PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Professional relationship is a man-woman relationship concerning those doing paid jobs. It is a kind of relationship connected with and affected by a person’s job: The role of a nurse entails a nurse-patient relationship; that of a lawyer, a lawyer-client relationship; and that of a teacher, a teacher-pupil relationship. But in broader terms, describing the role of a nurse involves not only the nurse-patient relationship but also the nurse-doctor, nurse-hospital staff, nurse-other nurse relationships. So, describing anyone’s role demands referring to a network of relationship e.g. the teacher interacts with his students, with colleagues, with the Principal or the Management, with the office staff, and indirectly with the public and the society in general. Obviously relationship is marked by role and role is a statement of the status of one role vis-a-vis the other. The status accorded to one of the two roles is higher and more powerful than that of the other. In parent-child relationship, the role of the parent has higher status and invests the parents with more power than the child. This is also the case with the role of the employer vis-a-vis the employee, and the teacher vis-a-vis the pupil. It is worthy to note that roles of teacher, lawyer, nurse, doctor, librarian, etc. are occupational roles and that occupations define social roles.

Though a person has other roles in addition to his/her occupational role e.g. family roles like father/mother/husband/wife/son/daughter, etc., his/her social role tends to be described in terms of his/her occupation. Roles differ from society to society and the roles that people adopt reflect what the society they live in, expects from them. Success in life is seen in terms of one’s profession and earning capacity and one’s profession is also a measure of one’s worth and respectability. In Shashi Deshpande’s novels, almost all the protagonists and their husbands are professionals. Saru is a doctor and Manu is a college lecturer in The Dark Holds No Terrors, Indu is a writer and Jayant is a doctor in Roots and Shadows, Urmila is a professor and Kishore is a sailor in The Binding Vine, Jaya is a writer and Mohan is an engineer in That Long Silence, and Sumi and Gopal are teachers in A Matter of Time.
Professional relationship is as old as human relationship. In the traditional Indian family system, there was division of labour between man and woman. ‘Man for the field and woman for the hearth’ was the popular slogan. Biologically also it was considered better for the men, especially at a time when earning one’s living involved physical labour, to work outside and for the women to remain at home to look after their household and children. However, the men get wages for their work but the women do not get it. So the modern, educated and liberated Indian women, particularly those belonging to the middle class, want to go out and work like men and earn salary. In many households, the working women land up earning more than man. But they do not enjoy the privilege of working men to be free from the worries of the household. They have also to do domestic work of daily necessities like cooking and cleaning, look after the children and the old-in-laws and manage the servants besides doing a 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. job. The working men, on the other hand, have not to add new roles to their repertoire except sharing some home-making tasks, if they are sensitive persons. Rather, on their return from work, they demand all attention but the working women, on their return from work has to cook, wait on her husband and submit herself for sex. Looking after her children is her exclusive duty as a mother and cooking food even after she is tired and exhausted is her normal duty as a wife. She cannot even neglect her work as a woman, in comparison with a man, is more strongly committed to working towards a successful career. They are always worried to deliver target at home and workplace. She is physically at workplace but mentally at home. Undoubtedly, they assert their equality, satiate their intellect, achieve economic independence and empowerment and make an identity of their own but they do not have their life independent of the roles of wife, mother, daughter and sister and many of them have to wear the garland of docility and sacrifice to knit the thread of relationship. In male dominated Indian society even a working woman’s worth is measured by her husband. Shashi Deshpande whose novels deal with the middle class suggests that women’s emancipation lies in their taking up job for empowerment but she is also aware of the social realities and the practical problems that professional women face in India. According to Anne Collette:

...many of the middle-class protagonists of her novels have an independent income and yet they would appear to be no less free of the sticky web of social and familial gender-based expectations and demands than their lower class sisters. (2004:62)
Sky high ambition and desire to rise to the top as fast as possible create all problems in professional relationship, especially for the women professionals. The working women have to make choice between having a career or becoming a caretaker—whether to put family first or to put work first—and they must take the consequence of the choice—postponing childbirth, adjusting hour of work with family life, etc. Either the centuries of social conditioning and cultural environment or biological factors make the women consider themselves as the primary care-giver of the family and put the needs of those around them before their own. They are biologically hardwired to nurture their children so, marriage and giving birth to children change their priorities. Child birth and nursing also release an avalanche of hormones which induce euphoria in mothers and make regular intimate contact with their infant a physiological imperative. Oxytocin, the hormone which is released during sex, while cuddling a loved one, nurturing a child or just reaching out in friendliness to someone, plays an important role in this context and helps women develop their gifts of empathy, enables them to read emotions in other people and love and trust them. So, they tend to prefer working with people they respect, to want flexible schedules or undemanding job that allows to weave a social purpose in their work lives, and to treat the needs of the people they love as being as important as their jobs. It is very hard for them to neglect their families because of their jobs and if they disrupt their family life by working longer hours or pursue a high flying career leaving their husbands and kids, they remain at conflict about the choice, torn apart by guilt, about not meeting the needs of those they love. Climbing up the career ladder takes single minded determination and an ability to ignore everything else as one focuses on the main chance. For working women who are wives and mothers it is difficult, almost impossible. Even if they use their earning and hire help to make sure that everyone’s needs are met, the very old and the very young in the family, who need more than just facilities for their happiness, feel emotionally lost and alienated. There is a need to strike the balance between the career and the family: the working women need be sentimental enough to sacrifice their career to please the young and the old who, in fact, need to subdue their ego to put their benefactor ahead of them.

