CHAPTER - IX

CONCLUSION

Many critics have classified Shashi Deshpande as a feminist. But she has been intuitively wise in not limiting the themes of her novels to feminism, even if her views are feminist. If she had, she would have been no more than a topical novelist, praised highly for a short time and forgotten entirely soon after. Topical novelists do serve a useful humanitarian purpose, but by doing so restrict the longevity of the life of their novels. For once the problems are solved, the novels or plays would lose all interest for the readers and would become only literary curiosities. Shashi Deshpande is interested in more fundamental problems like integrity and self-realization. She has apparently been influenced by, or arrived on her own at existential-hUMANISM. As an existentialist, she wants human beings, men and women alike, to realise their identity, to arrive at a harmonious unity of different faculties. And her writing is subjective as it must like existential writing.

But unlike European existentialist writing, which is pessimistic, Shashi Deshpande's novels end on an optimistic note. One can see light at the end of the tunnel. In this her
writing is more like English and American existentialist writing which is optimistic because those countries did not undergo the tribulations that Germany and France did during the two World Wars. Besides, as a humanist she recognizes the right of every human being to be happy without impinging upon the rights and comforts of others. She considers human relationships a solace and remedy for several human ills.

As a feminist, she wants the independence, individuality and rights of every woman to be recognized. She has an unshakable faith in the potential of human beings for good, though some of them are weak enough to succumb to evil.

In spite of the serious nature of her novels, she is one of the most readable of writers. Her novels hold our interest for several reasons: the plots are probable, the methods of narration engaging, the themes relevant and the values she posits viable, not only for the present but a long time to come.

Her books have received some awards. *Roots* received the Thirumathi Rangammal prize for the best Indian novel of 1982-83. *Silence*, published by the Feminist Publishing House, Virago, won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1991.
Her books have also been considered worth studying. The collection of short stories, *The Legacy*, was part of the prescribed course in modern literature at Columbia University. *The Dark* has been translated into German and Russian.

Though Shrimati Deshpande holds feministic views and admits she has been influenced by feminist literature in her later novels, she has stated that she wants to rise above feminist themes and write about human beings and not about men and women.

It is worth waiting for such a novel.