimes when he was alive:
All the pains, every pain. Not just his death but what I did to him when he was alive.

Perhaps there is something in the male, she now thought, that is whittled down and ultimately destroyed by female domination. It is not so with the female. She can be dominated, she can submit, and yet hold something of herself in reserve. As if there is something in her that prevents erosion and self-destruction. (If not, she would have been destroyed too easily. But then, have I not been destroyed?)

Does the sword of domination become lethal only when a woman holds it over a man? Dhruva had been dominated by two females, making him a creature full of terrors. And Baba ... even then a cypher, a man who didn't count, because she so emphatically did. Even his mistakes and omissions were unimportant because they could never affect any one else.

When she got married she had sworn... I will never dominate. I will never make my husband nothing as she did. And yet it happened to them. It puzzled, sometimes it frightened her, giving her a feeling that there was something outside her self, driving her on; that on her own counted for nothing. (The Dark, pp.85-86)

Saru’s success as a doctor and Dr. Boozie’s flirtation with her destroy the self-confidence of Manu. "My husband is a failure because I destroyed his manhood," she admits.

(p.217)

Sometimes a woman’s beauty may be responsible to lead a man to destruction. Dr. Girish gets himself involved in the
call-girl's business in order to earn more to keep his wife in comfort. Devi wonders whether Girish would have fallen into the trap if his wife had not been so exquisitely beautiful.

Surprisingly, even a mother's love may act as a hurdle to a son's ambitions. Madhav's mother (The Dark) wants him to leave his studies to go in search of his younger brother who has run away to Bombay. Quite sensibly Madhav refuses.

Jaya comes to know her own power over Mohan:

It was then that I had realised my awesome power over him. Now it astonished me -- how could I have been so stupid? Hadn't I seen that phenomenon, the power of women, in my own family? My two ajjis, two entirely different women, had been alike in the power they had wielded over their families. Looking back, it seems to me that their children lived their lives reacting against them; lives that had turned out to be, ultimately, a battlefield of dead hopes and ambitions. Appa who had wanted to join Gandhi's ashram, had had to give up on ajji's pressure, but he had refused to resume his studies or take up a job... married Ai and left home. Yet he had visited ajji every single day of his life... And there's Chandumama, Ai's brother, who had been turned by his mother, my other-ajji, from a lively ambitious young man who had wanted to do his F.R.C.S, into a dull, small-town doctor, married to a woman he had no feelings for, and filling his life with shoddy affairs with all kinds of women, once even with other-ajji's own trusted maidservant Kashibai. (Silence, pp.82-83)
The idea that women destroy men does not appear to go well with the view that women should have equal rights with men in every field. If a woman, ignorant, illiterate and exploited can manage to destroy man, what will she not be able to do with equal rights? But there is a remark of Devi, with which S. Deshpande apparently agrees, that "we carry our destinies within our own selves, not others." (Come Up, p.256) It means that a man is destroyed not by any external force but by what is false within. That is, man himself, not any external force is responsible for what he is or does. This implies that man has a free will and he is not predestined by some supernatural force to do evil or good. Philosophies and religions have tried to explain the presence of evil. Christianity believes in predestination. According to it, Eve and Adam committed the Original Sin and hence, as their children, human beings inherit their sinful nature. But if God is a kindly father and if he is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, why does he not destroy evil once for all? Does he not destroy it or can he not? If he cannot, he cannot be called omnipotent. If he does not, he cannot be called a kindly father. The theologians get out of this dilemma by
claiming that God has retained evil to use it to test the faith of his devotees. The story of the patience of Job is an instance.

_Dvaita_ (Dualism) believes that evil is self-existent. Since God did not create it, he cannot destroy it.

_Advaita_ (non-dualism) believes that evil is an illusion, as everything else is.

_Vishistadvaita_ (specified non-dualism) believes that man has free will and evil is the creation of man. Disease, decay and death which appear to be evil are not evil since they are inevitable parts of the course of nature. Its growth is welcome, why not decay? And if nobody died, where would be room for all? And for how many people could the earth provide? The potential of evil is in man, but whether he resists it or succumbs to it depends upon him.

_If I Die_ is not about death or the fear of it. Nor does it concentrate, as P.S.Kasture suggests, on the human

response to it. It is about the fear that the evil in their hearts will come out and get exposed to the world. The doctors may wear spotless white medical coats but they have beneath them evil which acts. What Guru does is to make them conscious of their dormant evil and activate their conscience.

A more direct reference to evil is made in *Come Up.* Inspector Prasad became interested in the problem of evil when he saw a group of young men hauled before a court of law for misbehaviour. He finds that there may be a number of external reasons for people to do evil, but "the truth is that all of us carry this potentiality for evil within us. We have to struggle against it all our lives. Some prefer not to struggle, that's all." (p.265)