Ever since Independence, the changes are taking place in man-woman relationship slowly and imperceptibly. The working women have changed the scenes at workplaces. Women who merely ran around the male members of the Board to get refreshment for them in the meetings, are now
sitting with them and taking part in decision making process and dealing with them on equal footing. But the situation by and large remains the same. The women who were controlling men in more silent ways, within the confines of the house, are all out in the open competing with them neck to neck and controlling them in the end while the patriarchal mindset expects men to be in control all the time. At the same time the same professional women who are vying for equality at the workplaces and are trying to control them in the decision making process, expect men to follow 19th century standard of chivalry in personal relationship and to owe them and win them when it comes to dating and sex. Moreover, women are often sore losers, especially to their same sex competitors and may engage in cat fight. However, men and women who have been working shoulder to shoulder for the last five decades have learnt a lot about one another’s basic nature and they are learning still to bridge this great divide because of the changed socio-cultural milieu and mindset. How they function at their workplace is bound to have a spill over effect in their home and bedroom too. Men have learnt to take things slowly and steady, and women have learnt not to be provocative. Consequently, man-woman relationship as professionals tends to be getting smooth and rational rather than thrilling, spicy and emotional.

Even in the Post-Globalization era, the working women are caught between old and new expectations. Global dreams are attractive as long as they come tempered with moral values. Financial success is fantastic as long as she makes sacrifices for family and children. She should be a problem solver like a man, while at the same time she must not allow her breasts to sag, skin to blemish and legs to succumb to cellulite. She is more open to scrutiny and criticism from her family, society and colleagues. She is expected to get it right every time. Those in high profile and male dominated workforces have to learn early in their careers to cope with the stress resulting from the collision of personal and professional demands. The demands made by the family and other social systems are difficult to accommodate in their punishing schedules. Our culture has a feudal legacy in which women are considered upholders of family name and honour, so they are more susceptible to being shamed. Fewer supports are available to them for the usual human frailties. Shashi Deshpande’s novels also deal with working women who are often out of the family and come in direct contact with the society. Her recent novels Moving On and The Country of Deceit present such situations faithfully and show the women as survivors and, in many cases, their learning to survive on their own, living with dignity.
A problematic aspect of the professional relationship is the mentor and mentee relationship. Women who work hard to arrive at her level of competence need male mentoring and support to find herself a suitable position in the top ranks of the organisation lest their career should get stalled at the middle level. The upper level executives still form an overwhelmingly male dominated set. Naturally a woman looks for a male mentor who has a certain level of seniority, competence and influence and is willing to accept the challenge and ready to give time for mentorship. But helping an aspiring woman gain visibility, win plum assignments and ultimately get promoted is a serious commitment and a high flying male executive has to risk his reputation to help her. There is a great deal of sanctity attached to mentoring. It is such a giving relationship—there is something very pious about it and it is not just the mentee who benefits. Often it is a catalyst for mentee and mentor in developing behaviour because the mentor too is far more aware of the challenges faced by the mentee. However, the pious relationship between the mentor and the mentee is getting complicated by the use of gender issues. The woman may have apprehensions that the male mentor might back off and that the relationship may be exploited for demanding sexual favour. The high flying man may feel reluctant to go out of the way to promote a woman, no matter how competent she is, for fear of inviting salacious gossip. The sour grapes situation exists. The woman on the fast track is eyed with some derision. On the other hand, there are male mentors who exploit the female mentee sexually or otherwise.

Shashi Deshpande’s novels, as it has been stated earlier, deal with the professional relationship as an aspect of human relationship involving man-woman relationship. As her novels are woman centric, her novels focus on the professional relationship of the protagonists who happen to be women.

Deshpande’s first novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors* deals extensively with the professional relationship of Saru who is a lady doctor. Her initial pride in being a competent doctor evaporates very soon as it badly affects her relationship with her husband and children and it happens because, despite being a successful doctor and the bread earner of her family, she is not stripped of her role as a house-wife-bringing up children and sub-serving the interest of her husband. Her professional involvement and success upset her conjugal relationship and filial relationship. Her professional engagements leave her with little time for herself and her family and she feels guilty of neglecting her duties as wife and mother. Her work keeps her away from Manu for longer hours and
she reaches home late at night. She reflects: “He sulked and I was either impatient with him or ignored him.”(92) Manu and children are used to being without her as she is out most of the day. She has employed Janakibai as maidservant to look after them. But for her children, it is no way any compensation for her absence. She reflects:

But Abhi refuses to go to bed until I cover him with his blanket. He will never let his father or Janakibai do that for him. If I’m late going home, I find him asleep, curled up in the middle of his bed, the blanket folded into a perfect square at the foot of it, staring at me accusingly. And Renu...who will not go to school unless I am at the door at the moment of her leaving. I ask her...Do you have anything? Your hanky? Water bottle? Your crayons? You have art today, won’t you? Yes, mummy, she says impatiently, brusquely, as if she finds me irritating with the sameness of my questions. And yet, Janakibai tells me, if I’m not there, she lingers, looking back again and again.(71)

She has also to face unpleasant situations and suffer public humiliation at the professional level when she makes a mistake while performing a surgical procedure. Her senior Professor rebukes her in harsh words and makes a worm of her;

...And why couldn’t you do it? what have you learnt in your five years here? Nothing, it seems. I don’t want incompetent, clumsy uninterested females cluttering up this place. Go home and play with your rolling-pins and knitting-needles. Even a moron could have done this simple thing. Why do you come here when you aren’t interested? (89)

For her “…It was like having my clothes torn off me in public, like having an ugly nakedness displayed to the world.”(89)

Saru’s success in her profession evokes her husband’s jealousy and erodes his self esteem because Manu’s own career in the teaching profession had not taken off. His male ego refuses to accept the reality that his wife was the bread winner and he was just the parasite. He cannot tolerate being ignored. The rise in her professional career is proportionate to her decline in her conjugal relationship. Her rising career widens the gap between the couple. The emasculated husband tries to assert his masculinity by inflicting sexual violence
and committing marital rape on her. She bears the torture silently. She feels that if she gives up her job, then perhaps everything will be all right. She thinks that if she can go back to being nothing but his wife, Manu will no longer resent her. So she gathers up courage and tells Manu that she wants to stop working and give it all up—her practice, hospital, everything to stay at home, look after the children and do the cooking and cleaning. But Manu, accustomed to high standard of living with her income, would not allow her to quit her job and live an easy and peaceful life. She faces a complex syndrome which requires a strong mental balance of nerves to cope with such a tricky predicament—she faces the crisis of her life. She also tries to appease her husband as is evident from her speech prepared for the young women of her old college (but not delivered): “You must pretend that you’re not as smart as you really are, nor as competent as you are, nor as rational as you are, not as strong either.” (137) But it does not work out any solution for her problem. G. Dominic Savio makes a very important observation in this context:

Shashi Deshpande meanwhile shows how emancipation and success for a woman in the patriarchal Indian society can cause subversion of roles in the family and destroy happiness. The social recognition she (Saru) gains as a doctor and the demands on her time cleave a wedge in her relationship with Manu. (2001:63)

Another problem that Saru faces as a reputed lady doctor is the profession of her husband. Initially Manu whom she thought to be a versatile personality, had failed as an aspiring poet, writer and journalist. His remaining jobless, wearing a bored look on his face had unnerved her. For her it was “a nightmare, a horrible humiliation.” (152) When Manu managed to get a lecturer’s job in a private college, he himself was not satisfied with it because it was a third-rate college and he had no future prospects there, but Saru felt enormously relieved because college teachers enjoyed good status and respect in the society. Manu could never recover from his feeling of inferiority complex and once when his colleague’s wife, after hearing that Saru and Manu were going to Ooty on a holiday, taunted her husband saying, “If you had married a doctor...you’d have gone to Ooty too.” (111), he felt humiliated and avenged himself by launching monstrous attack on her body at night. As Manu’s wounded pride manifests itself in the form of sexual sadism, she suffered utter despair and disillusionment in her conjugal life.
Saru’s disillusionment in marital life and her obsession with the material life lead to her other kind professional relationship with her colleagues-Boozie and Padmakar Rao-extra-marital relationship for seeking material and sexual fulfilment. She did not feel at home in a dingy two-room flat in a far off drab suburb. She had the middle class dream of ‘a house of her own’ where she could fulfil her dreams. She was interested in the economic and social status that her medical profession offered. She wanted to buy a house in a posh locality and educate her children in a reputed public school and for all these she needed the patronage of Boozie to rise in her profession. Her material ambition had a corrupting influence over her professional relationship and it made her use Boozie, her teacher, as a prop to enhance her career, when she came to notice that his interest in her was not that of a teacher in a student but of a man in a woman. She considered herself the raw material which Boozie is to shape, mould, chisel into something more polished, nearer perfection and so she socialised with him, very much to the discomfiture of her husband. Anne Collette observes in this respect:

The realisation of the middle class dream seems to be as much a motivating factor in Saru’s increasing move into her professional world and away from home life and domesticity with Manu as the dream of an intellectually stimulating career. (2004:64)

Boozie, a dark, rugged, handsome, masterful and ravishingly masculine man resembling a woman’s magazine hero attracted Saru. His dress sense, his English accent, his pipe, his swift progress through the wards, his meticulous and skilled work, his good humour, and his thatch of slightly greying hair added to his masculine charm. When Saru went to his house, he gave her a warm welcome saying, “I think of you every day. Every single day.” (97) He pulled her and gave her a hug. At the party he took liberties with Saru in full public view. He put his hands on her shoulders and shook them gently. His gestures attracted the attention of all except Manu who remained a silent spectator. Saru’s success in her profession was Manu’s problem but he did not object to Saru’s beneficial relationship with Boozie because he could not give up the luxury of life that Saru’s income offered. He let it pass with half shut eyes as it helped Saru in her rapid climb to her professional success. Boozie acted as the fairy godfather who made things miraculously easier for her. He teaches her to dress with elegance and simplicity, to speak good English and to enjoy good food. He gives her work in a research project that brings in
some badly needed extra money to her every month. Under his patronage it took her just one year to become a Registrar, only two years to pass her M. D and four years to become an Assistant Honorary at a suburban hospital. Boozie also extended financial help to her to enable her to have a consulting room of her own. Later Saru thought of seeking Boozie’s help in divorcing Manu, but she was disappointed as Boozie was a homosexual and “behind the facade of aggressive, virile masculinity there was nothing at all”(94) He had used Saru as a cover for his homosexuality as she had used him for her career advancement. Their extra-marital relationship which has been aptly compared to mythical Pygmalion-Galatea relationship was suddenly over without any sexual relationship. Premila Paul opines that it is success in profession that matters to Saru—the success that outshines others, and then she makes a sweeping statement that the doctor in her is much more important than the wife or mother in her. To quote her:

To outshine others and be a success is the be all and end all of Saru’s life that the end seems to justify the means. Her socialising with Boozie “the fairy godfather” is a calculated move in that direction. She has no moral qualms about allowing herself to be the raw material in the hands of Boozie, the Pygmalion, to be shaped into perfection, a Galatea. That accounts for her rapid climb in position and status. (1998:31)

Saru’s extra-marital relationship with her former partner in the college and now a medical practioner in the heart of one of Bombay’s worst slums, Padmakar Rao alias Padma, is another professional relationship to escape her bitter conjugal life at home. Rao never felt comfortable with his nickname because of the feminine touch in the word ‘Padma’ which deprived him of his maleness. When Saru met him at Akbarally’s one day, he told her, “...don’t call me Padma. Call me Rao.”(125) and made a tactless remark on Saru:

I...washoping for a glamorous creature...somebody like Marlyn Monroe, may be...as a partner. Instead I had you, in that ridiculous skirt and blouse, those two tight plaits and a stiff expression on your face, as if you were disapproving of everyone, especially me. (126-127)

However, they met frequently and their relationship grew. On one occasion, he came near her car saying, “I’ve been waiting for you for
ages.” and commanded her as if he were her husband, “You’ve got to lunch with me today.” (129) He was very excited to share some good news i.e. he had been able to isolate a cholera-like vibro which was responsible for recent cases of diarrhoea, which normally he should have done with his wife. He got angry when Saru refused to accompany him for lunch and left her alone. Later he sought pardon for his behaviour and insisted on her having a cup of coffee with him. Saru obliged him but told him frankly that there was no point in their meeting this way. Rao was hurt because he had no one else to talk to and he saw no harm if they met and talked. His wife could not talk about anything but servants, children and prices. Saru realised that Rao had been using her as an escape route as she had tried to use him. They had no sexual relationship and her affair with him had failed to fulfil her inner desire for love and communication. She expresses her frustration and disillusionment in the following words: “Suddenly I felt cold as if I was left alone in the middle of nowhere, one more hideout discovered, one more illusion destroyed.” (133)

Though Saru’s profession badly affects her relationship with her husband and children and bring her all miseries in life, yet it is her profession which finally takes her out of the dark loneliness surrounding her. She had gone to her natal home after hearing the news of her mother’s death to console her father and to find some way out of the maze of her life. But there she felt like a stranger to everybody. She was unable to communicate to her father or for that matter to everybody. She fights it out and comes to accept the reality after she gets a call from the patient and goes to attend her. It has a cathartic effect on her. Premila Paul underlines its significance in the following words:

Saru says that she has come to her father’s place to escape “the professional role.” But it is actually to escape the role of being a wife that she is there. At the moment of utter despair it is the call of her profession that steadies her and gives her the courage to confront reality. Saru setting out to attend Sunita’s illness is significantly placed at the very end of the novel. In the very first part of the novel Saru says, “…as long as there is a patient before me, I feel real. (18)

She refers to the profession as a crutch, which speaks for its indispensability. The novel’s ending with Saru setting out to attend to a patient indicates the assertion of her career. “There can be no compromise about it.”(1998:41)
If I Die Today and Come Up and Be Dead, the short novellas which deal with crime committed in the campus, are considered to be marginal works and they do not break any fresh ground in the depiction of professional relationship. If I Die Today, set in a hospital where several murders take place, reveals professional secrets which prick the conscience of the doctors as they move between the personal and the professional. Tony-Cynthia relationship is another version of Saru-Manu relationship, where a rift is created between the husband and the wife belonging to different professions which give them different unequal income and status. Cynthia being a doctor earns more than her husband, Tony who is just a Games Master. Tony, like Manu, suffers from inferiority complex and drifts away from her. Cynthia understands the problem that Tony “had an odd complex” about her being a doctor and repents after Tony’s death in a ridiculous drowning accident: “If I’d given up my job and become the pathetically clinging female, may be things could have gone right between us.”(95)The novel reiterates the fact that a wife with a job better than her husband becomes a social embarrassment for her husband irrespective caste, culture and religion. Dr. Agarwal’s profession keeps him away from his wife, Rani who forges an extra-marital relationship with Dr. Kulkarni. Come Up and Be Dead, set in an old and exclusive girls’ school, offers a glimpse of the professional relationship between Miss Kshama Rao, the Head Mistress, and Miss Devayani, the Housekeeper, and that between the teachers of the school like Mrs. Jyoti Raman and the students like Sonali. The student-teacher relationship here is turned upside down as the students sent to the school in good trust of the teachers and the managers are pushed into the flesh trade as call girls. However, the focus in these novellas is on the recurring crimes being committed in the campus, their detection and the thrill and suspense associated with all these.

Roots and Shadows presents Indu, the protagonist, not only as a wife but also as a professional writer. She cannot write what she wants to but only that which the editor said the public will accept, no matter how many lies she has to write in the bargain. When Indu protests and seeks support from her husband, Jayant, he tells her cynically, “That’s life.” When she wants to quit her job, he does not approve of this idea. He asks her not to be silly. He does not understand her feminine urge for self expression and her desire to influence and change the things by her writing. He wants her to conform to the editor’s guidelines to stay in the job since he believes that a person like Indu can do nothing against the whole system by wielding her pen. He asks her: “What can
one person do against the whole system? No point making a spectacle of
yourself with futile gestures. We need money, don’t we? Don’t forget, we have
a long way to go.”(17) However, in the end of the novel Indu comes out of her
false perception and realises that she is after all a writer and she would do the
kind of writing she had always dreamt of doing. She refuses to be influenced by
Jayant and resigns her job to devote herself to writing what she wanted. Her
roots lie in becoming an independent writer and in showing her courage to do
what she believed to be the right thing to do.

Coming to her next novel, *That Long Silence*, we find the
presentation of the professional relationship of Jaya, the protagonist, and her
husband, Mohan. Jaya is a journalist, deeply rooted in the Indian tradition of
Sita and Draupadi and highly influenced by the modern Western thought. Her
husband values her ability to write, not as a mark of her personality but as an
asset to his social status. Jaya reflects:

My wife is a writer yes, that was something to be proud of, a
respectable hobby, something that had set me apart from other
women, gave me a status that added a bit to his “My wife is a writer”
he had often introduced me. (19)

But as a writer of newspaper articles she has to observe the prohibition imposed
not only by her husband but also by the editor’s expectations and the reader’s
exhortations. All these restrict her truth telling and honest expression.

Her husband interferes with her profession. He does not
approve of her original style of writing and wants her to adopt the one that was
fashion though frivolous. He does not want her to take up the subject of her
choice and express her views freely. Rather he wants her to choose the subjects
which are popular and write what the people wanted to read. He is not interested
in her development as an individual but for the furtherance of his own
professional prospects. Jaya has been writing perceptively and sensitively about
oppressed women but when she writes a true story,

Jaya, how could you, how could you have done it?...they will all
know now, all those people who read this and know us, they will
know that these two persons are us, they will think I am this kind of a
man, they will think I am this man. How can I look anyone in the face
again? And you, how could you write these things, how could you
write such ugly things, how will you face people after this? (143-144)
He induces Jaya not to deliberate on such themes that would endanger their marriage. He wants her to think like him that anger makes a woman ‘unwomanly’. Jaya feels silenced by her husband’s disapproval and stops such writings. Occasionally she writes ‘the Sita column’ for a magazine which her husband loves and so do the readers and the editors as it lacked anger and emotion. Kamat, her family doctor and friend, comments upon one of her stories: “It is too restrained.”(147) and tells her “Spew out your anger in your writing woman, spew it out. Why are you hiding it in?”(147) But she cannot afford to do so as there is no scope for anger in her life. And she cannot write any more because the readers would see in it an image of a happy and satisfied housewife and mother which she was certainly not. At the end of the novel she decides to break her long silence and write once again setting limits: “We do not change overnight. It’s possible that we may not change even over long periods of life time. But we can always hope life always to be made possible.”(193)It indicates the scope for her change and growth as a writer reconciling her experience of life and her act of writing.

Mohan, in his own professional life, had fallen prey to the temptation of making easy money and got involved in a messy deal at work. But when an official enquiry was launched in the matter, he had panicked and bolted into exile in clingy suburban apartment at Dadar, Bombay, with his wife and sending his children, Rahul and Rati, away on a holiday. He does not own up responsibilities for his professional misdeeds which he had committed in his office; rather he holds his wife and children responsible for his malpractices. He explains to her that he cares for them so much that he went out of his way to get the things done: “I’ve always put you and the children first.”(12). The fear of losing his job unnerves him and he is scared of being left alone. He feels uneasy and frightened like “a confined animal” (25) He becomes more and more dependent on his wife for emotional and moral support and she feels “the burden of his wanting, the burden of his clinging.”(29) He uses her as a buffer, as an opiate to soften the impact of the biggest crisis of his professional life and wants her to share his worries though he himself never shares her concerns.

*The Binding Vine* deals with the problems of those professionals who live apart from each other either by choice or by compulsion and find it hard to negotiate between family and profession. Kishore is working in the Merchant Navy and Urmila is a lecturer in a college. Kishore, a liberated man and an ideal husband, does not interfere in Urmila’s profession
nor influences her in any of her decision. But Urmila feels alienated from her husband because of his long absence from home. He flirts into her life a few months in a year and flirts out again leaving her with ‘bodily hunger’ and mental tension. She longs for him when he is away and When he comes home, the parting again is like death to her. She is afraid of losing him forever and even sex with him does not relieve her of her worries. She suffers from a sense of insecurity despite her education and job.

Urmila’s sister-in-law, Vanna, a medical social worker, is not able to give enough time to her daughter, Mandira, as her job keeps her away from home. She has Hirabai, the maid servant, to look after Mandira. But Mandira dislikes to be left to the care of the maid servant and feels neglected. She says, “I don’t want Hirabai, I want my mother.”(72). She hates and hurts her mother saying, “You’re cruel. I’ll never talk to you again.”(31) She tells her aunt, Urmila, that she would never leave her children when she becomes a mother. Vanna’s profession strains her relationship with her daughter and creates a wide gap between them. A. G. Khan observes in this context:

Mandira fails to understand her mother’s compulsions in negotiating between family and profession and Vanna is equally unable to diagnose the tantrums of her daughter, who needs her mother’s presence and affection. (2005:166)

In Despande’s next novel, A Matter of Time, the central concern in professional relationship is the relationship between the teacher and the students. Gopal, a lecturer in a college, fights for his principles. He writes an article which offends the sentiments of the students and they attack him. A series of events follows and he resigns his secure job in the university service and moves into a small hired accommodation, giving up even the comforts of a modest middle class establishment. Sumi, on the other hand, joins teaching job after being deserted by her husband. The same profession which had made Gopal resign his job and desert her, helps Sumi pick up the thread of her life anew. Apart from performing her teaching work, she also writes plays for the class performances. She writes a play subverting the Surpanakha episode of the Ramayana—it is a story from the point of view of Surpanakha herself. To Sumi, Surpanakha was “neither ugly nor hideous but a woman charged with sexuality, not frightened of displaying it.”(191) and the men, feeling threatened by her bold and aggressive stance, had disfigured her to put her down. Both Gopal and Sumi tries to be progressive rather than conformist to their students, the ideal
which honest teachers always aspire for. However, Gopal’s pupils fail to see and understand him in right perspective and so, they insult him and push him towards his alienation. In the end of the novel, it is mentioned that he survives on his pupil’s printing press.

*Small Remedies* deals briefly with the writing profession of its protagonist, Madhu who is passing through a crisis in her conjugal life. When bitterness creeps into her relationship with Som, her husband, after her disclosure that she had lost her virginity to her father’s friend, Dalvi, before her marriage, and her only son, Adit, dies because of their conjugal rift, she withdraws from her husband and household and comes to Bhawanipur to undertake the task of writing Savitribai’s biography. Her writing is one of the small remedies for her ailing life and relationships. The professional relationship between another couple, Leela and Joe, is juxtaposed to that of Madhu and Som. Leela who works for the welfare of the women afflicted with T. B and Joe who is a doctor, especially for T. B. patients support each other and give enough space to each other for concerned activities.

The novel also presents Savitribai’s obsession with her career in music for which she leaves everything. Her passion for music is an all-absorbing one and leaves no space for emotions. Her choice is very clear-either one or the other; not combing the two. She ruthlessly sets out to pursue her professional goal. She leaves her high caste Brahmin husband and the household where learning music was not allowed and elopes with her Muslim lover and guru, Ghulam Saab, the Tabla Master, to pursue music as a profession. She gives up her family name ‘Joshi’ and adopts ‘Indorker’ and adds ‘-bai’ with her name to suit her profession. She uses Ghulam Saab for her own end and becomes the “Doyen of Hindustani Music” (28) and then discards him and, along with him their daughter, Munni. But she has to suffer a personal alienation on account of her single minded professional pursuit. She does not get filial love and respect from daughter who hates her and holds her responsible for her abnormal life. She has achieved her goal only through the denial of motherhood-whether the denial be of her daughter’s choosing or her own is of little matter. Her isolation is in part self-inflicted, and in part, the result of community’s inability to understand and accept a different view of what a woman might be and what a woman might achieve. She had some measure of freedom or oddity as a ‘singer woman’ but “it didn’t take away the aura of disapproval or the curiosity either.”(139) Jasbir Jain assigns her fate to
the Indian patriarchal set up and says that, in large measure whether it is the choice or the compulsion, the accepted view is that “women cannot have a full life if they pursue a career.”(2004:223) The evidence from the text supports Jasbir Jain’s view. Madhu’s father, a doctor, does not suffer deprivation or isolation on account of his profession. Madhu, the protagonist and the narrator, makes a comparison between her father and Savitribai:

But my father was accepted and his peculiarities and foibles were overlooked, because he was a doctor, and a very trusted and popular doctor at that. And, of course, being a man, he could get away with much. He could live the way he wanted, without open censure or disapproval. It was not so with Munni’s mother. (138-139)

The novel, in its final analysis, seems to suggest that professional relations are above caste and religion which are patriarchal structures.

Moving On deals with Manjari’s relationship with Shyam, a cinematographer who does not have a good and steady income from his job to afford a life of dignity. Pressure of work and uncertainty of income make him irritated and he often quarrels with his wife. They had married for love going against their parents’ wishes, but his wife’s demand for an honourable living hurts him. He calls her ‘bourgeois’ and accuses her of being money-minded. He never feels the encouragement to share his problems with her: that his film projects were either abandoned or flopped; that he kept himself engaged in some piece-meal work he originally hated to do, etc. Once when he was out of work and depressed, his son fell ill and he could not arrange for his treatment. His wife got angry and went to her parents to get medical help for him. Shyam felt alienated and forged extra-marital relationship with Malu, Manjari’s younger sister. All these widened the gap between Manjari and Shyam and it culminated in Shyam’s committing suicide. Later when Sachi, his daughter, learns that her father was a cinematographer, she feels proud of him. She picks up the correct pronunciation of the word ‘cinematographer’ and tells her, “My father was a cinematographer...He took pictures for movies.”(189) She even wants to get into film-making with the help of a friend’s sister who is doing a documentary, which Sachi is assisting with her. She has thrown herself into it with such enthusiasm that she has no time for anything else, even her studies. Her father’s profession became an anchor of her own professional life. Manjari reflects:
My father was a cinematographer. Does she remember that? Has she found it, the link she was looking for when she went blundering about like a bumble bee trying to find its way out, banging noisily against the window panes? She was nothing but blankness until now, no body behind her except me. (210-211)

Manjari had to take up jobs for financial support after Shyam’s death. She had to change jobs frequently owing to various reasons. She had started as an ayah in a school and moved on to become a salesgirl, a typist, a P. T. Teacher and a nurse to an old man who salivated over her. Her daughter, Sachi, used to be furious with her when she changed jobs and homes because each time it meant a change of school for her. She complained to her, “You never ever want me to have friends...”(209) and it was very difficult for her to negotiate between her work and household. But her job as the secretary to Roshan, the principal of a school, was devoid of such problems. For jobless and homeless Manjari, it was like being in a paradise. The two-room house given to her was ‘home’. And it was all because of Roshan was her boss in the office but a friend at home. Roshan was thirty years older than Manjari but they were friends. Manjari reflects: “We became friends. Thirty years between us, but we were friends. It was she who brought grace and hope back into my life.”(223) But above all Roshan was her mentor. He helped and encouraged her to pursue her studies and obtain a degree so that she could hold on to the post. She believed in Manjari’s ability to complete her study and obtain a degree. Her encouragement reminded Manjari of her mother and she felt as if it “was like being with Mai again.”(221) When Manjari finally got the degree Roshan said, “I told you, you could do it.”(221) Manjari acknowledges her indebtedness to her mentor in the following words:

But it was not my success, it was Roshan’s. It was she my sharp tongued saviour, who shook me out of my apathy and hopelessness. She not only pulled me out of my misery and torpor, she took my children in hand, she even made a human of Sachi... (221)

Manjari’s five year experience with Roshan and the degree which she obtained with her help and encouragement, remained her life-long assets.

Shyam’s relationship with Feroz is another example of Mentor-Mentee relationship in the novel. Feroz was Shyam’s guide and guardian in his profession of cinematography. Shyam called him Guru. He had
joined Feroz as a lowly assistant, ready to do any work, if only he could learn. Feroz gave him work in his movies and also recommended him to others for giving him work. When Shyam married Manjari, Feroz gave him his seaside house for a week’s honeymoon. Again he offered his large and generous house by the sea, Ocean Vista, for the next six months for his accommodation. Feroz and his associates-Tarunbhai and Kantibhai, Suresh and Babu-were just like a family to Shyam. Feroz also helped Manjari after Shyam’s death.

*In the Country of Deceit* brings out several kinds of professional relationships operating between various professionals. Devi, the protagonist, begins her relationship with Priya Ranjan alias Rani as friends after a chance meeting with Rani’s children but their relationship becomes professional when Rani asks her to write a script for her movie which she wanted to take up as the dream project of her dead mentor and lover Mahesh Tiwari. Devi’s aunt, Sandhu who was worried because of her association with a film actress, is alarmed at this development as she has her own apprehensions. She writes to Devi expressing her fears:

Now I hear that you are associating yourself with her professional life. I can’t see you as a script writer, Putta! I thought script writers are men who drink a lot, have two or more wives and steal ideas from other movies. The truth is ...I am a little frightened of you. You are too innocent.(118)

Devi notices a change in Rani’s behaviour towards her when she goes with her to meet the possible producer and director on the sideline of a family wedding in a resort on the Goa Highway. On their way Rani apologised to her for constant yawning saying, “I didn’t sleep well last night” (123) but at the venue she got moody and showed the tantrums of a film star. When she learnt that Romu Sen was coming next day instead of today she got upset and wanted to go back without meeting him. She did not introduce Devi to Diwanji, the producer, thinking she was one of those anonymous persons who hang around stars. But next moment she got concerned about her and wanted her to get a massage or a facial or something with the help of Sadhu, her Personal Secretary. Again next day when Devi went to attend the meeting, Rani waved a hand at her but did not introduce her to others, nor did they take note of her presence. Devi had another shock and surprise in the role of a script writer when she found out that Rani and her producer/director had changed the story line she had suggested beginning with a girl in the mango
orchard. They wanted to begin with a rape scene which Devi had never thought of. Devi gets a hint of her predicament as a script writer when Roshni tells her, “Anyway, you won’t recognise it when they’ve done with it.”(170) However, despite the sweet and sour experiences of her professional relationship with Rani, Devi receives thanks from her for reviving her interest in films. Rani acknowledges her contribution in the following words: “You’ve helped me a lot, Divyani. It’s because of you that Ramu changed his mind. The story you gave them about the school girls in the mango orchard...”(242)

Devi’s relationship with her lawyer, Iqbal, is a professional relationship between the lawyer and the client. Though he is known to her family for long, she hires him to file and fight a case for the recovery of a valuable piece of land gifted to her mother by her maternal grandfather. Iqbal is quite frank and honest in dealing with his clients. He tells her in the very beginning that the court-case will be expensive and K. N might bear the expenses. But when Devi refuses to accept K. N’s help and decides to fight at her own, he asks, “Do you want me to be your lawyer?”(86), explaining to her that he was also K. N’s lawyer. When Devi replies in the affirmative saying there was no conflict of interest there, he again advises her: “Talk to your sister and cousin, ask them if they agree, so that I can act on behalf of all three of you. I’ll need them to sign too.”(87) He reaffirms his commitment to his client, Devi, saying. “I am your lawyer whether you sell the land to K. N or not.”(251) He also offers a job to Devi in his office, not out of pity but out of necessity. He tells her, “I’m a professional. I need a junior lawyer. My junior, Satyendra is leaving in two months...”(252) She wants her because she has a law degree and she is intelligent. He offers her to make her his partner. He refuses to leave her alone when Ashok wants to hold a private talk to her. Ashok approves of her working with him and she looks forward to work with him as a junior lawyer. Their professional relationship is an ideal relationship.

Rani’s professional relationship with Mahesh Tiwari, a movie maker, had turned into an extra-marital affair in course of time. Rani had met him when she was a struggling actress trying to get good roles after the birth of her daughter, Roshni. She was just twenty and she had left her husband, Prem, to stick to her career in the movies. Her films were flopping and the movie makers did not want her as she was a mother. Mahesh who had the reputation of creating actors out of stars, of making stars of nobodies, gave her a role in his next film which did well at the box office and got the critics’ approval as well.
Both of them got awards for that movie. Rani called him ‘Maheshji’ and spoke of him as if theirs had been only a professional relationship. But it was more than that. Devi, the protagonist and the narrator says about their relationship:

Her life changed after that. I guess by that time she had already moved in with him. She got a number of offers from other producers and directors, but she stayed with Maheshji. They had two more films together. (72)

But as their professional relationship moved on to extra-marital relationship, there were frequent quarrels followed by physical violence and separation as Rani wanted Mahesh to divorce his wife and marry her and Mahesh wanted to keep her as a mistress fully involved in his films. Her professional relationship with Mahesh had a dip when he delayed launching his next film and Rani threatened to work for another producer who was offering her a good film. When Mahesh heard her talking to the producer, on the phone in the morning, he got angry and accused her of being a traitor. She hit back saying she knew he would never make another film and she could not let her career die along with his, waiting endlessly for the needed money. He became abusive on their way back home from Marine Drive and when she threatened to leave him, he pushed her out of the car and drove away. She had to walk back home in rain without umbrella. Once at home there was another bout of violence. Next morning she left Mahesh and went back to her husband and daughter. But Mahesh kept on ringing her and she went back. As things could not be sorted out it finally led to Rani’s leaving Mahesh for good and Mahesh’s committing suicide. Rani later repented it and, even after marrying K. N, wanted to fulfil his dream of making the movie titled Sannata which he could not make because of his inability to get financial backing. But to Devi it is Rani’s two-fold strategy. She says: “...I thought she wants to go back to films, not just for her lover’s sake, she wants to be back in that world.”(76)

However Rani’s professional relationship with the producer, Diwanji, and the director, Ronu Sen, of her proposed film has no scope for emotions and sentiments. They were going to put huge money and efforts into the making of that film, they would not go by sentiments but by practical considerations. They wanted a good return on their investment and so they wanted a comedy film to cater to younger audiences and global audiences. They did not want Mahesh’s storyline and Rani’s role in the film. The makes it quite clear when he says: “I admired Tiwariji, I am deeply influenced by him, we all
were. But times have changed. Tiwariji himself would not have moved on from the kind of films he had made then.”(138) But Rani did not trust Romu Sen, the director, as she trusted Tiwariji. She says, “I don’t know this man, Romu Sen. He does not know me either. Tiwariji knew me, he understood me. I trusted him. He knew how to make me act, how to give him the correct emotion, the correct expression.”(213)

Rani’s professional relationship with her Secretary, Sadhu is pleasant but formal. He always tries to make things easy and pleasant for Rani. He arranged a meeting of Rani with the producer and the director on the sideline of a wedding in a resort on the Goa Highway. When she arrived, he was waiting for her. He received her and said, “You go to your room, Priyaji, I’ll see that the bags are taken up.”(124) When Rani introduces him to Devi saying, “This is Sadhu”, he adds his complete name ‘Ramesh Sadhwani’. He seems to be standing up in perpetual excitement and created an atmosphere of bustle and urgency around him. He has a habit of taking unfamiliar persons as familiar ones. Ronu Sen was not known to Rani but he kept insisting that Ronu Sen had worked very briefly with Tiwarji and he greatly admired Tiwariji. In the meeting he strewed pads and pencils around them in case they were suddenly inspired with ideas and would be willing to present them to the producer. Devi makes the following comments on the relationship between Rani and Sadhu: “Between Rani and Sadhu there was the intimacy of two people who have worked together. But he kept his distance, and though not obsequious, he was deeply respectful.”(124)

Ashok Chinappa, District Superintendent of Police, Rajnur, has his own professional compulsions. He has to deal with different types of cases relating to different people. He has to do many things against his wish under the instruction of his bosses. When Devi asks him whether his advice to her to have an out of court settlement of the land deal came from his bosses, he replies: “Do you think I like doing things I have to do? You have no idea of the kind of people I have to deal with. Some of them are the sum of the earth...”(207) This shows that there is power relationship between the senior and junior officers in the bureaucracy.

A study of the professional relationship in the novels of Shashi Deshpande do not only reveal the complexity of human needs and aspirations but also the irrelevance of the old existing social model which have become meaningless. It also shows that the novelist was not satisfied with the
man-woman relationship as professionals. As most of the working men continue to have patriarchal mindset, the working women have to make sacrifice and reach adjustment for the sake of family. Deshpande who holds that a family should be raised not on the sacrifice of some but on the co-operation and compromise of all its members, wants certain changes to keep up with the changing facts and circumstances for the present day life. She says:

That a great number of people now live in nuclear families, that many women have to go out and work, that stresses are making relationships vulnerable—these are facts. It is in the context of this reality that changes are required in the man-woman relationship. (2003:85)

WORKS CITED


